



# **ivan čolović** **ethno**



**BIBLIOTEKA  
XX VEK**

**157 (e)**

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# ETHNO

*Stories about World Music on  
the Internet*

Translated from Serbo-Croatian  
by  
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Belgrade  
2018

Original title:  
*Etno. Priče o muzici sveta na Internetu*  
Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 2006  
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Ivan Čolović (1938, Belgrade) has published a large number of essays and studies in the field of literature, urban ethnology, ethnolinguistics and political anthropology. Some of his books have been translated into German, English, French, Italian, Polish and Greek. He is a winner of the Herder Award (2000) and has been decorated with the French Legion of Honour (2001). Among recent works in English: *Politics of Symbol in Serbia. Essays on Political Anthropology*. Translation Celia Hawkesworht, Hurst, London, 2002. "A Criminal-National Hero? Bit Who Else?", in: M. Todorova (editor), *Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory*. Hurst, London, 2004. "Priests of language: the nation, poetry and the cult of language", in: R. Bugarski and C. Hawkesworht (editors), *Language in the former Yugoslav lands*. Slavica, Bloomington, 2004. "Football, Hooligans and War in Ex-Yugoslavia", in: A. Fenner and Eric D. Weitz (editors), *Fascism and Neofascism. Critical Writings on the Radical Right in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. and *The Balkans: The Terror of Culture. Essays in Plitical Anthropology*. Translation V. Arandelović. Nomos, Baden-Baden 2011.

Cover by Ivan Mesner



## FOREWORD

What prompted me to embark upon this internet cruise in search of stories about the world music was the proliferation of those stories in the Serbian media, which had begun in the mid-nineties of the Twentieth century. Paying close attention to all that was being said there about ethno music – term most commonly used in Serbia for world music – I noticed that it was being offered as a new genre of popular music with a folkloric foundation, felicitously free of weaknesses plaguing the dominant (and up to that point the only) kind of such music: the folk, that is, newly written and performed folk music, nicknamed mockingly turbo folk in the early nineties.

Ever since it emerged, some fifty years ago, this kind folk music has been looked down upon by the cultural elite of Serbia as a worthless simulacrum of Serbian folklore, the gravest of its weaknesses, particularly manifest during the last twenty years, being its susceptibility to the influence of the Turkish and Arabic melodic patterns, allegedly totally absent from the original Serbian folkloric music. This prompted certain critics of this kind of folk to refer to it as "Anatolian howling", or "turban folk". Low and behold – I thought while reading the ethno music stories – it seems that the Serbian elite have finally gotten a kind of folklore-

based popular music perfectly suited to their taste, custom made for it, as it were. That music – the stories about it go on to say – remains true to the authentic sources of the Serbian folk melodic patterns, but is, on the other hand, open to cross breeding with other Balkan people's music, as well as to the utilization of modern musical forms – primarily those peculiar to jazz and rock music – and modern production technology.

Thus, Serbian ethno music is represented in these stories as national in its spirit, but modern in its form, and politically correct to boot from the standpoint of democratic standards, as a form of intercultural communication and dialogue. It seemed to me as though the same formula was at work here that has also been used, since the mid-nineties of the past century, by the adherents of the so called "good nationalism", just so they could offer a political project named the Third Serbia, a vision of a society capable of avoiding the excesses of radical nationalism (exemplified by Šešelji's Serbian Radical Party), as well as those of supposedly unacceptable radical anti-nationalism (exemplified primarily by the activists of independent non-governmental organizations for the protection of human rights in Serbia). I thought that, if I gave it a try, I would be able to find out what is being said in our country about ethno music, and learn through it some key elements of the ideology, or what I suppose could be called the political faith of the Serbian elite. Perhaps, the name of its head idol is: Ethno.

However, I went beyond the Serb stories. I ventured into other, close by as well as far away regions of Ethnoland - the name I gave to the virtual archipelago of world music narration. Thanks to that, I was able to see to which degree the Serbian stories on this topic represent

versions of a globally spread out discourse about the Holy Grail of ethnic identity, wherein allegedly resides the authentic sound of traditional music. The first, longest part of this book is written in the form of a diary of a field research, and since my field is the virtual space of the Internet, my journal contains notes of my visits to websites speaking of world music, its stars, producers, projects, disks, festivals, instruments, critics... In Part Two, I attempted to systematize the observations and insights I had arrived at as a cybernaut ethnologist, a kind of ethnologist I christened: internethtnologist. In short, I discovered that the focal point of the narration I was studying was the quest for authenticity of music, culture, and of man himself, which lay hidden in the ethnic identity, in ethno, as in some sort of "primordial soup". And, when a narrative is about musicians who valiantly cross borders between musical genres and national traditions, in order to effect multiple and diverse fusions, the steadfastness of the primordial ethno sound is never compromised by it. Its vitality is even more emphasized in episodes focusing on genre and ethnic mixing. Thus, the term *ethno* in the title of this book does not point only to one of several names given to world music, but to a certain quality it is presumed to possess, regardless of what one may call it, and regardless of where else that quality may be present. Sometimes, ethno appears in my text as a personification, an embodiment of that quality, in which case I capitalize it: Ethno.

Some of my observations in the Journal are not consistent with what I wrote later in Part Two of the book. I was reluctant to fill those gaps later, for I wanted to give the reader a sense of gradual character, not only of my journey through diverse regions of Ethnoland but of



my discovering and grasping what I have termed the system of ethno sound. Also, I left material, in the Journal, that does not corroborate my thesis, hoping that it would help me show more convincingly that my main thesis is well founded in the totality of the material, than I would have if I had cleaned it of all that did not fit it.

Nor did I attempt to account for the development of world music narration from its earliest beginnings in the eighties to the present. I considered examples of it in the order in which I was finding them on the Internet, in some kind of virtual synchronicity. The succession of my encounters with individual musicians and other personalities from the world of ethno music, or, to be exact, with texts about them, does not follow any "objective" chronology, thus, representatives of different generations of musicians may, at times, appear next to each other in my Journal, as is the case with Alan Steevel or Purna das Baul, who had emerged as stars in the late sixties of the last century, and Amazigh Kateb and Richard Boné, whose first albums came out only a few years ago. I met them mixed together on the monitor of my computer, so they appear likewise before my readers. This book is surely not exempt from a number of other weaknesses and mistakes, which found their way into it without my knowledge and will. The two people who saw to it that this number be greatly reduced are my friend Eric Gordy – professor of sociology at Clark University in Boston, author of the study *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for valuable information on American and British research regarding world music, which would otherwise have remained unknown to me. I am also indebted to the translator Đorđe Tomić, editor of the very first selection of texts on

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this type of music ever published in Serbian, in the magazine *Reč*, who helped me eliminate a great deal of imprecision from my text. I take this opportunity to address my warmest thanks to them.



# **PART ONE**

## **A VIRTUAL VOYAGE TO ETHNOLAND**

### **A Research Journal**



# I

## AMONG THE STARS OF SERBIAN ETHNO MUSIC

*It is difficult to convey the feeling of intense  
Curiosity and uncertainty with which an  
ethnographer enters for the first time a domain  
representing the future area of his field research.*

Bronislaw Malinowski,  
*The Argonauts of The Western Pacific*

June 12, 2003

I am hoisting anchor, that is, putting my computer online and *Internet Explorer* leads me automatically – it is preset to do that – to one of the best-known devices for exploring the vast expanses of the Internet. I am feeling an excitement coming over me that appears every time the individually colored characters spelling G o o g l e pop up in front of me, accompanied by that narrow rectangle into which I only need inscribe the name of my wish, before my search engine, similar to Aladdin's good genie, picks me up and carries me toward its fulfillment.

Today, my excitement at the gates of cyberspace is particularly intense as I am about to begin so far the longest voyage through it, which surely will last several months. I wish to visit those web sites on the Internet where ethno music is discussed, at least most of the important ones. The first bit of information *Google* gives me in response to my request for a list of all the web sites containing in their title the word "ethno" sounds rather

disheartening, the number of such web sites being nothing less than 202,000. My only hope is that, after I have sailed deeper into this archipelago of ethno, I will have learned how to tell important from not so important web sites, as well as the most important web addresses dedicated to ethno music, its stars, publishers, producers, instruments, and festivals.

Upon this field exploration I am embarking all alone, with pretty modest gear (a PC of limited power and speed), and with just as modest an amount of experience as an "cybernaut", and with a – to put it mildly - feeble phone line to boot, perfectly aware that this cyberspace trek of mine will be frequently interrupted, and that I may never reach destinations requiring better equipment and connection.

The idea of surfing the internet in search of material on ethno music came to me when I discovered that the major performers of that sort of music have their own web sites. In that regard, they seem to be far ahead of all our other artists. I also noticed that, as a rule, their web sites are bilingual, using Serbian and English, and sometimes multilingual. In some cases, the presentation of a given ethno musician is done exclusively in English. Such is the case with the web site of Biljana-Bilja Krstić, the founder of the ethno group "Bistrik" ([www.bilja.co.yu](http://www.bilja.co.yu)). On the home page (*Biljana Kristich's Home page*), a red-haired songstress in front of a microphone can be seen through a hole cut through one of those famous kilims, woven in the region of the town of Pirot in eastern Serbia. She is inviting the visitor to an "ethnomusicological journey through Balkans". The explanation of this formulation resides in the fact that Biljana Krstić is a trained musicologist who considers her career as a star of ethno music a part of her

musicological work. She refers with reverence and gratitude to her professor of ethno musicology, Dragoslav Dević. "My present work has a great deal to do with him", she says in an interview published on the website *www.muzika.co.yu*. Presently, Bilja is also on the faculty of Belgrade Conservatory, besides being one of the program directors at Radio Belgrade as well.



Picture 1. Biljana Krstić



I browsed through other pictures of Biljana Krstić on Google's *Images*, where I also found out that a photograph of her appeared on the web site *www.kczr.org* (Cultural Center of Zrenjanin). Using that address, I pressed on. Some information awaited me there about the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the said center, scheduled for July 1, 2003, as well as an invitation to a lecture by a sociologist on the ongoing transition in Eastern Europe, but not a word about Bilja. I am bringing this up just as an example of how easy it is for one to stray and get lost after having hardly begun a journey of this kind.

I returned to Biljana Krstić's home page, and then glanced at what *Biography* page had to offer. It informs one that this vocalist had achieved a degree of success in the field of pop music toward the end of the seventies and during the eighties, and that at the beginning of the nineties she "...decided to record material close to her heart ever since her childhood, adding to it some ethno recordings of obscure songs from the territory of Kosovo, South Serbia, Macedonia, The Vlach district in East Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary." She collected these songs for over five years, the first fruit of which effort was the CD "Bistrik"(English - *A Spring*), "whose title" – it is clarified to us – "reveals a desire to say something , through modern music's means of expression, about the unfamiliar, under explored, yet very rich ethnic cultural heritage of this region." The release of this CD (December 2000) is viewed on this web site as a "sign of new times". It remains unclear, however, whether it is an allusion to the aftermath of Milošević's fall from power (October of the same year). Whatever the case may be, the new era is supposed to bring about a new image of the Balkans and its music, for it will be the "times of bringing all Balkan

differences together". It is noteworthy that Bilja and her group perform in prestigious places of elite culture, such as Kolarčev narodni univerzitet (Kolarac People's University), Atelje 212 (Studio 212) in Belgrade, or at the "Grand Theatre" festival in the seaside resort town Budva, Montenegro. This does not seem the least bit unusual to anybody knowing that, besides Biljana, most of the members of her ensemble are trained musicians, four of them with a Conservatory degree; two are accomplished musicologists, and three, counting Biljana, work as musical program directors of Radio Belgrade. Surrounded by this company of highly trained musicians, there is a single folk artist, "people's musician", the Serbian folk flute player Milinko Ivanović, "one of the best whistle players in our national folk music".

In an interview, published in the *online* edition of Belgrade's weekly NIN (December 19, 2002), Biljana comments on the genre of songs she has been singing lately. "It is hard to define my current musical genre, and I don't like any of the attempted definitions. When they ask me abroad about it, I simply say it is the music of our land, our folklore and tradition. I avoid the words "ethno" and "project" Leaving her music without a firm definition, she, on the other hand, characterizes it as something very stable, durable, at one with "our people", and thereby – with herself personally. Having recognized this music in her heart of hearts, she returned to it. However, she does not repudiate the earlier pop music phase of her career, but quite to the contrary, speaks of it as unforgettable memories of her collaboration with Bora Đorđević and Đorđe Balašević. But, only this new music, to which she entirely devoted herself only toward the end of the nineties, appears to her to be her, from time immemorial

present, but only now discovered truth. That truth has the dimension of a miraculous harmony of one with oneself, one's body, one's throat. This harmony manifests itself as some irresistible instinct, independent of the singer's volition, be he or she indisposed, or even ill, "Truly", Biljana Krstić says, "when I sing these songs, my throat opens differently. I do not set anything up in it... it should be this way or that way. Quite simply, it is as though the song were singing itself. The music I did earlier never afforded me that experience. Here I feel some strange contact, a touch, something unique is happening. Even when I have sore throat, I feel no difficulty singing... The throat opens up all by itself, as if I were born with that ability."

Nevertheless, Biljana finds it somewhat difficult to determine cultural and geographic identity of that way of singing she has always carried within herself. She quotes, although tongue-in-cheek, a remark made by her compatriots from Niš that what she sings is not "Nissian" but rather Walachian (Romanian) music: "Ti si otide u Vlajne" (You've turned Walachian). She does admit that this "specific tearing in the throat" is characteristic of Walachian and Romanian folk music. Elsewhere ([www.balkanmedia.com](http://www.balkanmedia.com), February 25, 2003), Biljana employs the expression "artistic transposition of the traditional music of the Balkans". According to her web site, the areas where she finds her inspiration include Kosovo, southern Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, but also Hungary.

Niš (Nish), Walachia, Romania, Kosovo, Bulgaria, the Balkans? Indeed, it is not easy to tell in which place, in which region was born that irresistible voice to whose power Biljana and her throat so unconditionally surrender. One thing is for sure: it comes from somewhere rural. Her

interviews are replete with remembrances of the days spent in her mother's village, "in the foothills of Suva Planina" (Dry Mountain). That is where she had listened to her mother and her grandmother Lenka sing, while "grandpa Mladen played his duduk". She fondly quotes a joking remark addressed to her by a friend: "You are a villager type; you should be singing villager songs." The author of a story on Biljana, published in the *online* edition of *Ilustrovana Politika* magazine (Politics Illustrated) of March 3, 2003 (Radica Momčilović, "Ajša u Koloseumu"- Aisha at the Coliseum) retells Biljana's story of her own childhood, reducing it to threadbare formulae of idyllic portrayal of village life: "She speaks with warmth of those first blushes of day when she went to the vegetable garden with her grandparents. All worked, even children, tilling, harvesting, or stringing tobacco leaves. And, when the sun would rise high above the mountain peaks, it was time for a snack: unleavened country bread, cheese and green onions from the garden."

June 24, 2003

Indicative of the appeal that Balkan identity has for many of those involved in popular music and popular culture in general is also the existence of the virtual store "Balkanmedia" ([www.balkanmedia.com](http://www.balkanmedia.com)) in which I found myself while tracking down Biljana Krstić. The merchandise offered therein is on display under the following headings, virtual "shelves": Folk - Pop/Rock - Alternative - Ethno - Film - Books - Panorama. Besides Bilja, under the heading of ethno also come the Macedonian guitar player Vlatko Stefanovski, the singing duo Teofilović Brothers, the

trumpet player Boban Marković, the composer Aleksandar Sanja Ilić and his group Balkanika, the singer Pavle Aksentijević, the gusle playing bard Milomir Miljanić, the female vocalist Madam Piano and the group Teodulija, the musician Slobodan Trkulja with his group Balkanopolis, the group Orthodox Celts, and the singer Ljubiša Stojanović Louis. Along with articles on performers and their new releases, this website contains sections such as "Stari običaji"(Ancient Customs), "Narodna verovanja" (Popular Beliefs), and "Etno priča"(Ethno Story), which offer ethnological explanations, whose purpose, I imagine, is to reconstruct ethno music's social and cultural context which, in turn, would facilitate understanding and appreciation of it.

In the issue of this website which I am reading today, the section on ancient customs is taken up by a report entitled "Doba nevinosti" (The Age of Virginity) discussing the custom according to which the bride is expected to enter her marriage as a virgin. Three photographs illustrate the article. The first shows a bride with a white bridal veil, and a white tiara on her head; the caption reads "the bride's 'honesty' (virginity) was verified on her wedding night." The second photograph shows the bridal attire, all white and neatly displayed on a table; the caption reads: "The virginity has always been symbolized by the white – thus, the bride is always dressed in white." On the third one, the visitor can see a folkloric dance ensemble in traditional folk costumes, while the caption reads: "Bachelors who had been seen with 'indecent females' were not respected either."

Someone well versed in ethnology, no doubt, authored this account of the age of virginity (it was signed by the initials J.D., and dated: October 30 2002). The author

writes about the requirement of the "traditional community" that girls and boys preserve their "pre-marital innocence", and provides data on "virginity as a sacrifice", i. e. on the "celibacy of a nun", as well as on the custom according to which in families without sons, the male gender role of a son is assumed by female children who thereby "sacrifice" their femininity to the well-being of their family. What is interesting is that these customs - as well as Biljana Krstić's songs - are referred to as „ours", without being explicitly defined as Serbian, but - rather in broader geographic terms - as Balkan. The article ends in a indictment of "the present age" in which, in the author's opinion, "the very idea of sacrifice for others is being derided and cast aside," and in which, "virginity is most often characterized as a symbol of backwardness and deprivation of freedom." The author warns that AIDS, "the plague of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", is a result of sexual freedom, and of complete "relativization of the concepts of love, fidelity, and sacrifice." Therefore, ethno music is being connected here to a value system that could be considered patriarchal and traditionalist. However, that system is being offered as a remedy for the ills of our time, and in that sense, it is less an evocation of the past than a projection of a possible bright future. Ethno music is enlisted here in the service of some sort of ethno utopia, which offers a new era of innocence and humility, and, in conjunction with it, of physical and social wholesomeness.

The article offered in the "Popular Beliefs" section also discusses women: "Women – Witches or Fairies". Its author is the same: J. D., the date is October 4, 2002. Its style is determined by the language of (Serbian) classical ethnology in which abound formulae of the type "among our people", or "as popular belief would have it", "in

popular imagination". Here too, the time is divided into "once upon a time" and "today": "Once upon a time, markedly dark-complexioned and hairy women were thought of as witches, while today this epithet is most often given to nagging and ill-tempered women who make life miserable for men around them." This article, intended also to educate its male readers, ends in a lesson somewhat less stern than the conclusions arrived at in the previous one: "If you have some 'secret' fairy, or simply know that your girlfriend or your wife is one of them, be mindful and take good care of her lest she lose her good fairy traits and become a witch."

"Ethno Story" is devoted to gusle. The title: "Gusle – two strings that have preserved the history of a people" The author (Jelena Milutinović, June 7, 2002) communicates opinions of the poet Matija Bećković and Branko Konatar, man of letters and president of Belgrade based gusle artists' society "Student", on the importance of gusle for the preservation of the Serbian national identity. Here, it is no longer a matter of the Balkans, but specifically of the "Serbian nation" "As long as his head remained on his shoulders, there were only three more, mutually inseparable things every Serb kept on his person at all times: his icon lamp, his gusle, an his icon." To me personally, the most interesting here is the fact that this contemporary writer resorts to an expression "the head on his shoulders". This article mentions the study "From the Bottom of Lepenski Vir"- unfamiliar to me - by Branko Arsenijević, which puts forth the thesis that gusle had come into being as a part of a paleolithic civilization, discovered in that locale.

A sizeable portion of the article deals with the contemporary state of the gusle art, and with Branko Konatar's assessment that in this day and age gusle is often

abused: "However, today's bards that accompany their singing with gusle sing of some new, sometimes genuine , but often not so genuine heros, of marginal events, while the great and important ones are being either marginalized or are of dubious artistic value in themselves" It seems as though among today's gusle artists there is not a single one fit to join the educated elite of ethno musicians, which is why the position of the experts, emphasized here: "The experts say that it is imperative to bring gusle back into the sphere of art from where it came in the first place", does not seem very likely to bear any fruit. On the other hand, writers who draw upon the epic gusle tradition are highly rated these days, so that the void caused on the ethno scene by the lack of gusle artists can be filled by writers with a gusle-like frame of mind, such as, for instance, Matija Bećković and Momir Vojvodić, who could be called ethno poets<sup>1</sup> (1). They alone - in B.Konatar's judgement - can measure up to Filip Višnjić. "Filip Višnjić was a poet who had the ability to portray an event like that (the First Serbian Uprising, I. Č) according to the laws of poetry, transferring it thus into the realm of poetry". Today, we have very few people who can do that. I can responsibly mention only two names – those of Matija Bećković and Momir Vojvodić."

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<sup>1</sup> More than a year after this log entry was made, I found, - in an article published in the Belgrade daily, "Politika", devoted to Matija Bećković (Zoran Radisavljević, "Pesme nisu jaja", Poems are not eggs, Aug26, 2004) - a confirmation of the fact that I was not alone in noticing the connection between this writer and the ethno movement in Serbia: "Bećković", the author of the article says, "is a discoverer of a new and original poetic form, creator of a new genre that could be called ethno satire".



June 25, 2003

"Balkanmedia" advertises itself as "the oldest cyber store in the Balkans", and it defines the character of the music it offers under the heading of "ethno music" as "the original sound of the Balkans". However, the emphasis on the Balkan identity of the music offered here does not necessarily mean that it comes from various parts of the Balkans, but that it is simply a way of pointing at a certain Balkan character of mostly Serbian – seldom Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Gipsy – musicians and musical groups. Only one of the 37 CDs, offered in the section "Ethno music", includes a few musical numbers originating from without former Yugoslavia. It is a CD entitled "The Balkan Caravan" which – in addition to about ten numbers whose origin is indicated by labels "South-East Serbia", "Kosovo and Metohija", "Knin Krajina", "Southern Serbia", "Bosnia and Herzegovina", "Macedonia", "Mačva, West Serbia", and "Montenegro", offers one number from each of the following: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. But on the other hand, three bands are tied directly to the Balkans by their very names: Slobodan Trkulja & Balkanopolis, Sanja & Balkanika, and Jovan Maljoković & Balkan Salsa Bend.

Teofilović Brothers are introduced on this website as „unique performers of ancient Balkan vocal music". Examples of emphasis on Balkan identity are found in the title of the report on the trumpeter Boban Marković ("Balkan Trumpet Conquers the World"), as well as in the titles of a composition performed by the group Ognjen i prijatelji, Eng. – Ognjen and Friends ("The Balkan Rumba") and a number performed on the CD, offered here, *Between Dream and Reality* by the folk flute player Bora Dugić ("An

Ordinary Balkan Day"). All verbiage on Dugić's CD is in English, and the Balkan dimension is crucial in it: *A Balkan/Serbian world between a dream and reality presented through balkan traditional piccolo and big flutes*. In an interview, given for the millennial issue of NIN, which I found on the website *www.medijaklub.co.yu*, Goran Bregović too attributes Balkan identity to his own music: "Primarily, I am a Balkan composer; the address of my music is The Balkans. It is inspired by the Balkans and written for the Balkans. However, its worldwide acceptance is a very nice thing indeed."

The concert, given by the Macedonian group "Anastasia" in April of 2002, in Belgrade, bore also the mark of Balkan music. This fact is emphasized in an article by Sanja M. Petrović, published on April 30, 2002, on the website "Balkanmedia", The music of this group is "a fusion between ethno and spiritual music", and it reveals the fact that, "despite its material wretchedness, the Balkans possess an immeasurable spiritual wealth." This music, the author goes on to say, embodies "the sadness and the passion of the Balkans", but it also "evokes the morning sounds of green pastures", the percussion deserving most credit for it, as it "gives away the heartbeat of the Balkans". All this is – in the opinion of this reviewer – "a new Balkan story". Perhaps, it is so new because it is unfolding in the twenty-first century, and because its subject matter is this very same century, perceived by the author as the age of "alienated man, surrounded by concrete". "Anastasia", explains further Sanja M. Petrović, conjures up this alienation by means of "electronic sounds", so that its audience can hear "the creaking of trolley busses, the huffing and puffing of locomotives, the rumble of a megalopolis, the grinding mechanism in which we are all helplessly caught." But the

Balkans have the right answer to all this hubbub of tin and concrete, and it isn't the buzzing of bees about a green pasture, but rather the sweet, soothing sounds of Balkan church singing: "The sounds of a church choir that periodically overpower the electronics bring on hope and tranquility." To "the cry of the alienated man of the concrete" answers "the lonely human voice of a church cantor", seeking to awaken the children of Macedonia and take blindfolds off their eyes: "Ova se naši deca razbudi gi neosetno – odvrzi im po prevezot (Macedonian)." (These are our children, awaken them gently – untie their blindfolds).

The Balkanmedia page dedicated to ethno music encompasses all too variegated a selection of musicians and music for anybody to be able to speak of any traits of this music as something that makes it a distinct genre, or even a group of genres. The selection of 37 compact disks in the "ethno music" section includes discs with songs and music, written or just performed, by Vasil Hadžimanov, Boban Marković, Goran Bregović, Esma Redžepova, Pavle Aksentijević, Bilja Krstić, the group called Orthodox Celts, two albums under the title *Serbia: Sounds Global*, but also "The Songs of Ksenia Cicvarić", an album of folk songs entitled *Mito, bekrijo* (Hey thee, Dimitry the Reveler), a CD by the group Garavi sokak (The Grimy Alley) – a selection of "old Serbian songs", entitled "Far away over there", and a disk with folk-dance music. The term ethno music is so broadly understood here as to cover "humorous and amusing songs" of Mica Trofitaljka (Three-quarter Milly), such as "Moja roba moj dućan (My wares, my Boutique), "Beži Sido, bog te vido" (Hey you, AIDS, get the hell out of here), "Drž' se ćerko tvrdog kursa" (Stick to the hard line, daughter), and "Rđavome kupcu i dlake smetaju" (Even the hair is in the way of an incapable customer).

June 27, 2003

Still in the company of Balkanmedia contributors, I am undertaking today a visit to a twin-brothers' vocal duo "Braća Teofilović". I am first encountering them on a number of photographs. They are dressed in white trousers and specially made shirts, showing a print of a few concentric circles, not unlike the rings of a tree trunk, whose center is transpierced by an arrow. These photographs are in a bluish monotone.



Picture 2. Braća Teofilović

On these photos, the brothers' eyes are turned toward a nearly cloudless sky, and on two of them, their arms are wide open, as if they were flying. One photograph with a greenish cast shows the brothers in some forrest. And there too they are observing something above their heads. One brother is holding his arms crossed on his chest, as in a prayer. I also come across a photograph, taken in some interior, and showing the Teofilovići in buttoned up collarless shirts, their eyes closed, the head of one of them resting on the other's shoulder. One would surmise

that the camera caught them at a moment of descending deep down into their innermost selves. This has got to be the moment of concentration before singing, or else, a longer intermission, since their mouths are closed as well.

The explanation of these photographs is made available to me by the article on Teofilović Brothers , entitled "In Search of a Dream, (Jelena Milutinović, May 16, 2002). The article quotes the words of a music critic who asserted that for the Theofilovići "there exists only one way of singing – the one with the eyes closed, the hands made into fists, the face turned toward the heavens, and the heart wide open." So, this duo's looking toward the skies or keeping their eyes closed symbolizes the fact that their thoughts, hand in hand with their music, are directed toward something distant, or invisible, something they call a dream. Their first CD is entitled *The Keepers of a Dream*. What are they dreaming about? First and foremost, about something very ancient. As the author of the foreword to that CD put it (Petar Peca Popović): "every one of the Teofilovići's songs is older than the latest world empire!"

The dream Teofilović Brothers are dreaming is not at all a matter of their intimate selves, but is rather a sort of collective dream, preserved in motifs of the traditional "ancient Serbian and Balkan vocal music." In their own words, the Teofilovići find those motifs in ethno musicological notes taken by Miodrag Vasiljević and Kosta Manojlović. What is curious is the fact that they have no musical training, and cannot read music. Nevertheless, what they say in their interviews gives them away as educated men, scrupulously doing the homework required by their job. They haven't been strangers to a number of names of thinkers, in vogue in Serbia during the decade of the nineties. So, in their desire to explain the character of

their music, they will invoke not only the name of Béla Bartok, but also that of Bartok's countryman, man of letters and philosopher, Béla Hamvas, whose books contain long and vivid descriptions of the mysterious pathways of the spirit: "We do not attach ourselves to the moment in time when a song came into existence. According to Hamvas, Béla Bartok, when he wrote about folk music, was the only one to recognize the curious fact that folk music is not merely the way villagers sing, but is rather a profound "rec" of the past, older than all of history, yet preserved in the depths of people's soul. I do not know where they found this "rec", perhaps, in one of Hamvas' books, or more likely, in its Serbian translation. One would guess that it is supposed to have the same meaning as "recall" or "memory". But "rec" certainly promises more than just that, yet it doesn't matter here that it clearly gives less as far as grasping its meaning goes. "Rec" does not prevent me from recognizing something behind it that once was referred to as "memory of the race" or "eternity through blood."

The notion that folk music is the bedrock foundation, the primeval source of all music is the reason why the Teofilovići do not wish to be defined as performers of ethno music: "It (the folk music, I. Č) has deposited, settled itself like geological layers", the brothers state in an interview they gave to a Balkanmedia contributor, "and therein lies the value, not of ethno music but of music as an idea, as a great gift bestowed by God upon those who have the ear for it... We don't like to say we are doing ethno music." They do not wish to be pigeonholed in that category of music, not any more than Bilja Krstić does.

Whenever one comes across Hamvas, one comes across the term archetype, which also figures prominently in interviews the brothers give. It appears in their explanation

of the crucial significance of the "second voice" in their singing. While their first voice is something they arrive at rationally, by exploring ethno musicological records, "the second voice is something residing in the depths of one's unconscious mind, something archetypal, and it is up to us to recognize it in ourselves, and bring it into harmony with our first voice." Descending deeper and deeper, as in a dream, through archetypal layers of folk music, the Teofilovići come across things long forgotten; nothing is made up in their music, everything in it is retrieved from the depths of oblivion, tradition is brought back to life, because tradition, for instance, the tradition of old songs, preserves "the people's living thought": "Our musical tradition is layered – the Byzantine religious chanting has left its mark upon the musical heritage of the region, but secular concerns, popular jubilees, human strivings, sufferings, desires, and fears constitute people's living thought." Hamvas, "archetype", "unconscious mind", "archaic", "layered tradition", "secular concerns"... all these erudite references, expressions, and terms in the pronouncements of the Teofilović brothers are combined with a rhetoric termed longtime ago by Theodor Adorno "the authenticity jargon". In the brothers' own terms, a second voice makes itself heard in their speech, featuring "people's thought", "chanting"... Stories about close ties to village life are another figure of authenticity rhetoric. However, while they are prominent in Bilja Kršić's biography, where they include the information about her first contacts with folk melodies, in the biography of the Teofilovići the emphasis is on the religious dimension: They were also "greatly influenced by growing up in the village of Vidovo, across a lake, surrounded by ancient monasteries, the so called Serbian Mount Atos, at their grandma's and grandpa's."

Letting oneself go to a dream, recognizing things long forsaken, being filled with a special emotion, some sort of bliss, that is what the Teofilovićs are offering to their concert audiences. "The audience dreamed too"- the author of the article "A Concert from The Dreamland at Zemun's Gardoš" notes (J. Milutinović, Balkanmedia, July 4, 1992) – as it swayed to the beat, listened to their singing and silences, to the sound of shadows... Those present also shared in a peculiar archeology of remembering ... Among with them was Vojislav Koštunica, the president of Yugoslavia, though not as a special member of the audience, in a special box, but just as one of the 'mortals' ".

Still, Teofilović Brothers do not address their messages of a musical past brought back to life exclusively to their Serb audiences. They are counting on understanding and consideration by foreigners, and their numerous and well attended concerts abroad attest to that understanding and consideration, and show that what they dream or bring out of dreams and into reality can be recognized by people outside Serbia, even outside the Balkans and Europe, as their very own. Moreover, the interest shown by foreigners seems sometimes greater than that shown by domestic audiences, as is demonstrated by the great number of their international concert tours. Perhaps, their example, as well as that of some other ethno musicians, corroborates the old adage that no one is a prophet in his own village.

July 4, 2003

Arrived to the page of Balkanmedia dedicated to Pavle Aksentijević. I had noticed earlier that he is almost never



referred to as a "singer", but strictly as a "cantor", a rather archaic term, just as his singing is always exclusively called "chant". I see him on a photograph with the members of his group Testament, which includes his two sons. I learn that he earned his MFA at the Fine Arts Academy in Belgrade, and that, besides music, he does fine arts painting. "This authentic seeker 'restaurer and interpreter of the sound of medieval music'- as is stated in an interview with Pavle Aksentijević (Dijana Maksimović, March 17, 2003) – "has contributed a great deal to the preservation of the Serbian and Byzantine musical heritage, and to its introduction to the world." Here we see, in lieu of the broader spatial definition of Serbian folk music as "Serbian and Balkan", a temporal, historical broadening of the definition of it as "Serbian and Byzantine". The difference between these definitions could consist in the fact that in the first case the emphasis is on the secular, and in the second on the sacred dimension of the Serbian musical tradition. However, what seems to matter the most to Aksentijević is his belief that Byzantium provides better protection than the Balkans do from that which frightens him the most - Asia.

And its sound, the sound of Asia, to the horror of Pavle Aksentijević, resonates in new Serbian musical folklore, the non-academic one, in the so called "turbo-folk music". Having nothing but contempt for that music, he resorts, in his derogatory comments on it, to the usual stereotype according to which contemporary folk music has been forced upon the Serbian people in an effort to uproot them culturally, rendering them thereby easier to subjugate. Aksentijević has enriched this stereotype by linking the new folk music to "all our defeats". "It is not our music", he says, "It is the music composed for a nation impaired in its development, more precisely, for a

comatose nation. That sound of an aggressive, alien, asiatic music has followed all our defeats, and seems to have been made for our people, in order to prepare them for all manner of evil poised to befall them."<sup>2</sup>

In the online archive of the weekly NIN, I found the issue of August 30, 2001, in which I am now reading the article by Marina Stefanovic on ethno music in Serbia, entitled "The Least Serbian of All", and in it Pavle Aksentijević's discussion of what the authentic voice of Serbian folk music is, from whence it comes, and how it makes itself heard. For him, as well as for Biljana Krstić, that voice has always existed "within ourselves", it is older than any of "us", and, sooner or later, it will be heard, that is, it will come "out of us": "A voice appropriate for that music must come out of me, out of us. My point of departure is that it is buried deep inside me, and that it will come out. It is one of the most precious gifts we receive at birth."

This article repeats Aksentijević's warning against the danger, looming large over the authentic folk music, of various influences, most harmful to it. But, in addition to

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<sup>2</sup> At a later date, in a statement made for the newspaper of the Serbian community in Toronto which wrote about his performance in that city, Aksentijević more narrowly defined this music - in his opinion, forced upon the Serbian people - as "Islamic", adding to it another, presumably just as perilous an influence on Serbian folk music - that of the Gypsies. "The aggressive assault on our ethno music, which has been going on for a considerable amount of time already, and which has desecrated it with Islamic and Gypsy rhythms, has contributed to a transformation of the Serbian national being, placing a nation, once ready to die for its identity, in a situation where its people no longer know where they belong."

this danger, another one is brought up here. "Another great danger to our folk music", he says, "are the base, feeble-minded, attempts to bring that music closer to the European ear." Apparently, as far as Pavle Aksentijević is concerned, that specifically Serbian and Byzantine voice "we" carry inside ourselves wouldn't be able to reach the European ear spontaneously, but only if it were tuned up for that purpose specifically. And Pavle is firmly against it. What should then the European listeners do in order to hear us? Pavle Aksentijević says nothing on that score, but I have a hunch that he would, more than likely, be inclined to recommend to them trying on their own to adjust their ears to us, rather than us having to alter and corrupt our pristine voice.

The Balkanmedia web site is leading me today toward Boban Marković, trumpeter and the leader of the "foremost brass band in Serbia for over 14 years". Added to a number of first prizes, won at the annual brass band competition in Dragačevo, his collaboration with Goran Bregović, Lajko Feliks, and other well known domestic and foreign musicians, contributes a great deal to his good reputation. An article on Marković (placed on the web site September 19, 2002) begins with a lengthy briefing on a series of concerts announced, for the period between September, 2002 and June, 2003, by the Cultural Center B92 Rex, under the title "Serbia Sounds Global – A Living Tradition". Thus, Radio B92 has found itself as well on the road toward the Tradition, which, of course, is "alive" here too, and, begins with a capital T to boot, just as is the case with many others who are striving for the renewal of what we have always had, but have forsaken. It is emphasized by the title of this article: "The Living Tradition of Ethno Music". In it, the ethno music is alternatively called *world*

*music*. The use of that English term, as well as of the expression *Sounds Global* in the title of the disk, is intended to place the Serbian "living tradition" in the context of contemporary trends on the global scene, to distance it from the meaning that striving for it might imply in the context of nationalistic rhetoric about culture. It seems as though the expression ethno music, regardless of the fact that some Serbian singers view it as a Western musical fad, is not clear enough a marker of this new contextualization of the Serbian musical tradition, intended to bring this tradition closer to audiences that tend to stay away from straight folk music.

Unlike B. Krstić, Teofilović Brothers, and P. Aksentijević, B. Marković does not mention, in his public statements, any nationally, regionally or historically defined sources of his music. Actually, one might easily guess that even the expression "living tradition" does not mean a whole lot to him. His answer to the question as to how he defines his music is: "as a unique kind of music." He proudly speaks of the fact that his listeners cannot tell, by his music, where he and his kinfolk come from. "We play music from all over the world, so that those listening cannot tell whether we are Greeks, Americans, or Hungarians..." Important to him as well is putting into the music he performs something that is only his, something personal: "I have done many adaptations of other people's music, in addition to music created by me, but even in my adaptations, it isn't easy to figure out whose music it is, they bear my stamp."

The conflict between Marković and the Organizing Committee of the 2001 Guča Trumpet Festival is quite interesting. For that competition, he had prepared a trumpet adaptation of the theme tune from the TV series "The Written off", but the Committee rejected that number

of his, and the rejection "hurt him very much." But, since they didn't allow me to play *The Written off*", Boban continues, "I decided not to compete at all, because it is my deepest conviction that I should always move one step forward, not backward." He does not say whether the Committee provided a rationale for not accepting the music from *"The Written off"*, but the reason for it may well have been a political one, the fact that resurrecting the tradition of Tito's partisan movement did not fit the conception of a "living tradition", which guided the Committee.

July 24, 2003

I am coming up to Bora Dugić, the folk flute player from Kragujevac, through his web site *www.Boradugic.com*. His home page, quite fittingly, displays a large "Welcome!" However, this is all that the colloquial language on Dugić's website amounts to, while the rest of its text belies, by its style, the author's ambition to appear learned. The first sentence shows it off the bat: "A temporal determinant of man's enjoyment of music can also be – the moment." A moment later, I come across the expression: "purposive instantaneousness", which somebody like Husserl might just as well have thought up. These abstractions and philosophical observations about music and the Serbian folk flute are seasoned, these days, with stuffy Serbian archaisms, cherished in today's Serbia, expressing concepts such as "always", "everywhere", "entire": "The talk is about the music that has for evermore been hither and yon."

The likenesses of the "Serbian flute king" on a few photographs, offered by his website, convey nobility and

class. On those pictures, we see the artist wearing tails and a bowtie, his hair neatly groomed, and his beard and mustache trimmed short. He holds his flute with his fingertips, his eyes closed on all the pictures but one. The flute being in and of itself strong enough a symbol of that "ethno" element emanating from Dugić's music, he – unlike the musicians whose instrument is their own voice, as is the case, for instance, with Bilja Krstić - didn't need any other visual sign of it. One could suspect that, in his eyes, the Serbian folk flute is too strong a symbol of folk music, and that he is trying to mitigate its impact by wardrobe particulars, peculiar to performers of classical music, tails and bowtie, elevating thereby social and artistic status of the Serbian folk flute.

On Dugić's website, it is asserted, among other things, that he is "one the greatest folk artists in the world." I find this immodest boastfulness intriguing because in it I detect a trace of an important problem that is an integral part of any discussion of ethno music: the problem of code or level of understanding, of some kind of a value standard that must exist for all the diverse "ethnic", "indigenous", "traditional", "national", etc. kinds of music to be listened to with equal attention, understanding, and enjoyment. On what grounds, by what criterion, can anyone declare anyone the greatest folk artist in the world?

The second problem arose because of the praise Bora Dugić received from Nicea Fracile, professor at the Novi Sad Fine Arts Academy. "By preserving the fundamental traits of Romanian performance style, and with the specific quality of his tone, with his brilliant staccato, subtle glissandos and ornaments, his keen sense of the musical phrase, his dynamics of melodic wholes, Bora Dugić

revives, personifies, enriches the cultural and spiritual creations of the Romanian people. What I have read so far about ethno music has taught me that ethno music is generally viewed as something done by musicians at one with their native soil, with roots, perhaps even unconscious, in their people's tradition, customs, and collective memory. However, professor Fracile's praise of Bora Dugić implies that a foreigner can enrich the creative work of a nation just as much as any of its own members could do. So then, one can master an alien culture - not only one's own. Perhaps - a heretical thought bursts into my mind - the alien one even more completely than one's own.

July 25, 2003

Interviews with Dugić are even more interesting than his web site. I am coming across the first one on the Balkanmedia website, still my principal guide through the universe of Serbian ethno music (Snežana Milošević: "The Magic That Joins Together Heaven and Earth", May 24, 2002). It begins with the topic of the origin of the Serbian folk flute. Dugić makes it clear that it is not only a Serbian instrument, but also that, "as time went by, it did become a Serbian national instrument". However, Dugić pushes the point in time when the flute was adopted deep into the past when there existed only Slavic tribes: "The Serbs brought it with them when they came to the Balkans, and never parted with it since." We have here a version of a story about the uninterrupted connection the Serbs have had with their "primordial" musical instrument, better known as the story of gusle. Here too, this connection

appears to be a thread by which hangs our national identity, a thread that does not break even when everything else we have crumbles and perishes. This is how the Serbian folk flute, the "Frula", receives the halo of an epic symbol of our soul, which nobody can take away from us, even when we are stripped of our territories and other earthly goods: "Throughout their history, The Serbs have lost and won territories, lost and won wars, but this little instrument they have never lost."

Here too, it turns out that the seemingly well-measured admission that an element of our culture may be a part of a tradition we share with some other cultures, inevitably leads to a tactless conclusion that only in our culture that element could reach the heights of perfection, inaccessible to others. The key to the alleged superiority of the Serbian folk flute over alien flutes is none other than the unique, replication defying quality of the Serbian soul: "Explaining how the delicate Serbian soul sings through a flute in a manner different from that of a Peruvian or a Chinaman", writes the author of this interview, "Dugić says that the entire world bows in admiration before our, Serbian, flute because of the astonishing magic of the sound it can produce, and the emotions it can so mysteriously elicit... Speaking of the advantages the Serbian folk flute has over foreign ones, our best known performer on that instrument describes its tone as round, soft, warm, tender, capable of conjuring up both apathy and euphoria, elevating or soothing, as broad as the Slavic soul itself." Here comes another broadening of Serbian musical identity, that is, of the Serbian soul which dwells in Serbian folk music, which, here and there, has a way of spilling over into the Balkan, Byzantine, and in this particular case, Slavic "spiritual and cultural space".



This interview shows more clearly than does Dugić's official website that he has adopted the rhetoric of the ruling order of symbolic meaning, replete with erudite, pedantic, phrases and references. An example of it is the notion that the Serbian folk flute is a means by which the Serbian national identity resists anyone attempting to destroy it, which Dugić expresses, invoking K. G. Jung, who, during the last fifteen years, has become one of often referred to authors in Serbia, the improbable ideologues, as it were, of Serbian nationalism. "When I began performing", Dugić recounts, "I noticed that young children, brought to my concerts by their mothers, would, among all instruments, notice the flute first. This was no accident. Some have attempted to explain it by saying that a small child, quite logically, notices the diminutive Serbian folk flute, because it too is small. But, it isn't true. It has been proven scientifically that a child doesn't differentiate between instruments by their size, it only recognizes their respective sounds, and that's something all of us possess as our collective, unconscious heritage. This is something Karl Gustav Jung explained brilliantly in his psychoanalytic writings: all individuals of a given community recognize the same things in the same manner."

Bora Dugić was reached, as well, by the idea of a national "genetic code", popularized, on the pages of "Politika", by the psychiatrist, poet, and politician Jovan Striković. "The Serbian folk flute belongs to Serbia", Dugić explains, "it belongs to the consciousness, cleverness, and cunning closely linked to the Serb nation. The Serbian sound must belong to every Serb in the same way. It's a fact that our folk flute has been something marking a collective, unconscious state; it has always contained, and still does, a genetic code." It is interesting that Dugić's referring to

Serbian genetic background, supposedly preserved by the Serbian folk flute, ends in an observation that the said background is under threat, that somebody is hell-bent on altering it. "It's quite another thing", he says, "that that our genetic makeup and our state of mind are are being steered in another direction, or perhaps, being erased, because, being our genetic asset, the sound of "frula" will never be completely deleted from our brains." This is a fine example of a rhetorical "fake", I have also encountered on earlier occasions, which consists of representing the discourse of the ruling order of symbolic meaning as a manner of resisting some other symbolic constellation, threatening us, allegedly, with subjugation and domination.

In the interview I am reading in the online edition of the newspaper Blic News (Snežana Milošević, "The Best 'Frula' Hasn't Been Made Yet", May 15, 2002) Bora Dugić was given an opportunity to narrate his childhood and school days, to discuss his role-models, his musical and other ideas and convictions, his successes. It was during the nineties that he achieved his greatest success, and received his most important official awards: The October Prize of Kragujevac and The Golden Badge of the Culture and Education Union of Serbia in 1995, The Vuk Karadžić Prize in 1997. Professor Azanjac ranked him as "the golden 'frula' of the Serbian Balkans". He begins the story of his life philosophically: "Life actually boils down to understanding life." He goes on to underline the fact that he was born "within two kilometers of the birthplace of the great Karađorđe, and that he came into the world "out of spite". He accompanies it by yet another philosophico-anthropological observation: "Spite is one of the significant elements of the mental makeup of a Serb, or more specifically, - a Serb from Šumadija."

At his point, Bora Dugić boasts of his peasant background and his pious grandfather: "I proudly stress the fact that I was the child of Serbian peasants... My grandfather thought that nothing could be either begun or finished without God. I inherited this philosophy of his... In our bedroom, right above the bed, there hung three icons, two representing Jesus Christ, and one the Archangel Michael, our patron-saint. Those three images played an important part in shaping my personality... I remember how my grandpa would put on his Sunday's best the day before Christmas, and take me by the hand into the woods, where we would cut a Christmas log. That used to be a genuine pilgrimage."

While doing his variations on the theme of the Serbian folk flute as an expression of Serbian mentality, Dugić introduced the motif of a contrast existing between Serbian History and Serbian spirituality: "I was given a 'frula' to speak through it as a Serbian child. All that I was carrying inside me, all those pastures, acacia groves, fields of wheat or clover, I continue to carry within me to this day. Not only the rolling hills of Šumadija, but the rest of this, historically unfortunate, but spiritually very fortunate country, called Serbia, is woven into my innermost being." Equally new is the motif of calling, mission: "The Serbian folk flute belongs to Serbia, and I must put it in its right, Serbian place. It is an order given to me, a mission I must accomplish." In the end, he mentions the honor of having once had – together with one of his pupils – an opportunity to play "the flutes that once belonged to the great Serbian Orthodox bishop, Nikolaj Velimirović." "The flutes", Dugić recalls, "were on display in Lalić, in the museum of bishop Nikolaj, and I am very happy to have played them. Milinko and I were given five flutes to try,

but, due to their age, they were practically unuseable. With the blessing of Father Jovan of Ravanica monastery, I made some minor adjustments to the instruments, so my pupil and I could play them."

The Serbian folk flute is a symbol of Serbian national identity, as well as its refuge. Accepting alien musical influences, such as Turkish, for instance, puts that identity under a question mark, and can even cause it to vanish. The following reflection by Bora Dugić was recorded by the Kragujevac paper, *Nezavisna svetlost* (The Independent Light), in an online edition of December 15, 2001: "If you brought some Englishman to one of our flea-markets, so he could hear the music blasting away out of loud speakers there, and then asked him to guess, from what he were hearing, placing a bet on it, what country he's in, he wouldn't deliberate too long before saying – in Turkey! The Englishman would only lose his bet, but we have lost our identity."

Bora Dugić shows once more himself to be a passionate defender of the Serbian national identity in an interview I came across on the web site of an internet magazine "Pogled" (View), on the address: [www.pazova.net](http://www.pazova.net) (Boba Bojović, "Bora Dugić, a Defender of Serbian Folk Music", April 10, 2002). Here, his erudition reaches as far as Milorad Pavić and his Hazars, who (didn't you know it?) were Serbs: "If we were ashamed of our peasant roots," says Dugić here, "we couldn't talk about tradition. Nevertheless, we seem to be ashamed of them, because we are so eager to adopt everything foreign. Hospitality is when you give food and drink to someone foreign, but adopting his language and culture as your own is an act of a loser. I am as ready as ever to fight, with this "piece of wood" as my weapon, for the survival of our music. I'm afraid that

Milorad Pavić has anticipated, in his "Hazar Dictionary", the destiny of the Serbian people, sensing that, due to our deficit of collective awareness, we would vanish from history just as the Hazars did."



Picture 3. Bora Dugić

I am taking from this website a photograph of Bora Dugić, which differs from most of his pictures by a rather unusual attire the king of Serbian folk flute is wearing in it. It was, no doubt, custom made for him, and by its wide shirt sleeves, pleated around the wrists, reminds one mostly of what is worn the heroes of the movies depicting the exploits of the three musketeers. So costumed, Bora Dugić is standing in the middle of a rowboat, navigating about some greenish body of water, near a steep rocky shore, and there is no telling whether it is a sea, a lake, or a

river. His gaze is directed toward the sky, and a lock of hair on his forehead is suggestive of a little bit of breeze to boot.

Bora Dugić's zeal in defending the national identity of the Serbs by means of their authentically national music and its authentically national instrument – the "frula", is directly contradicted by what he says in an interview I've come across in the online edition of the newspaper "Glas Javnosti" (The Voice of the Public) (Ivana Semerad, "The Sound That Is In The Genes of Serbia", February 27, 2002), when he explains why he relies on the music "of the nationalities surrounding us". It doesn't matter to him, he says, "if it is Macedonian, Bulgarian, or Serbian music". Quite unexpected from someone deriving authentic music from a national genetic code, there emerges here a concept of a worthwhile music which, in fact, would be an admixture of diverse kinds of music, rather than a pure national sound. That "Balkan blend", Dugić says, "provides a fantastic wealth of folklore". Moreover, he now claims that the Serbian folk flute and Serbian music in general are all too simplistic, uninteresting to foreign audiences, which is why he now has to turn to other nations' music: "Because, to be frank, Serbian music, or more precisely, the music of Šumadija along Morava river is pretty simple, and as such, it can hardly be competitive anywhere but on its own home court."

August 30, 2003

At the portal of Projekat Rastko (Rastko Project) (The Internet Library of Serbian Culture) I am finding a website featuring a review of the audio-cassette *Prizivanja* (Invocations), with music by "the Serbian player of folk instruments" Darko Macura. The producer of the cassette

bears the evocative name "Biljeg"(Marker), and his name is followed by a brief designation of the area of his activity: Balkan and Slavic publishing. The reviewer is Sanja Radinović, MA in musicology. She informs me that Macura was born in 1952, in the vicinity of Obrovac, Krajina, "where he spent most of his childhood and had his first contact with the Serbian instrumental sound." He plays "several diverse types of folk instruments (žir, šupeljka, kaval, cevara, frula, okarina, rog, dvojnica, šurle, diple, gajde, diaulos, sopila, tambura, gusle). Some of those instruments he revamps, adjusts, adding new keys to them. Also – the reviewer tells us – his work is not to be reduced to copying accurately and reviving folk melodies, but includes creating his own as well." Macura achieved his greatest success at the First Festival of the Oral Musical Tradition of the Peoples of the East (from the Magreb To Japan), held in June of 1993, in Athens, where, in the words of S. Radinović, "he performed alongside the greatest names of the world ethno scene." The tone of the review elevates itself, toward the end, to a solemn glorification of the primordial: "In this age of dumbed down musical culture in Serbia, there remains only the hope that there are still people alert enough to hear the message of Darko Macura: that truly perfects us only that which has the power to lead us to incorruptible values of the primordial." This is a handsome example of crystalization of signs of a Conventional Knowledge speak reigning over the symbolic order in Serbia: "alert", "truly", "incorruptible", "primordial". I suppose that "incorruptible" came along with the church rhetoric, which – during the last decade - has been spilling over into the sphere of public discourse. The titles of Macura's musical numbers, listed along with this review, are stimulating as well, among

them : "Far away and yonder", "Hey, Thee, Morava River", but most are Macura's original compositions, such as: "Around the Balkans", "Playing for Salvation", "With Prayer", "Invocations", "Dance of a Serf".

Macura is a trained musician, a graduate of a junior college of music, where he had majored in clarinette. However, the pictures, published along with this review, show him dressed in a folk cosume (probably indigenous to Krajina), in which stand out a shirt with wide embroidered sleeves, some kind of a vest, a wide waistband, and especially a tasselled cap on his head. The face of the young singer is complemented by a thick moustache. One photograph was taken outddoors, in what looks like a vineyard, while the setting for the other one is a monastery, right in front of wall with fresco paintings. The oneness of people, village, and church is clearly emphasized here. But, Macura has a particular reason for posing in a monastery, in front of frescoes. He has made one of his dual flutes, following the design of an instrument (diaulos), that can be seen in a number of medieval freso paintings.

This bit of information I am finding at another location, on Guarnerius web site (Guarnerius Biografije)<sup>3</sup> Macura is introduced there together with the folk singer Svetlana Stević, with whom he sometimes collaborates. Svetlana was born in Homolje. The anonymous author

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<sup>3</sup> Roksanda Pejović claims in her book *predstave Muzičkih Instrumenata u Srednjevekovnoj Srbiji* (Depictions of Musical Instruments in Medieval Serbia) (Beelgrade, 1984, pp.132) that the double flute can be seen only on the fresco painting "The Birth of Christ" in Gradac Monastery. But this double flute is not identical to the ancient Greek diaulos. – Note : 2005.



from this web site writes that she „carries on, in a profoundly authentic manner, the Serbian tradition whose roots reach back to the oldest layers of human civilisation and culture." Svetlana Stević herself uses one of the key words of the etho music narrative: "authentic", and repeats one of that narrative's commonplaces: that everything genuine, worthwhile, and true within us comes from where we were born.



Picture 4. Macura in a monastery



Picture 5. Macura outdoors

"I learned by listening and repeating", Svetlana recounts, "by the 'mouth-to-ear' method, whose purpose is to preserve, as faithfully as possible, the authenticity of each and every, even the faintest sound, which was something my teachers insisted on... If we learn a song from our place of birth, then we carry within us the entire

range of possible sounds and the tradition in which we were born, and that is an everlasting source of inspiration for a person."

I am finding Svetlana Stević, dressed in a folk costume (from Homolje?), on the web site of Grad Teatar Budva (City - a theatre stage Budva), on a page devoted to the Fifteenth Festival of the Theatre City (2001). It says there that she grants no interviews, makes no public appearances, and, most interestingly, pays no attention to the current trend of re-discovering ethno sound." Nevertheless, the author of this presentation speaks of her singing as if it were perfectly in line with this "trend": "Seeking the authentic folk poetry and folk music sounds", it says there further, "Svetlana Stević represents the pure state of a tradition, almost destroyed by the aggressiveness of contemporary pop culture whose commercialism reduces even the loftiest values to money. She is, therefore, 'the voice of Homolje', the unspoiled sound of a world, which still exists against all odds, resplendent, and bringing out the archetypal, the primeval, 'preaching and singing' the folk art of Serbia as a "mystery of Heaven and Earth".

In the same place, there is a testimony Of Svetlana's namesake and fellow-singer Svetlana Spajić, on the influence exerted upon her by the music of Svetlana Stević and Darko Macura. Thanks to that music, she says, "I have realized that we don't know who we are, from whom we descend. I have have experienced singing as an opportunity to get to know our ancestors intimately, to experience for a moment their everyday life. To discover what we are to them, and what they are to us today. A complete parallel world revealed itself to me, and before it I felt veneration and responsibility."

September 2, 2003

Interested in Svetlana Spajić, I am soliciting from Google web sites having anything to say about her. Out of the total offer, I choose the pages of Svetigora Radio (Holy Mount Radio), the radio station of Montenegro Archdiocese. I am proud to report a headline from the home page of this website, stating that the Archdiocese and its head, Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović don't shun modern means of communication, and are not intimidated even by the word "global". Nevertheless, the page, just for the sake of measure and proportion, displays a logo, a drawing of an antenna with concentric radio-waves (The Famous Tesla Tower erected in Shoreham, Long Island, 1901) ... with the slogan: "Where sound becomes the Word."



Picture 5. The logo of Svetigora Radio

At this address, I find a detailed review of the album *Living Water. Serbian traditional singing*. These are folk songs performed by the Drina duo, featuring Svetlana Spajić and Minja Nikolić. The producer of *Living Water* is Svetigora Radio, and the year of publication is 2000. The review begins with an introductory statement by the *jeromonah* (a monk who can perform church rites) Jovan Ćulibrk, entitled "The Murmur of Heavenly Fatherhood", and is situated in space and time in the following way:

"The Patriarchate of Peć, Holy Monday, in the year of the Lord 2000." It is a sort of religio-political prose poem about a murmuring water spring, probably inspired by the album title. The hero of this creation by Father Ćulibrk is St. Ignatius The-God-Bearer, a Christian from Antioch, a martyr, thrown to the lions at the Roman Coliseum. Apparently, it was the Serbian blood that ran through his veins. For, if Father Ćulibrk is to be believed, Serbia itself already existed in those days. What is more, Rome soaked the borders of its empire in Serbian blood then, just the same as it still does today. All this is said in preparation for the final conclusion of the piece that this Serbian blood spilled at the Coliseum, and subsequently around the borders of the empire, is now murmuring in the music of the group "Drina". I am trying to relate and interpret Ćulibrk's writing as accurately as possible, but I am realizing it may not work. So, in order to ward off any suspicion that I may be making a malicious caricature of Ćulibrk, I will quote his piece in its entirety:

„And whosoever drinketh of the water that I shalt give onto him, shalt thirst no more for ever an ever, for the water I shalt give onto him shalt be in him a spring of water flowing into life everlasting (John, IV, 14). Led from Antioch to Rome, and before crossing Serbia, St. Ignatius The-God-Bearer, imploring the Church not to stop him from facing the lions, reveals to us at once the true essence of this water, promised to the Samaritan Fotina: 'I have crucified my own Eros for Crist's sake and the spring murmurs within me: 'Back to the Father!' The Christ – murmur and melody, 'a perfect icon' that streams out of the all-fertile Silence of 'the perfect Father'. the Christ's name, etched in his heart, it was all that remained of St Ignatius at the Coliseum; the Serbian blood with which

the same empire waters its imagined outer perimeter, murmurs in 'Drina' with the same voice. Hieromonk Jovan (Ćulibrk), Peć Patriarchate, Holy Monday, in the year of the Lord 2000." Here is what the last paragraph of this text looks like in the website's English version, whose very existence shows clearly that the Archdiocese of Cetinje is also addressing itself to those souls lost in the vast realm of Anglophony: *"Christ's name engraved on the heart was all that left from St. Ignatius in Colosseum; serbian blood with which the same kingdom waters its imagined limes, purls in 'Drina' with the same voice. Hieromonk Jovan (Ćulibrk), Pech Patriarchate, Holy Monday, in the year of the Lord 2000."*

The presentation of the album "Living Water" also includes the lyrics of all twenty songs it contains, with somewhat intriguing designation of their geographic provenance. Thus, for example, the song „Soko pije voda na Vardarot" (A falcon is drinking water out of the Vardar river) is labelled as „Macedonian", while another song with a title in the Macedonian language as well: "Se navali Šarplanina" (.....) is defined as an "ancient shepherds' song from Old Serbia." The origin of many of these songs is confined to individual villages of Southeastern or Eastern Serbia: Vukmanovo, Lasovo, Vidrovac, Seselac, Milatovac, or to villages of a region called the Serbian Drina area, Eastern Bosnia, Bosnian Drina area, Bosnian Krajina (frontier land), Knin Krajina. Gračanica monastery is cited as the place of origin of two of the songs. The assorted songs are of the "old folk song" variety, subdivided here into "shepherds'" or "kantalice", harvesters'", "Easter songs", "old wedding songs", "plowmen's", "songs sung while dancing". The last one, "Hey thee, the churning Drina river", stands apart, labeled "traditional – Drina, oy–oy singing fom Knin

Krajina." The song is, no doubt, of a newer date, since it speaks of the current political situation in Bosnia:

*Hey thee, the churning Drina river,  
Be no divide across my nation.  
O, don't thee, Drina, brothers separate,  
We implore thee as a child its mother implores.  
Oh, let faith join us together for ages,  
Let your waters separate us not.*

I am coming across a fact, which in this case confirms my hypothesis that ethno music gained momentum in Serbia already at the beginning of the nineties, and that it is a product of a "Zeitgeist", or, as one might prefer to say these days, of a "discourse of the times" peculiar to Milošević's Serbia: "Svetlana Spajić has been involved with traditional vocal music since 1993." The statements made by the songstress herself, and reported here from the periodical *Pro Musica*, demonstrate that she is – just as is the case with the majority of performers and authors of this kind of music – an educated person, at ease with musicological and general theoretical discussion of music, culture, and society. Her conception of tradition as an "organic re-creation of that which is handed down to one, and is to be handed further down." The word "organic" gains additional clarity of meaning when one reads the following sentence, speaking of the unity of Serbian music, which, in Svetlana Spajić's opinion, "just as in the case of every other nation, represents a well-rounded, complete form which has its own rules and patterns. If you succeed in mastering the patterns of that system, you stand a chance to transform yourself from a simply replicating artist into a traditional one, becoming thereby a link in a long chain of artistic creation."

And yet, Svetlana Spajić does not overlook a difficulty confronting the idea of organic unity, due to the diversity of folk music traditions of different "Serbian lands", and she accepts the possibility that her group "may not be singing all songs from all areas equally well". In spite of that, and at the cost of quality fluctuations – which means that the full measure of authenticity and organic connectedness with the heritage may not always be attained – "broadening our scope so as to include all Serbian lands" remains a goal. Nor does she overlook the problem which, from the point of view of organic oneness of a singer with his or her native musical tradition, arises from broadening his or her repertoire so as to include numbers taken from other national traditions. She finds a solution in regarding this part of her repertoire as an opportunity to perfect her vocal technique, as well as to define better the dividing line between what is ours and what is alien: "Singing Bugarian or Greek songs helps me develop further my vocal technique and sharpens my sense of that which makes our songs ours."

This songstress too is firmly opposed to the term "ethno", for she sees in it an attempt by the West to turn the entire wealth of the world's folk music into something exotic. Today, the traditional music is", she says, "very popular throughout the world, particularly in the West, but the problem lies in the fact that the West treats everything that is traditional culture of non western peoples as some kind of simple-minded exotics, reducing, for example, all of us in the Balkans, all these high civilizations with their centuries-old heritage, religion and culture to a simplistic, trendy label: *ethno*. We must be victorious in our struggle for never allowing our Kosovo melodies or our epic ballads to become *ethno*." This is why she probably wasn't pleased

with being called "ethno star Spajić", on Belef web site (in an article posted on July 18, 2003).

September 4, 2003

The group Moba<sup>4</sup> is to be found on the web site of the Agricultural Internet Review also called "Moba". In its "Culture" section, this online publication has reprinted an article by M. Ognjenović, published in Politika on January 5, 2000, under the title "Prolonging life of songs". I am learning from it that the members of this female vocal group are "ethno musicologists, ethnologists, one is a French and another a Spanish teacher, and one is a student at a teachers' college." Does this group belong at all in the category of ethno music? That term doesn't appear even in Ognjenović's article. Moba, he says, performs "Serbian rural traditional and ritual songs." While doing it, the group is striving to "perform these songs in strictest possible accordance with their traditional form", for which purpose it uses field recordings or transcriptions of villagers' singing. Their objective, the author of the article goes on to say, is to "restore and somehow revive", those songs which are less and less frequently sung, "or, at least, to prolong their life." I am noticing that the „tradition reviving" strategy used by Moba is different from that used by others, for example, by Svetlana Spajić, who maintains that tradition can only be preserved and passed on by a personalized treatment of the heritage, and not by mere replication of it.

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<sup>4</sup> Moba is the Serbian name for an old custom among Serbian peasants, which consists of everybody in a village helping out with every fellow-villager's harvest – mass harvest



I am finding in Ognjenovic's article a new example of the rethorical subterfuge consisting of representing that which is prominent and widely accepted as something not yet recognized, if not outright endangered by possible rejection. Of Moba's work he says that it is "music we do not get to hear very often". While it is true that this group is different from the others, it nevertheless belongs – by its chosen name, by its founding principles, and by artistic goals it has set up for itself – in what has become during the nineties (Moba was founded in 1993) the mainstream of Serbian musical and cultural life in general. Among the tasks the members of this ensemble have assigned to themselves is, according to the author of this article, making a contribution to restoring the Serbian national unity: "One of the reasons why this ensemble bears the name it does – its members stress – is the desire to remind the world, by the very presence of this folk expression in these times of total Serbian disunity, of the existence of a fine custom among our people. It implies harmony among people and awareness of an essential interconnectedness on which depends the survival of the entire community."

Quite a few facts about Moba can be found on the web site of Jugokonzert (Yugoconcert), from which I am borrowing a photograph which stands in sharp contrast with any photographs of ethno musicians I have ever seen, because its message is roughly this: we are ordinary young urban women and girls, and we see no reason why we should put on folk costumes in order to be credible performers of Serbian folk music.

On this website, an unsigned text entitled "Biography" speaks at length of Moba members' own understanding of the cultural and national role they play. They have – it says – received, each in her own way, "the message of centuries-

long experience and musical creation of their ancestors", which is concentrated in folk music, and they are now "striving to to communicate and by so doing pass it on to more people ready to hear and adopt it." In essence, it is a message of love and togetherness, as the very name of this group suggests.



Picture 6. Moba.

On the same website i am finding information on this group's success, its many concerts at home and abroad, which contradicts the commonplace of ethno music discourse in Serbia, which I found in M. Ognjenović's article, and according to which ethno music would be a rare and neglected, as it were, kind of music. Here it says: "The group began its work in Belgrade, in the spring of 1993. Since that time, it has given numerous concert

performances in Belgrade and other places across Serbia, as well as in Greece, Macedonia, Slovenia, Republic Srpska, France and Lithuania... The ensemble has given several remarkable performances at Belgrade Music Celebration festival (BEMUS: Beogradske muzičke svečanosti), as well as within the "Visionary Belgrade" and "Kalemegdan Twilight" cycle, then at the art gallery of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, at the Ethnological Museum, and also in other Serbian cities and towns (Vršac, Požarevac, Zrenjanin, Arilje, Novi Sad, Bačka Topola, Subotica)." This article also quotes the opinion of Jelana Jovanović, a Moba member, that the old country music the ensemble performs no longer has country audience. Its audience is only in the city, where this music fulfills a new social and psychological function: its effect is sobering and social cohesion enhancing: "The young people in villages are not interested in perpetuating traditional singing. As a result, the Serbian songs are gradually migrating into cities, where they are - it seems to me at least - having a cathartic and a sobering effect, and where they also bring people closer together."

September 6, 2003

I am returning to Balkanmedia to hit a number of links under the heading of Ethno with reports on individual musicians placed in this category of music. The first page appearing on the screen showcases Lubiša Stojanović, alias Louis. I had encountered that name on earlier occasions, before the emergence of ethno music. Here, Louis is introduced as an "authentic performer of ethno music in our land." He is placed in that category by the

very title of the article: "Ethno joins together emotion and native soil of a nation." (Slobodan Vlajić, June 27, 2002).

Reminiscing about his greatest successes, Louis particularly emphasizes his performance in Dubrovnik in 1984: "The welcome was magnificent. At the gates of the old city there was a huge sign reading: 'Welcome, Louis'". Those memories prompt him to express his ideas about ethno music: "If you do ethno music of one region, it is essential that it be appreciated and well received in other regions. It is there that ethno music has its real purpose, ethno does not have its full range of meaning if it is heard only where it was born." This is an important testimony in support of the thesis that ethno music is music for the Other.



Picture 7. Louis in Australia.

Between 1981 and 2002, Louis had published ten albums, two of which in English. He successfully toured

foreign countries, including Japan and Australia. One of the photos published as illustrations for this article shows Louis visiting a zoo somewhere in Australia.

In this article, Louis is not introduced as being himself a Roma (Gipsy), but the author speaks of his "remaining faithful to gipsy music." "It is the music", he says, "brought here by, perhaps, the most adaptable people – the Roma. Their temperament is unsurpassable, inspiring, and they always bring, through their music, authenticity to any location they happen to come upon. At their weddings there is outpouring of emotion that is present nowhere else in the same degree." There can be no doubt that Louis' marketing strategy is relies considerably on exploiting positive stereotypes about Roma, which most often boil down to their allegedly unsurpassed musical prowess. This is also confirmed by one of this singer's promotional portraits, showing in its background a young Roma woman carried away by her dancing. For me personally, the most interesting part of Louis' use of the myth of Gipsy temperament and music, is the notion that the Gipsy music lends authenticity to any place where Gypsies happen to live. If you are intent on hearing the authentic sound of your own area, check out the local Gypsies! I do not wish to attribute to Louis something he, perhaps, never had in mind, but let it be said for the record that he did lure me slightly into viewing authenticity as something that "others" create for us.

An article on Sanja Ilić - a musician with a diploma in architecture, founder and leader of the ensemble Balkanika – relates this artist to ethno in its very title: "Reports colored by ethno sound" (Dijana Maksimović, January 29, 2003). It is a reference to video recordings this musician makes while touring abroad. Regarding

international exposure, he is right up there with Louis and other ethno singers. The article mentions that he has performed in Slovenia, but also in Mexico and China. With his music, he takes to far away people the music of the Balkans, and with his video camera he wishes to bring to our own audience "a foreign country, its people, customs, archirecture, scenery..."



Picture 8. Sanja Ilić and Balkanika

Nevertheless, Sanja Ilić is partial to the success of numbers from his album "Balkan 2000" with domestic audiences. He points out that the band performed in various settings, including even a meadow, and that the audiences always responded very emotionally. It remains unclear, understated, what in Ilić's compositions elicits those emotions the most, even though, judging by some of the titles ("Chilandar", for instance), it would not be far fetched to suppose that they are of the national-romantic kind: "We have given concerts outdoors, on public squares,

in ampitheatres, on improvised podiums, and on meadows. The audiences received us wonderfully and enjoyed with a great deal of emotion numbers such as 'Kermis', 'Theodora', 'Tashana', 'Hellen', 'Anathema', 'Chilandar'..."

Ilic believes that the Balkans are a place where religious and popular culture, that is, Byzantine – Orthodox and folk musical traditions, are joined together in blissful harmony. He first became interested, he says, in "church incantations", which lead to his composition „Chilandar". Subsequently, he realized that in the Balkans the sacred and the secular are naturally linked together, so he intertwined them smoothly and naturally in his own music. I am intrigued by Ilić's testimony, in an interview he gave to Radio Free Europe, concerning all the preparations that preceded the creation of the numbers that make up the album "Balkan 2000": "First, I listened to quite a few ethno audio-notes at the Radio Belgrade archive, some church chants, intent on making exclusively sacred music indigenous to this region. It was then that the composition "Chilandar" came about. Then I met some young people who play various instruments: bagpipe, various horns...and so forth. They inspired me to broaden my scope, to combine the spiritual I wanted to express with something worldly. Well, after one whole year of reading various books on the Balkans, on Byzantium, on the "Byzantine commonwealth", an idea crystalized itself in my mind of what I should be doing, and it ultimately bore the fruit that is 'Balkan 2000'." (Brano Likić, "S. Ilić: Our concerts are rock'n roll bashes with a Balkan sound", Radio Free Europe, online ed., November 26, 2002).

Interesting also is the fact that, after his concerts, listeners come up to him to chat about the songs, but also about the band's instruments. So far, closer examination of

an instrument by the audience has only been observed only at gusle concerts. "It happened at times", recounts Sanja Ilić, " that, after we were done playing, members of the audience would come to us to chat about our songs, but also about the instruments we had played." On one of the photographs accompanying this article, one can see two unusual tamburitza-like instruments, but one can also notice that the players holding them do not wear anything remotely in keeping with instruments of that sort. However, in the background of the picture, there can be seen a few exotically dressed members of the band, among them a woman with some kind of white turban on her head.

I am coming across the very same photograph on Sanja Ilić's official web site ([www.sanjailic.yuonline.net](http://www.sanjailic.yuonline.net)) which has both Serbian and English versions, among photographs taken during the filming of "The Balkan Island", a show on TV Belgrade, aired January 9, 2000. The show was a TV adaptation of Ilić's CD "Balkan 2000", the later being described here as "an ethno-pop musical, created in a musical idiom inspired by both the spiritual and the secular music of The Balkans, by the melodic pool, the harmony, and the instruments of this region of ours." The sound of those instruments is "contemporary" thanks to an enhancement by "digital musical technology", its being contemporary is not an obstacle though – but may even be an encouragement – to the experience of re-living distant past, or as it is said here "a time that is far behind us", which is, no doubt, one of Ilić's chief objectives. Music can take us back into the past thanks to its ability to bring back to life that which the past and the present have in common, and that is the timeless spirit, the immutable "atmosphere" of a given region, for instance, The Balkans. In order for that to come to fruition, the timeless spirit must find its temporal



embodiment, must put on "contemporary garb". As Ilić puts it, "the old Balkan melodies...conjure up the spirit and the atmosphere of this part of the world while wearing new clothes for the new millenium".

When he says such things, Sanja Ilić's point of departure is the conviction that the distinctions between various Balkan nationalities do not cast any doubt upon their "spiritual" connectedness. "Using music, I wanted to bring out the idea that in spite of all those fateful spiritual differences among us, there is a lot, in the Balkans, that connects us together." Apparently, this connectedness, interrelatedness of Balkan peoples can be explained as a result of relative isolation of the Balkans, since Ilić claims that "in spite of all the influences to which this region has been exposed, it has remained an intact island with a very rich folklore, which makes a great source of inspiration for a composer." Thus, the traditional Balkan music is, in this musician's opinion, autochtonous and crossbread at the same time, but the later only within the he regional boundaries only, amongst us. This raises the question whether music which tends to express the spirit, the atmosphere, the character, the identity of an entire region inhabited by various nationalities, can be called ethno music. One should rather speak here of regional interethnic music.

On a Belgian website [www.ptb.be](http://www.ptb.be), I am reading an article by Antoine Hermant, entitled "The Group Balkanika Wants to Export its Music" (*Le groupe Balkanika veut exporter sa musique*), posted April 3, 2002. It quotes an interesting statement made By Ilić as to what he wishes to accomplish with his music. It is interesting because it mentions a goal political in nature. He wishes - one can read there - to assist "in the creation of an opportunity to build a new Balkan home, a home made out of differences

understood as a source of common strength, of an opportunity to build into that home all of the creative energy of the Eastern and the Western art, in order to achieve peace and prosperity."

The strongest compliment to Sanja Ilić, which I am finding on [www.pgp-rts.co.yu](http://www.pgp-rts.co.yu), was made by a drummer and a composer Dragoljub Đuričić at the promotion of "The Island Called The Balkans" project, on February 24, 2000. "What Vuk Karadžić and Dositej Obradović had done for Serbian literature and for the preservation of Serbian cultural treasures", Đuričić stated, " Sanja Ilić has done for Serbian music... by refining ethno musical motifs and by contemporary production methods, he has brought this music closer to Europe". Guessing correctly how Pavle Aksentijević would comment on this praise is not much of a challenge.

September 8, 2003

I am finding another confirmation of Serbian ethno groups' devotion to The Balkans and to Balkan identity in an interview, posted in the "Ethno" section of The website [Balkanmedia](http://Balkanmedia.com), under the title "Svet se okrenuo u mom pravcu" (The world is looking my way), (Miloš Ristić, November 8, 2002). The interviewee's name is Slobodan Trkulja. He is introduced as a young musician who has been a part of "the expansion of ethno music". The Balkans have provided the inspiration for the name of his group [Balkanopolis](http://Balkanopolis.com), founded in 1998, as well as for the title of the group's first CD – "Let iznad Balkana"(Flying over the Balkans). He too, just as Darko Macura does, plays various wind instruments, including saxophone and clarinette, but

also two types of folk double flute such as *diple* and *dvojnice*, *kavalo* (...), and *okarina* (ocarina). He has connected with other ethno musicians in Serbia through the Department of Ethno Musicology at Belgrade Conservatory.

Trkulja, the interviewer says, has distinguished himself at a charity concert, given on September 15, 2002 at "Sava" Center, under the title "Kuća na putu" (a house in the middle of the road), where he stole the show from other, older and better known participants. It was "a stunning experience even for those who never listen to ethno music, because the very ancient sounds of Trkulja's arrangements simply carry you away."

Googling websites containg references to this concert, I stumble upon the announcement of it in the online edition of the Belgrade daily "Blic" (Blitz), ([www.blic.co.zu](http://www.blic.co.zu)), thus learning that the the concert had been organized by the Orthodox Pastoral & Advisory Center of Belgrade & Sremski Karlovci Archdiocese, and had taken place under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Rpublic of Serbia. The moto of the concert had been "Faith, Hope, Love", and it had received the blessing of the head of The Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Pavle (Paul). The list of performers having taken part in it is significant: The Frst Belgrade Song Society, Bilja Krstić and Bistrik, Kornelije Kovač, Danijela and Danica Karić, Bora Đorđević. Jasmina Mitrušević, Moba, Točak (The Wheel), Teofilović Brothers, and Slobodan Trkulja. It is apparent that representatives of ethno music make up the larger portion of this billing. I will have to check if Točak and Jasmina Mitrušević may be a part of it as well. It is quite interesting that this whole business is linked to the Karić (5) family. As far as Serbian Orthodox Church is concerned, there is no doubt that it has been one of the

major institutional buttresses of this musical trend in Serbia, even if in the proces it had to contend with some resistance from those who think that ethno music harbors the danger of watering down our ethnic essence and giving in to the West. The "house in the middle of the road" topic is captivating as well, serving here as a part of a metaphor for Serbia defending itself by faith, hope, and love from dangers stalking at something that was built on as inconvenient a spot as a road.

Actally, even before Belgrade and this concert, Trkulja had achieved great success in Holland, where he lives. He boasts of having played "in the most presigious concert auditorium, *Concertgebouw*, at a New Year's concert, televized live to ten million people." That earned me "my place at the top of the Dutch music scene." When asked by the interviewer how it is possible that a student of Amsterdam Jazz Conservatory (Jazz Coservatorium van Amsterdam) like himself end up in the "ethno mode", Trkulja replies that "the style of music is not a standard"by which a musician can be classified, that music is something "very personal and intimate", and being so, "is not subject to any sort of classification." But as the interviewer remains unswayed: "Ethno has come on top nevertheless...", Trkulja will accomodate him by expounding his own views on ethno music: "One of the characteristics of ethno music is the fact that the feel of an ethno song is so recognizable that one need not know its language to be able to understand it. This music communicates at the emotional level, in some divine proto-language, comprehensible to every human being. That is why it is so appreciated. People in Holland, France, Germany, and many other countries have experienced similarly the songs I sang and played for

them." Nothing terribly new here. Just another definition of music as a universal language. But can that definition fit the kind of music whose very name suggests relativity, something that came into being in the specific context of a particular culture? Besides, Trkulja is talking about the fact that Balkan music in his interpretation elicited the same experience in diverse foreign audiences, wherever he had performed, but we do not know for sure whether it applies to domestic audience, or could it be that the domestic audience finds something different in that music? Could it just happen that the domestic audience can best appreciate and understand ethno music of its native soil when listening to it with foreign ears, the ears to which that music is destined in the first place?

In its „Ethno" section, Balkanmedia further introduces the clarinettist Ognjen Popović, founder(1998) of the group Ognjen i Prijatelji (Ognjen and Friends), ("Bunt, vapaj i radost življenja", J.D. June 26, 2003/ Engl.: Rebellion, crying out, and the joy of living). Ognjen and Friends are featured in the album Serbia Sounds Global 2 (produced by B92), considered by the author of Balkanmedia article to be the "the most successful domestic ethno compilation". In his words, we have here "exceptionally talented musicians who, in their search of authentic music of the Balkans, have attained a very high level of excellence, and have succeeded in creating a specific vision imbued with all that is peculiar to these parts: rebellion, yearning, crying out, unrestrained temperament, and the joy of living." "These parts", "these lands" "the island called the Balkans", all these are just ways to situate the Balkans, without bringing up the subject of strictly geographic boundaries.

September 9, 2003

According to Balkanmedia, ethno music is a home to a music teacher and a songstress Ljiljana Rančić, alias Madam Piano, and to the group Teodulija, whose name may well have been chosen by some follower of Nikolaj Velimirović, the author of the book "Srpski narod kao Teodul" (the Serbs as a God-loving nation). An article entitled "Etno u srcu"-ethno at heart (Draško Aćimović, January 8, 2003) accompanied the release of the album "Priče iz davnina" (stories of times ancient), which had been produced with a grant from the Karić Foundation, and found itself on all "ethno top lists". Madam Piano herself sees an even greater success for herself in the fact that the song "Eternal Love", she performed in a duet with Franco Mazzi, "was first on top lists even in Brazil". She characterizes herself as a hard core "jazz and rock type", but admits that ethno music has "gotten under her skin". She considers her precursors to be the likes of Sanja Ilić, Bilja Krstić, and Neša Galija. Thanks to ethno music, and "in spite of so much bad music and lyrics, I believe that those who cherish true musical values can now breathe a sigh of relief." I understand this as an allusion to the so called "newly composed" or "turbo folk" music. It is loved by the common people, but despised by those more sophisticated, who have, finally, found a decent, "cultured", quality alternative to it in the form of ethno music, so that those fine people can now breathe "a sigh of relief", and enjoy their people's music without having to mingle with riffraff.

Balkanmedia also places under the "Ethno" heading the group "Orthodox Celts", which was founded in 1992, and has been creating a brand of music resting upon the foundation of "Irish folk music". It is remarkable that, as

Aleksandar Petrović – known as Aca Celtic – candidly admits, the members of this group have never been to Ireland. The interviewer (Đorđe Tomić, "Napredan irski folk" – progressive Irish folk music, July 4, 2002) asks: "Are there any similarities between the Irish and our people?" Aca Celtic's answer: "We have light brown and black hair, like the Irish. It is a myth that they are all freckled redheads. The Irish are identical to us: an Irishman works when he has to, he loves boozing, carousing. Both nationalities are in the "let us get drunk now" mode. An Irishman told me at a seaside resort: "we are identical. We love to eat, drink, and score three goals on the opponent's home court. That is correct." Actually, it just occurred to me, if we are so much the same as the Irish, why would we go to Ireland at all. Aca Celtic has been right on the mark not going there.

What is mainframe? My lack of familiarity with techniques and technological means of traveling the Internet is catching up with me. The way I am moving along should be called walking rather than riding, "surfing", that is, if the later means fast "skiing" on wave crests. Should I change wagons, and learn how to drive something faster, or fight for one's right to travel the internet in a one-horse wagon? This rumination on wagons and the Internet reminds me that I should, indeed, find out more about Točak (the Wheel) - a musician listed among the participants of that concert at the "Sava" Center, where Slobodan Trkulja's star shone so brightly. I discovered that it is the nickname of the rock n'roll gitar player, Radomir Mihajlović. I am finding him instantly, under my fingertips, as it were - him too on Balkanmedia - (in an article posted on September 14, 2001). It is not evident that he has much to do with the ethno direction in rock music. He seems to be following

his own path, bypassing fashionable and commercial trends. He feels an aversion toward Goran Bregović and Bora Ćorba. This makes it even stranger that he should find himself among the participants of a concert of spiritual and ethno music, organized by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The name of Jasmina Mitrušević, another participant of the said concert will remain obscure to me, since it has remained unknown to none lesser than Google.

Unlike Točak, many rock and jazz musicians in Serbia have become seriously involved with ethno music, and some have entirely dedicated themselves to it. Among them are two Vladimirs – Simić and Maričić. Ethno – to paraphrase a famous political catch phrase from our recent history – "happened" to them. Simić is now the leader of a group called Belo platno (white linen), which I have already encountered several times. That group is included in the album "Serbia: Sounds Global 2". Svetlana Spajić collaborates with it. In connection with the group's concert at the Rex, Vladimir Simić gave an interview to Zorica Kojić of the daily "Danas" ("I narodna muzika napreduje"- folk music also grows, *online* edition of "Danas", April 7, 2003). At the beginning of the conversation, the journalist ascertains that "as far as ethno music bands are concerned, things are definitely beginning to roll", while introducing Simić as a "multi-instrumentalist", because he too plays a multitude of instruments, among which the article mentions kaval (a type of flute), dvojanka (double flute), šupeljka (woodden flute), tambura (tamburitza), gajde (bagpipe), and def (...).

It occurs to me that it might be useful to establish a list of instruments used, made or only mentioned by ethno musicians, a list of those instruments' names, that is. For these names – as is the case here with šupeljka and



dvojanka – before even a single sound comes out of them, bespeak the desire to recapture - in the forgotten, as old as the hills, primitive but our very own, born of nature itself, as it were ("flutes growing on willow trees" as the Serbian expression has it) – harmony, if only that of the sound. Quite expectedly, the names of bands express the same desire as well. For instance, The White Linnen. It reminds me personally of surrender, bedding, or of Lermontof's poem "The Lone Sail". But to my embarrassment – for I am some kind of an ethnologist after all – it was only thanks to Vladimir Simic that I realized that white linnen is an important symbol in our traditional culture: "Wite linnen", he explains, "follows, and has done so throughout most of history, the entire course of human life, literally from cradle to grave. At birth, human being is swaddled up in white linnen, at baptism cloaked in it, at weddings, according to our wonderful custom of bandaging arms, the guests used to be offered a gift of a white shirt, or more recently, white towell, and at the end of life, of course, one is always wrapped in white linnen. And then, there probably were a whole array of other moments in which white linnen played a part, which is additionally reflected in certain folk songs, in which white linnen is an extraordinary symbol, in that the song depicts a maiden, along with her other attributes, as someone endeavoring to white out linnen in a mountain spring."

Simić and his group cultivate "authentic playing and singing from the region of Kosovo and Metoch, southern Serbia and Macedonia." In his view, it is a "cultural region" with the best preserved "modal music", supplanted in our lands by harmony dominated music coming from western Europe. Modality is not peculiar only to our ancient music. It has an uninterrupted tradition in the East, and it once

existed in the West as well. But, Simić says, "there exists a style peculiar to us the Balkan people, Slavs, that is, Serbs, and that is essential, that is what we explore within the framework of all this modality. Therefore, we in The White Linnen do not use harmony, we remain outside major and minor keys; within a prescribed scale and its melodic movements, we perform tunes indigenous to our lands, which is to say the traditional ones. We do not compose – we only arrange." Quite interesting is the testimony Vladimir Simić gives as to the moment he gave up on rock'n roll and embraced ethno. The influence exerted upon him by Predrag Stojković Stole was decisive for it. Stojković even named the group, and for that Simić calls him the group's godfather and founder. Stojković implanted in him the love of kaval, the love that triggered a genuine spiritual transformation. "We are talking here of a long flute without a mouthpiece, the kind shepherds play", Simić explains, "which truly has a beautiful tone, and which turned the deepest disposition of my mind toward Byzantine church music; that kaval, that is, turned me away from doing exclusively rock'n roll, and started me on this, the music with White Linnen, which I feel entirely as an expression of myself, timeless, but also here and now." The mention of Byzantine church music remains, nevertheless, somewhat of a riddle for me. Simić was probably trying to say that, besides kaval, the church music had also played a role in his inner transformation. What speaks volumes of this transformation, induced by a sheep herder's flute, is Simić's use of the expression "...the deepest disposition of my mind...", which is a borrowing from the Serbian Eastern Orthodox theological jargon (a version of the Greek term *metanoia*), and which has gained currency in recent Serbian nationalist writing with a religious slant.

The influence of this type of literature can also explain Simić's understanding of a return to musical tradition. He insists that it be "actualized", that is, brought back to life, rather than rescued from oblivion in order to be "conserved and museum-ized." "Therefore", he says, speaking of the type of music The White Linnen cultivates, "it is not, by any means, some kind of a museum copy of what my grandfather may have played once, but rather something that at this very moment enables me express myself completely... naturally, it may please, in the process, my listeners, as a specimen of music of this very soil that could and should mean something to them as well." The possibility of actualization of folk music is also the possibility of its continued development, of its change. "Like everything else, you know, music progresses, folk music too. It is not dead, it is not an arrested tradition, like a moment in time captured on a photograph, which you can only keep as a memento. I think that in the absence of creativity the whole thing curls up and dies. But it seems to me that, quite to the contrary, there is progress, and as we can see, there are plenty of bands and people involved in this thing."

September 11, 2003

Vladimir Maričić (Marichich) is a jazz pianist with a web site. The data i find on the site show that this musician had begun his professional career in 1980, and that during the first half of the nineties he switched to ethno music. His album *The Pagan Trilogy* attests to that. In genre terms, it is defined as a „jazz ethno-suite". His interest in ethno is manifest in his "world-fusion project" entitled *The Ritual* (November, 1999), or more precisely,

in his ethno-jazz album of that title, as well as in the album entitled *Prelo* (spinning-bee) (February, 2002).

The album *The Ritual* had a promotion at the 212 Theatre Studio. It contains nine songs: "Šest pesto" (Six Five Hundred), "Crno Grozje" (Read Grapes), "Dodole" (the rainmaking song), "Oj, goro" (Hey thee, the Forrest), "Gusta mi magla" (How Thick's the fog), "Ajde Jano" (C'mon, Jana), "Zapali se Ivica planina" (Mount Ivan is burning), and "Tupan mi tupa" (Beating the Tupan for Me). Their performers, besides Maričić, are the female vocalist Sanja Ranković (Sanya Raankovich), the drummer Dragoljub Đuričić (Dragolyub Dyurichich), the percussionist Papa Nik (Papa Nick), and the guitarist Branko Macić Macko (Braanko Maatsich Maatsko). On Maričić's web site, one can find the lyrics to all the songs from this album, accompanied by concise explanations as to their origin and character, which goes to show once again that the ethno musicians and their producers feel the need to supply their audience with detailed knowledge of the cultural cotext specific to the material on which they work in order to facilitate comprehension of their music. Sometimes, one is under the impression that this knowledge is more important than the music, which seems reduced to mere illustration, or just an incentive to acquire the knowledge. Here is an example of it: the lyrics of the song "Hey, Thee, the Mountain" followed by their explanation:

*Hey, thee, the mountain  
Growing so tall, thee the mountain  
Do thou keepest bayduks safe in thy woods  
Do thou keepest them safe, the mountain?  
I do hide them, my sadness,  
The Turks still take them away.*

*I do hide them, my sadness.*

A typical Kosovo song performed at various popular gatherings. In this song, the folk singer implores the mountain forrest to protect hayduks, the freedom fighters, and the mountain replies that it hides them, but that the Turks still capture some of them and take them into slavery."

The most interesting text On Vladimir Maričić's web site is his explanation of type and function of the music offered by the album *The Ritual*. "It is", he says, "conceived of as a natural (musical) integration of the Serbian traditional music, that is, of the musical heritage preserved among the people (the original singing and playing) into the modern music of the second half of the Twentieth century. The basic intent of this project is to initiate the process of internationalization of our authentic music." That process should unfold following the example of the international expansion of the Brazilian samba and bossa nova music, or salsa and calipso. "My wish is for the world to find out in that same way about oro, kolo, rainmaking songs, the South-Serbian rhythms with odd numbers of beats per bar etc."

However, a problem emerges here. In Maričić's opinion, the international audience should not be offered our traditional music in its original form, because it would not appreciate it. The reason for that lack of appreciation is ontological, it is, in Maričić's own words, the fact that other musical traditions "differ ontologically" from ours. Nevertheless, that gap, albeit ontological, is not unbridgeable, and the author of *The Ritual* knows what is to be done to bring our music to minds and hearts of foreign listeners. In order for the audiences throughout

the world to understand, accept, and begin to like our music", Maričić says, "it is not enough to perform it authentically for them. It is necessary to make a mutually permeating connection of our traditional musical thinking with the universally accepted musical concepts, rendering thereby our authentic music even more interesting to a listener outside our country. Thus, we would give to people whose musical tradition is ontologically different from ours an opportunity to recognize as their own a part of what is being performed for them."

The key role is assigned here to "the universally accepted musical concepts" as some kind of universal musical idiom fit for transmitting what is peculiar to individual local and national traditions. Our musicians will use that idiom to express something that is "ours", but it will be comprehensible to aliens, to foreign audiences, and they will, aided by universal concepts, be able to recognize "theirs" in "ours". But, how far can one go with this translation into what is universally accepted without losing, in the process, what is specifically ours? Maričić condemns arrangements and orchestrations that "have substantially altered the character and the quality of our original folk songs." He says that the "microintervalty of the songs must be preserved."

At this point, in Maričić's exposé arises another difficulty that is commonly encountered by other ethno music representatives trying to reconcile the the notion that folk music (and folk culture in general) is something autochthonous, unique, and incommensurable with any other musical expression with the idea that autochtony, rootedness of a kind of music in the life of a given community is no obstacle to bringing that music closer to people outside the community from which it stems. For

representatives of ethno music it is also a practical issue, since for virtually all of them foreigners make the most desirable audience. That is why it remains unclear whom Maričić has in mind when he says: "In the end, our intention is, nevertheless, that what we create be attractive and that it captivate the unconscious, the spiritual, in us." Does "us" refer to any human person, or only to "our" people?

Maričić does not hide the fact that his music also has patriotic aims: "Those abroad who take a liking to it will soon want to learn more about Serbia and its people (its written culture, history, present time, etc.). How significant this is for us at the present moment is all too obvious. The only thing that should be said is that our art promotes the most successfully our culture and our country in today's world (more so than our politics, for example)."

The album *Prelo* (Spinning-bee) differs from *Ritual* to the extent that a new strategy is in the foreground now, the one of internationalizing the Serbian traditional music. This music is no longer the sole source of the traditional sound subjected to an interpretation for the purpose of bringing it closer to an international audience, but only a part of the material provided by musical traditions of various nations, which material can be used, thanks to jazz arrangements, to create heterogenous but harmonious compositions. "The goal of this musical undertaking", Maričić explains in a text posted on the web site 18. yu jazz fest (Valjevo, May 16 – 19, 2002), "is to arrange attractive elements of our folk music together with attractive elements of latin and jazz music, thus obtaining a successful, interesting, but also original combination of different musical cultures. Music being a universal language, this compact disk shows all the points

of convergence between these two different musical cultures upon which a new music can be built." The slogan of this jazz festival: "Speak Jazzic, so the whole world can understand you" illustrates what Maričić is advocating here: the idea that our musical, i. e., cultural identity, can be preserved and internationally reasserted only if it formulates itself in the universal idiom of jazz, or in a fortunate combination with another internationally known musical tradition.

September 27, 2003

Tacking down the guitar player Vladan Vučković Paja (Vlaadan, Voochkovich Paaya), mentioned by a colleague of his I encountered earlier, I finally found him on *www.gitara.co.yu*, in the column "Celebrity Interview", whose editor is Ružica Vrhovac (Roohitsa Vrhovats). She interviewed Paja on April 6, 2003, on the occasion of the release of his new album *Na Istoku Zapada* (In the East of the West). "This here is Walachian music", Vučković explains, "I touched on ethno a bit, but I would like to say that I did not do it to be fashionable, it was not the reason. The reason is my deep connection with my native region. I am from Eastern Serbia, there we have those very, very beautiful Romanian melodies, to which, I would say, a broader audience has not been exposed enough. That is why I tried to flirt with that sound. The album is conceived in such a way that Wallachian motifs in it are used as an annex to some authorial parts which I had composed, and later built into the music."

Among the musicians with whom Paja worked together recording this album, was Tasa (Taassa) from the group



Unfaithful Babies. "He is", Paja says, "from the same region as I, so I drew on his "eastern" energy. (It is obvious that the adjective "eastern" refers here to Eastern parts of Serbia, which may be an instance of some sort of internal orientalism). In further course of the interview, Vučković constantly emphasizes the significance of native soil and childhood for establishing a connection with folk music, which is the basis of his compositions: "I grew up with that music. In my native region, the music is a part of the environment, and I have known these tunes since I was a child." to the question about the origin of the title *In the East of the West* he gives the following answer: "We have here Eastern musical themes packaged in Western form, extremely modern. Besides, throughout our history as nation we have been neither West nor East geographically." My desire to obtain more information about this album on Google led to the discovery of the fact that the title *In the East of the West* was not Vučković's invention after all. Before his CD, two books bore that title, a novel by Mirko Sobolović (Naklada Pavičić, Zagreb, 1997), and a collection of newspaper articles by the journalist Miloš Jevtic (Meelosh Yevtich) (Belgrade, 2000). On this site devoted to the guitar. I am coming upon an interview with Petar Janjatović (Petar Yanyatovich), the author of the well known *YU Rock Encyclopedia*. To the question "what do you listen to when you are alone?" he gives the following answer: "I have a set answer to that question: like all people over forty, I listen to folk. Folk from Cape Verde, from Portugal, Latin America, Cuba, Ukraine. I really started going ape over music containing ethno. I believe that we the generation born during the fifties have had the fortunate opportunity to take advantage of some interesting trends. As a youth, I was a hippy, the whole nine

yards: sleeping bags, hitchhiking throughout Europe two months at a time, getting high on that kind of music. Just as I reached the age of normalcy, there came along the punk, which I didn't get, but I was into new wave up to my neck. Then came a period devoid of any major trends. In the early nineties ethno emerged, and that music pleases me to no end. There is phenomenal music on this planet, and it's fascinating. I just heard the work of some dude from Algeria, whose name is Massut Ali."

It is time for me too to push off and navigate a little bit farther than the Balkans.

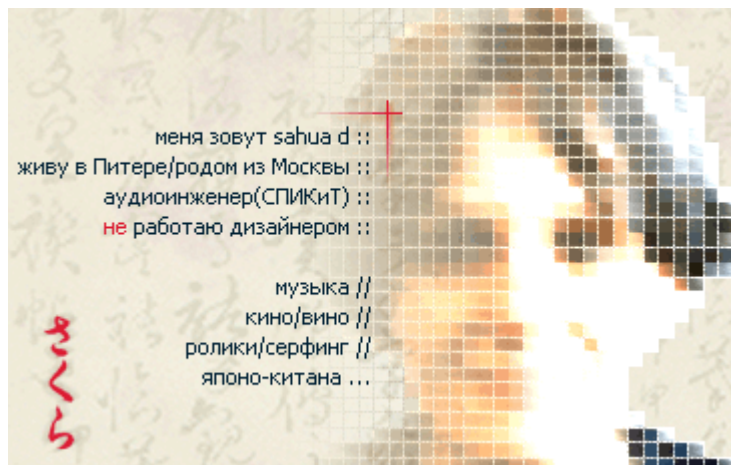


## II

# IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE NORTH OF EUROPE

October 1, 2003

During the past few days, I have been following road signs I found on the Russian web site *www.ethnotrip.bluse*. Its creator wanted to remain in the shade, as he introduced himself by a rather blurry photograph and by an alias Saha D. He cites Moscow as his place of birth, and "Peter" (short for St Petersburg, as is "Frisco" for San Francisco) as his current place of residence; his occupation: sound engineer. He reveals about himself that he likes music, film, wine, roller-skating, and surfing, and that all things Japanese and Chinese are close to his heart. There seems to be an erroneous notion that he (or she?) is a designer, which is denied by his sentence "I do not work as a designer, with "do not" in red for emphasis. While his likeness on the picture is blurred up, it still reveals a very young person, most likely a young man. The home page of his web site displays a drawing of an unusual animal, most similar to a frog. I am unsuccessfully attempting to reduce its size in order to show it here.



Picture 9. The home page of Sahua D.'s web site

Sahua D. has truly created an exceptionally rich web site about ethno music. In the foreground are the portraits of the greatest stars of this type of music, replete with biographical and other data. It is clear that the author is exceptionally well informed of all that is happening in the world of ethno music, and that he gathers his information first and foremost on the Internet. His blogs are a result of re-telling, condensing, and compiling information he finds on the Net, and they often include the addresses of the sites on which he drew. In addition to that, Sahua D. uses printed sources, which he also scrupulously lists. That is demonstrated by his dictionary of ethno music, which has several hundreds of entries. Among the more bizarre ones, I am coming upon the political history of the word "authenticity". Allegedly, it is

general Franco of Spain who had played a key role in the worldwide propagation of that word in the Twentieth century. Equally fond of it was the former president of Zaire, Mobutu, who gave the name of "authenticity policy" to his campaign of resisting the European post-colonial influence, so that the language, the clothing style, and the art of Zaire would recover that which constituted their roots.

Among the musicians featured on this web site, one finds the Malian, Toumani Diabate. He is convinced that his task, the mission of his music, is to carry certain messages, not only to his countrymen, or to the rest of the Africans but to all of the Humanity: "I have been called upon to take this message to the entire world. My instrument, cora, possesses great power, a lot of positive energy. When you listen to it – whether you are white or black – you are certain that you understand what it says to you." To the objection, he sometimes hears, that his music betrays his tradition by succumbing to the influence of jazz, flamenco, and other popular Western styles, Diabate replies: "When Malians listen to what I play they never wonder what it is. Toumani, they say, that's our roots." To put it in regal terms: roots *c'est moi*.

This Malian musician does a lot of traveling, collaborates with many foreign producers and arrangers of music, and does joint stage performances with colleagues from different parts of the world. He believes that he has remained a traditional African folk singer (griot), even while building an international career of an ethno music star, even yet when – in order to get closer to foreign audiences, especially in the West – he performs music different from what he plays at home. "The role of a griot", Diabate says, "is to connect different people with

one another, and not only to preserve ties with the past. I can play in Mali within the framework of tradition. In America, I work differently. I am free to play with Taj Mahal or with Ketama (Quetama?), (a Gipsy-Spanish "new Flamenco" group), or with Japanese musicians... Who cares?"

Meanwhile, the American blues singer Taj Mahal, whom Diabate mentions here, has taken just the opposite direction, from America toward Africa. At one point, he took interest in Mali, in cora and its masters, which lead him to Toumani Diabate himself, and all that in order to find the home of his origin, his primordial home, the source of who he is. In Mali, he learned how to play cora, and changed his name to Dadi Kuyate. Taj, alias Dadi, claims that none of it is much of a change. "It is not true that I switched from Chicago blues to Malian music", he says. "All my life I've only done this one thing, I've been looking for the kind of American music that didn't sever its ties with the African tradition, still alive after seventy-one generations. This album (he is referring to *Kulanjan*, BBC, 1999) is a real connection with my ancestors... the kinsmen have finally found their way home."

The Armenian Djivan Gasparian, whom Sahua D. calls "the brightest star of *world* music in the entire territory of former USSR", plays the duduk (doodook), an ancient Armenian wind instrument, made out of apricot tree wood. Gasparian claims that it is an unusual and unique instrument, the like of which he has never seen anywhere else. There is something inexplicable in the very way it is made, because "a craftsman will make up to ten duduks out of one tree, and nine will sound alike and mediocre, while the tenth will have a totally unique sound." The biggest contribution to the international success of this

musician, and to his rise to stardom in the field of world music, was made by the Britons Michael Brook and Brian Eno, who invited him to London in 1998. There, he met Peter Gabriel, with whom he collaborated on the music score for Martin Scorsese's motion picture *The Last Temptation of Christ*. That is how, Sahua D. writes, "the name of the exotic instrument duduk and that of its greatest master became known to the entire world." Since 1993, Gasparian has been living in the United States, where he continues his collaboration with Hollywood directors, so his music can be heard in movies such as *The Russia House*, *The Crow*, *Onegin*, and *The Gladiator*.

Djivan left a folktale-like account of his first encounter with Hollywood: "One day, they summoned me to Hollywood: let's hear that duduk. I got scared at first, I didn't know what to play. Around me nothing but professors from different countries, from Paris, from Italy. Just sitting there. The screen, the music stand, the sheet music, the conductor. But no rehearsals before: just a quick glance at what you are supposed to play, and get going! So I bend forward, get a closer look at the music and all of a sudden I realize: this is out of my instrument's range, duduk has only one octave! Please translate, I say, I can't play this. The interpreter turned white as a sheet. No I can't translate that, they won't understand it, he says. The conductor has already raised his hands, the scenes from the movie are beginning to appear – it was *The Russia House* – and the place where I play my solo is almost there. What am I to do? I play two – three phrases regular, according the sheet music, and then I begin to improvise. The conductor just looks at me – and besides, he wrote the music – but he doesn't stop the orchestra. Well, I think, if he says something, it's all over. In short, I



played for some 25 odd minutes. When we finished, the conductor said something, and everybody applauded. What the hell is that about? I found out later that he had said: "This man plays like he wrote this music all by himself."

October 2, 2003

Ethno trip also features the portrait of Marta Sebestyén, a Hungarian songstress, who earned her fame by singing in the motion picture *The English Patient*, where she performed the theme song. Her mother was a folklorist, and studied music with the famous Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodály. What is interesting is that in Marta's life story the character of her grandmother is cast in a new way. Namely, her grandmother was not the folksy sweet little old lady we have encountered in the biographies of some ethno musicians, who would hand down to the future ethno star the love of country life and folk music. That part went to her learned mother, while the granny, Marta remembers, "couldn't wait to move to the big city, and as far as village songs went, she found nothing in them to write home about. To her it was boring and threadbare music, not even coming close to foxtrot, which was all the rage in those days." In addition to her mother, history too played a part in bringing folk songs closer to Marta. In the decade of the seventies of the past century, the Hungarian youth embraced those songs as a part of the rebellion against communism. "There was a huge potential enshrouded in folk music", Marta remembers, "it brought people together in those days."



Picture 10. Marta Sebestyén an the group Muszikás

It is noteworthy that one of the first groups with which Marta sang took up the name *Muszikás*, a colloquial name for folk musicians. But, the musicians, who adopted such a folksy colloquial name for their group, were intellectuals; in addition to Marta, the group had an ethnographer (Peter Eri), a mathematician (Mihaly Sipos), and a geophysicist (Daniel Hamar). Those are not plain folks, but they

maintain, shall we say, open lines of communication with plain folks. Sahuá D. knows from somewhere that "even today Marta often visits the countryside, where there are still people who have preserved the folk musical culture", and he quotes her own words: "It is very important for a singer to hold in his hands the hands of elderly village women, to look them in the eye, to spend time in their homes." Well, this is how the stock character of a folksy old woman finally finds its way into Marta's life story. However, it seems that this interest some musicians take in the music of the people is not very well understood and appreciated by the people. The village folks fail to see what can motivate those intellectuals and scholars to endure the hardships of spending time in their backwoods, and what merit there can be in the songs they find there. "The peasants do not understand", Marta complains, "why a professor from a big city would come to their muddy village, looking for songs. They are quite suspicious of it. That is why it is necessary to win their trust first, to befriend them. Marta's songs impressed Eric Mouquet and Michel Sanchez, members of a well known duo Deep Forest, as Sahuá D. relates, not without a shade of irony, "after the success of their first album for which they used the music of the African Pigmies, they went on a search for new sources of inspiration", and that is how they found Marta Sebestyén. When they contacted her and sent her a pilot tape of music into which they had inserted parts of one of her songs, she was stunned. "It was a real shock to my ears", Marta recalls, "but I tried to forget I was a folk singer, and I listened to the tape as if I were some kind of a teenager. Actually, there are many ways of bringing the music I sing closer to an audience... so, I decided to let them use my song, and we later became good friends."

The fact that it is possible to offer music to different audiences by different venues and in varying forms prompted Marta and the group Muszikás to publish, in 1997, two different versions of the same album. One, entitled *Hazafelé* ("Coming back home"), was intended for the domestic audience, and the other, given the title *Morning Star*, for foreign markets. A foreign publisher by the name of Joe Boyd, of the publishing house Hannibal, had given them the idea to do so. He had been frightened by the sound of the original version of the album. "While being normal for our listeners, the texture of our music was too aggressive for Western ears. That's why we decided to rewrite some songs. We didn't try to soften up their existing version, to eliminate some elements, but simply came up with a new version. So, we ended up with two albums instead of only one."

Oct 3, 2003

An Algerian by the name of Hadj-Brahim Khaled, called also Cheb Khaled, which in Arabic means young Khaled, has lived the last ten years in Paris. Sahu D. claims that the Islamic fundamentalists in Algeria consider him a mercenary, an example of "shameful capitulation before the perilous influence of the West." The danger to his person lurking from those quarters seems real, keeping in mind that the singer Cheb Hasni was killed in 1994, in Khaled's hometown Oran, when he came there from Paris to visit family. Khaled's songs belong to the genre called *rai* (*rai*) which, in Arabic, means "personal opinion" or "world view". In the West, those songs are also called "Algerian blues".



Picture 11. Hadj-Brahim Khaled

Long ago, rai was sung by Berber shepherds, and the last hundred years only by sheiks, that is, by tribal and religious leaders. In the twenties of the last century, new forms of rai began to emerge with radically altered lyrics, indecent, bordering, at times, on pornography – and they were sung by girls from houses of ill repute. More recently, rai has become a part of urban folklore of Oran, and its current offshoots show traces of Moroccan folklore and Spanish flamenco influence. Rai has undergone further transformation as the music of Algerian refugees in France, where it is also called "Algerian punk-rock", while at the beginning of the nineties this type of songs and their principal performer Khaled attracted the attention of Don Was, the famous producer working with Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Iggy Pop, Elton John,

Bob Dylan, and other music stars... As Sahua D. explains, he "created high tech rai by adding to it some Latin American samba, New York funk, and Jamaican reggae."

Khaled has earned a great deal of fame in Arab countries, especially among Arab youth, wishing to hear its native music in modern arrangements, but also with lyrics breaking social taboos. Almost without exception, his songs speak of two things: love and drinking. Sahua D. cites an example which may just as well have been taken out of a Serbian "turbo folk" song: "I am drunk, and nobody wants me. Pour me one more glass. Tonight I am drinking because my beloved left me." That carousing does not prevent Khaled from getting politically involved, from participating in musical projects intended to contribute to peace in the Middle East. An example of this sort of *engagement* on his part is his version of John Lennon's song "Imagine", recorded in 1995, which he sings jointly with the Israeli songstress Noa, he in Arabic, and she in Hebrew.

I have found this information on the web site of French radio RFI ([www.rfimusique.com](http://www.rfimusique.com)), which I visited, leaving for a moment my Russian guide, in order to find the original spelling of Khaled's name, which, otherwise very thorough, Sahua D. failed to provide. I do give him credit, nevertheless, for a much more complete history of rai than that provided by the French site, from which I am taking Khaled's own explanation as to why he so often sings in French. He believes that his music does not lose its Arab identity because of that, while the French lyrics do open many doors to an Arab musician that would be closed for him otherwise. He cites the example of the song "Aïcha", whose French lyrics were written J.-J. Goldman, and which became popular, not only in France

but also in many other countries, where Arab music is seldom heard. "I have heard Germans sing "Aïcha" in French, and I have met Dutch and American people who knew that song by heart", Khaled says.

Equally interesting are certain places in the text Sáhua D. has devoted to the famous songstress Cezaria Evora. Her first audience was made up of foreign seamen, patrons at saloons in Cape Verde seaport of Mindelo, which, due to its rather animated nightlife, used to be called "The Creole Rome". The songs from her repertoire belong mainly to the genre named morna (from the English *to mourn*). They are down tempo songs in the local Creole that came into being as a result of mixing Portuguese with East African languages. "Music is a universal language", Cezaria says, joining thus a vast circle of "universalists." "Even though my songs are meant for the people of Cape Verde", she adds, "it seems to me that everybody can understand them... Even in the days I sang in nightclubs, my music was well liked by sailors from all kinds of countries, never mind that they couldn't understand a word I sang. I've seen foreign language speakers cry listening to my mornas. Recently I sang in Japan. There are no Cap Verde expats there, but everybody understood my music very well."

October 4, 2003

Among the musicians featured on the web site Ethno Trip is an Azeri by the name of Alim Kasimov, a master of mugam. Mugam is, according to the Russian Encyclopedia of Music, a "cyclical vocal and instrumental piece", which, in addition to being popular in Azerbaijan, is common in

Turkey and Iran as well. Its scale is microtonal, divided into as many as 84 intervals (unlike the European scales of seven intervals or twelve half-intervals). A singer of mugam is called hanende.

During the Soviet period, mugams were performed at concerts only as musical relics, as a demonstration of how ancient the history of Azeri music was. After the fall of communism, mugam got a new lease on life. Alim Kasimov began to give concerts abroad, and in 1999, he won one of the most important musical awards - the IMC-UNESCO. In the West, a scholarly interest in Azeri folk music is on the rise. Yet, Alim is not interested in cultural, historical and theoretical considerations concerning that music. "In Azerbaijan, we have many excellent mugam theorists", he says, "but many of them cannot perform it, in spite of their brilliant theoretical knowledge. I simply feel what spontaneously comes from the spiritual world... As I sing, I feel as though I were leaving our physical world. I feel as though I were entering another world of spirituality. I feel so good in there, so comfortable, and I wish I could stay there. Unfortunately, as soon as I finish singing, I instantly find myself again this world of ours. Obviously, the realm of "spirituality" is a vast one, and many a singer of folk songs, from Serbia to Azerbaijan, will testify to the effect that they arrive there spontaneously, on the wings of their song, as it were.

Sahua D. writes about ethno music and its stars, reports other people's (as well as their own) opinions of themselves, careful not to impose his judgment; except in one place, in a text on Khaled that begins with a scathing condemnation of an "odd musical hybrid", called ethno-pop by some, and *world music* by others. i. e, music of the world. That music, Sahua D. says, is "broadly advertised as



a meeting of two cultures – Western, i. e. technologically advanced culture – and non-Western, i. e. exotic culture." The best musicians of the third world are selected to participate in "that circus". And none of it is", my guide continues to explain, "a matter of learning anything about distant musical traditions and cultures, which have turned out to be too diverse and incomprehensible for the so called civilized public, for that public can only enjoy chewing gum for the ears, made by clever producers." In his opinion, it is a fad that began in the early nineties and which "only a couple of years later went out of style for good."

October 11, 2003

Today, Sahuia is taking me to Tuvin throat singers. It is the way of singing based on human throat's ability to produce two voices simultaneously, one of them serving as a sort of accompaniment to the other. That way of singing is also called harmonic, diaphonic, or laryngeal singing. Tuvin word for it is, in Russian transcription, *borekteer*. In Russian, that singing is called *gorlovoie pienie*, in English *throat singing*, and in French *chant de gorge*. The art of obtaining a guttural diaphone is a part of several countries' traditions, but in recent times it is most often found in the traditional music of Central Asian peoples, the Mongolians, the Tuvins, the Altaians, and the Tibetans.

During the nineties, the interest in the *gorloviks* (Russian for "throaters") was on the rise. An important part in inducing that interest was played by the physicist Richard Fineman (1924 – 1988), a Nobel Prize laureate in 1965, for his work on developing the theory of quantum

electrodynamics. Enchanted by throat singing, revealed to him by a Russian colleague, he went on to organize in Pasadena, as early as the beginning of the eighties, a festival of Tuvin and other throat singers, and he founded the Friends of Tuva society, whose members call him to this day patron-saint of Tuva. This factoid comes from the society's web site ([www.fotuva.org](http://www.fotuva.org)).

My Russian guide introduces me to Tuvin legends about the origin of throat singing, which say that this unusual art was discovered by people who wanted to imitate sounds of nature, such as murmur of water in a creek or sighing of wind. "At the very foundation of the interest in such sounds", Sahua D. says, "is the belief that that all things have a soul, or that there are places where spirits dwell." That actually means that throat singing is narrowly linked to shamanism. One of the best-known Tuvin throat singers today, Nikolai Oorzhak, is a hereditary shaman. Singing is a part of his shamanic know-how. Today he can freely talk about it, because since the fall of the Soviet Union, shamanism has come off the list of unacceptable vestiges of tradition. Tuvin shamans, including Oorzhak, can now do their thing publicly. They have founded their professional association (Tos Deer), some sort of shamanic non-governmental organization. The association collaborates with the American musician and music educator, Steve Sklar, who, following in Fineman's footsteps, organizes for American audiences lectures on shamanism and throat singing workshops.

A Tuvin by the name of Kongor ol Ondar won the first place at the First International Festival of Throat singing, organized in 1992, under the auspices of UNESCO. That earned him the title of People's Throat Singer of Tuva. After that, performers and producers of ethno music in the West

took interest in him. He subsequently worked together with famous names, such as Frank Zappa, Mickey Heart, and the Chronos Quartet. Nevertheless, the greatest interest in Ondar was shown by a blind American musician and blues singer, Paul Pena, alias Earthquake, who, in 1994, came to Ondar's Kizil, the capital city of the Autonomous Republic of Tuva, to learn throat-singing first-hand. He made such fast progress, that the following year he won the first prize at a throat-singing competition held in Kizil. He was a contestant in the category of *kargira*, Tuvin for voice of horse, i. e. neighing or whinnying. One more instance showing that outsiders can be quite successful in doing anybody's traditional music from any part of the world.



Picture 12. Paul Pena and Kongor ol Ondar

Pena's sojourn and work in Kizil was the subject of a documentary film, entitled *Genghis Blues*, while the same title was used for the album of music jointly performed by Pena and Ondar. Not only in the title, but also in the subtitle of this album that reads: "From the steppes of Central Asia, to the streets of San Francisco", is there emphasis on dual identity of the music the album contains. Doubtless, the idea of this "project" is in sync with one of the basic postulates of the aesthetics and philosophy of ethno music, which consists in believing that apparently all too remote parts of the world, and apparently incompatible, or as it is often said today, incommensurable worlds of different cultures I reality much closer to each other, even so much closer that not only can they understand and respect each other, but they can fertilize each other, creating thereby a mix culture, music, and songs of hybrid structure. Can that be accomplished without anybody sacrificing anything of his own? It remains an open question. Kongor ol Ondar and Paul Pena seem to think that in their joint project neither one of them has lost what he brought into it. To this conclusion I am lead by a photograph that I found on Pena's official web site ([www.paulpena.com](http://www.paulpena.com)). Kongor wants to make it clear that, while performing with Paul, he has remained what he has always been, by wearing a complete Tuvin folk costume. In contrast to him, the American's dress is neutral, and his instrument – the guitar – is not a sign of a particular ethnic identity either. However, this does not mean that they do not have a symbolic meaning. They function as signs of the modern Western world, in contrast with the world of the traditional East, personified by the Tuvin folk costume-clad Ondar. Pena too remains what he is.

October 30, 2003

Today I continue my tour of the world of ethno music with the help of a new guide, the French online magazine Ethnotempos, with the subtitle "Ethnic Music Today" (*Ethnotempos, Musiques ethniques d'aujourd'hui*). In a brief introductory article it is said that the magazine is dedicated to types of music with a distinct ethnic character (*musiques à caractère ethnique*), also called "*musics*" of *the world*. The noun music is emphatically used in the plural, because the editors of the magazine are hard pressed to distance themselves from the fashionable *world music*, the one that some producers and musicians have, in the editors' opinion, "turned into a new cheap hodge-podge of exotic pop music." Conversely, Ethnotempos wishes to open its pages to "musicians who are inspired by one or several traditions, and whose work is characterized by innovation, encounters, and mutual permeation of diverse musical expressions, as well as to imaginary kinds of folklore." I have no clue as to what the latter might be (*folklores imaginaries*), but I am not losing hope to find it out eventually. Nor do I succeed in perceiving any difference between the music this magazine promotes and the one designated by the term *world music*, because, as far as I could see up to this point, the latter is also characterized by innovation and mutual permeation of different kinds of music.

Ethnotempos rejects hodge-podge, but does not seem to steer clear of exoticism itself. Here too, the throat singing is in the foreground of an exhaustive presentation of principal performers and ensembles of the folk music of Central Asia, and the terms in which it is introduced are those of hard core exoticism: "Enigmatic and wondrous

guttural singing... its resonance alone makes the listener believe to have stepped into a world parallel to this one." And, it is the world in which the Western man will get transformed. "Whoever attends a performance by the group Huun-Huur-Tu", the author of the text, Stéphane Fougère, explains, "will come of it a transformed person, serene, transcended, which is to say, exorcised." In Serbian, we would, perhaps more aptly, say *undevilled*. "The power of throat singing defies comprehension", Fougère continues in the same style, "as does the power of imitating the sound of galloping horses, bird chirping, torrential rain, sougning of wind or canine howling..." The purpose of these "naturalist" imitations, he explains, is not to entertain the audience and make it marvel, or at least, they are not done for that reason alone, but rather, they are linked with magic and animism, with a technique of communicating with nature, the fauna and the spirits, used by shamans. Incidentally, even the neck of a two-string fiddle, *igil*, one of the instruments used to accompany throat singing, has at its end an ornament in the shape of an equine head.

I am discovering here that throat singing has attracted the attention of Western singers and musicians other than Paul Pena. It also attracted the interest of the likes of David Hykes, Michael Vetter, Jill Purse, and Stuart Hinds. It is most interesting that, according to this source, the Asian musicians – Tuvin, Altaic, and Buriat – follow two divergent paths: some desire to preserve the tradition, as faithfully as possible, while some, in direct opposition to them, wish to improve upon the tradition, namely to innovate it. The latter integrate themselves easily into international projects typical of world music. For example, the group Huun-Huur-Tu collaborates with the

Bulgarian choir Angelite, wit the Russian singer Sergey Starostny (in an album entitled *If I'd Been Born an Eagle*), and with some Scottish musicians, such as Mary Mac Master and Martin Bennett.

Sayan Bapa, the group leader, is an academically trained musician, just as is the majority of his Tuvin colleagues, and he keeps up with the international music scene. He is familiar with throat singing in traditional music outside Asia. "I once listened", Bapa says in an interview to Ethnotempos, "to a disk by an African songstress whose way of throat singing is unusually reminiscent of the Tuvin way. It is strange indeed..." His vocabulary contains expressions such as "good vibrations" and – as I had already found it out – the globally ubiquitous "positive energy", called in French "good energy" (*une bonne énergie*). Describing the delights of throat singing, Bapa that it causes in the singer "good vibrations and positive energy. A man feels stronger, reborn, awakened...he feels as though he were with a new body, full of new energy. At least, it is how I see it. I could call it a form of yoga." Sayan Bapa's reply to the question as to why Tuvin songs so frequently talk about horses, and why *igil* is decorated with a horse head, is that in Tuvin legends the man's best friend is the horse. If a Tuvin needs an interlocutor who will truly hear him out and understand him, he will speak to his horse before he does to another man. This veneration of the horse is the reason why the rhythm of horse gallop is the basic rhythmic pattern of Tuvin songs: "Whoever has the least bit of familiarity with horses", Sayan explains, "can recognize the rhythm of gallop underlying our songs."

The leader of the Huun-Huur-Tu group has kept good memories of his collaboration with Russian and Bulgarian

musicians, with whom the group had realized two disks. "I remember", he says, "how our three groups met in Sofia, Bulgaria. We held several rehearsals during which each group made an effort to bring into line its melodies and rhythms, its approach to music and its way of thinking. Oh what a medley that was! The Angelite ensemble consists of 24 female voices, we were four, and there were one Russian singer, one pianist, and of and on, a French horn player, and a trumpeter... The fact that we managed to produce anything at all is like science fiction!"

November 4, 2003

In its further review of Central Asian ethno groups, Ethnotempos posts articles on three Mongolian groups: Tumbash, Temuzhin and Egshiglen, on a singer by the name of Dangaa Khosbayar, and on a female vocalist by the name of Urna Chahar-Tugchi. Out of the three groups, two – Tumbash and Egshiglen – were founded by students of the Conservatory of Ulan Bator. Urna is also highly educated as a musician, having graduated at the Music Conservatory in Shanghai. Nevertheless, they emphasize having preserved their living ties with their country's folk music. Thus, in Urna's biography, particular emphasis is placed on the fact that her parents were herdsman, "that the nomadic and nature- connected Mongolian poetry, with its stories and legends, has, since Urna's village childhood, nourished her Muse."

In the case of these Mongolian ethno groups as well, the connectedness of their repertoire to the tradition is materialized in the fact that they play traditional folk instruments. Those instruments are eye-catchers at



concerts, they are always placed in the foreground of promotional photographs, and their exotic names are always cited in writings about groups that use them, the process of their making is described, and parallels are drawn between them and similar instruments known to the Western audience. As an emblematic Mongolian instrument, emphasized in Ethnotempos' presentation of the ethno music of Mongolia, is *morin-khuur*, an instrument described as a "two-stringed, trapezoid-shaped viola with a horse head." Present there are also a bamboo Jew's harp *bulsan bel khuur*, a lute called *khun tovshuur*, and a flute called *tsoor*, instruments played by the multi instrumentalist and the singer, Yavgaan, the leader of the group Temuzhin, as well the *shudraga-shanz* lute, *joochin* dulcimer, and the two-stringed lute called *tobs-buur*.



Picture 13. Tumbash group

For stronger emphasis on authenticity and exotic character of the music offered by these Mongolian groups, even before the music is heard, in addition to photographs of their instruments that look unusual, and their names that sound likewise to a Western consumer, used are also the original language terms to designate certain genres of songs in these groups' repertoires. Those terms are present in promotional texts, on disk jackets, and in concert advertisements. So, thanks to Ethnotempos, I am learning that some Mongolian epic songs are called *tuuli*, and that longer songs of the same kind bear the name *urtun duu*, while a prayer in that language is called *magtaal*. For the same purpose, the original Mongolian song titles are cited, so that a foreign consumer may find out that the real title of the song he or she is listening too is *Dönön Nast Khölög Baatar*. Needless to say that Genghis Khan appears in several songs. It is his name that the group Temuzhin has adopted, for it is the name the great Khan bore in his youth.

How important these added symbols of ethnicity and exotic character are for the commercial success of Mongolian, or for that matter, any other ethno music, is evidenced by the fact that some of its publishers are adding to each copy of a disk a lengthy brochure vividly depicting the country from which the musicians hail. Thus, the label Face Music is offering its buyers of discs by Mongolian music groups a booklet which, according to Ethnote-mpos, contains a plethora of information on the history of Mongolia, on different types of Mongolian songs and instruments, as well as summaries of each song's lyrics. In a similar vein, the American house Arc Music, offers along with the disk *Sounds of Mongolia*, by the group Egshiglen, a "thirty-page booklet with chapters speaking of the cou-

ntry's history, and those containing descriptions of instruments and summaries of songs."

Under the impetus of the above, I smoothly sail to the web site of Arc Music, to the web page devoted to Egshiglen. In addition to the rubrics mentioned by Fougère, I am finding there an English translation of an entire Mongolian folktale about a singer by the name of Cuckoo Namdshil, which talks about the birth of the most important Mongolian folk instrument, the horse head-adorned viola. I am copying a few sentences describing Mongolia and the Mongolians: "Clear rivers flow from the snow-covered mountains of the Altai and the Khangai through the forests into the plains. A large percentage of the just over two million Mongolians today still live as nomads, in harmony with nature and together with their "five jewels, their horses, camels, cattle, sheep and goats. The music of the Mongolians breathes the vastness and freedom and the power of a life in harmony with nature and the elements... The music expresses their familiarity with animals. They seek to influence their animals with singing or with the sound of their instruments, mostly simple traverse flutes of cane or bamboo. These are used to calm the animals, so that mother animals would accept their young and suckle them or so they would allow humans to milk them." It seems as though some kind of popular story telling were evolving in the shadow of ethno music.

All these Mongolian musicians emerged on the international music scene, during the decade of the nineties of the past century, thanks to the interest Western producers and composers had taken in them. Tumbash and Temuzhin collaborate with the Swiss label Face Music, and Egshiglen with the German firm Heaven & Earth. Danga and Urna also have ties with Germany.

Danga collaborates with the German composer and producer Pat Pangea. According to Fougère (I am still reading his article on Asian throat singing), Danga is one of those musicians who are "sacrificing their traditional art on the altar of fusionist modernism". Something similar could be said of the female vocalist Urna. During her studies in Shanghai, she met the German artist Robert Zollitsch, who was attracted by Asian peoples' traditional music, which is why he learned how to play *guguin*, a kind of Chinese dulcimer. He also mastered the basics of throat singing. The two of them jointly authored the disk *Jamar* (PMP), which contains numbers typical of fusion: Robert accompanies a Mongolian song by Urna on a Bavarian zither, while the percussion instruments are in the hands of the Hindu musician Ramesh Shotham.

The very name Tumbash, adopted by the group, designates a sculpted figure symbolizing a harmonious life together of four different animals: a hare, a pigeon, a monkey, and an elephant. This symbol of unity in diversity, of alliance between large and small, coming from Indian mythology, is a fine arts visual translation of the story about four animals who, thanks to their cooperation and friendship, overcame major perils. Tumbash comes in quite handy as a symbol of world music, and above all, of a current within it that favors hybridization of different musical traditions, which is touted by narratives about this type of music as a musical, and even more politico-pedagogical, value.

The Egshiglen group participated, in July of 2002, in a project of intercultural cooperation entitled *Tien-Shan – Suisse Express*, organized by the Swiss Administration for the Development and Cooperation, as its contribution to the International Year of the Mountain, which distinction was given, upon a recommendation by the UN, to the year

2000. Under the slogan "Mountains unite people", the project brought together 21 musicians from mountainous regions of Switzerland, Austria, and central Asia. Besides the Mongolians, the Asian highlander contingent included two trios, one from Kyrgyzia, and the other one from Mount Tin Shan (Caucasus). They had the honor of performing in the Plenary Sessions Hall of the UN building in Geneva. As Ethno tempos reports, one number in the material recorded on that occasion represents an attempt to create a fusion of the work of Asian, Swiss, and Austrian musicians. It was given the title of *Babylon / Mountains Messengers*, and in the words of the reviewer, "a jovial and a lively whirlwind was created thereby in which, as in some mountain echo, are mixed together – yodeling with *komuz* lute, Alpine horn with throat singing, timpani with *joochin*."



Picture 14. Tumbash

Articles on Mongolian groups show, along with the others, that the basic function of Ethnotempos is marketing

promotion of world music, so that Stéphane Fougère, besides being at liberty to make a critical remark here and there about certain tendencies within that kind of music, calling them exotic rubbish (*le n'importe quoi exotique*), is primarily responsible for tickling the attention of the readers of his article, for warming them up to the music he is writing about. However, as I have already noticed, he no more than others has any better means of accomplishing that task than commonplaces of exoticism, a promise to take us, unlike Baudelaire's famous "Invitation to a journey", to a land not resembling us in the least, where a harmony has been reached between man, nature and God, the harmony we have forsaken, of which we are deprived, and for which we yearn. Fougère is obligated to give up his sense of humor, and to rhapsodize, to conjure up what awaits a future listener of the music performed by Tumbash: "They miraculously convey the feeling with which an epic singer must imbued when he rides on horseback, all alone, through intractable and boundless Mongolian steppes, that feeling of loneliness which changes into humility before an immeasurable horizon line that bursts before his eyes, turning subsequently into a prayer addressed to nature and its gods." In the same piece of writing, he will also promise to the listeners of his Mongolian group's music that they will find themselves "in a world we would consider unreal, if we did not know that these musical traditions still exist on this Earth."

Steering away, for the time being, from Stéphane and Ethnotempos, I am "leafing" through some other web pages devoted to Mongolian groups. That is how I come upon a report that the music performed in Switzerland in June of 2002 by Asian, Austrian, and Swiss ethno music groups, within the framework of the *Tien-Shan – Suisse*

*Express*, was covered live by Student Radio of Ljubljana (Slovenia). That is what I am learning from this radio station's archive. In the station identification, the project is characterized as an interesting adventure in sound: *"When in the middle of the Alps, in honor of the international Year of the Mountain, Mongolia and the rest of the Central Asian steppe are paired with Austrian-Swiss yodelers; it has a way of becoming an interesting adventure in sound, which, in this case, is one of a kind project and a very unique recording."*



Picture 15. Egshiglen with colleagues in Switzerland

November 10, 2003

I am spending more time in the company of Claude Samard, a French guitarist, composer, and producer, whose web site ([www.claudesamard.com](http://www.claudesamard.com)) contains the information that we have here a musician who has two

higher education degrees: In France he graduated from a university with a degree in literature, and in America from *Berkley College of Music* in Boston. Samard was the producer of the first recording by the Kalmuk singer Vladimir Haruief, who took on an artistic alias of Okna Tsahan Zam. For that occasion, Samard prepared a lengthy catalog (around ten pages) or "dossier de presentation", available on his web site too, which represents one more example of that variety of pop ethnography evolving in conjunction with ethno music.

The album and the catalog booklet have an English title *Shaman voices. A journey in the steppe*. Vladimir, alias Okna, is introduced there as a "shaman of Central Asian steppes". His choice of his alias, which in Kalmuk means "White road", is explained there as a tribute to a long road by which his parents, along with other Kalmuk people, had returned home in the winter of 1957, and during which journey the future singer was born. But Okna's songs contain a memory of much older times, since he is a descendent of an ancient Kalmuk tribe *Baatood* (Fr. Baatoude), whose legendary founder was the second son of a Cyclops by the name Doa Sohor. Okna discovered his musical calling in a dream. Some mysterious power kept telling him that he was born to devote himself to throat singing, so he gave up his day job as an engineer, and began to learn the ancient art of his ancestors. He achieved a great deal of success on his European tours, first of which took place as early as 1991. He is proud of his participation Alan Simon's project entitled *Gaia*, along with other stars of ethno music, including Cezaria Evora and Manu Dibango. Nevertheless, this master of throat singing is also held in high esteem in his own country. He is a member of the Association of



Russian Writers, and in the year 2002 he was granted an award by the Russian Ministry of Culture as the best performer of folk songs. The award is called "Russian Soul", which goes to show that Vladimir, that is, Okna feels quite well as both the descendent of Genghis Kahn and a medium through which the very being of Russia, i.e. the Russian soul lets itself be heard. His producer surely does not personally hold this against him, but as a man who knows what the pop music market wants these days, he favors Okna over Vladimir, that is, Kalmuk-Mongolian identity over Russian. The Russian side of this singer's identity represents a hindrance in building his public image, as it disrupts the simple, linear narration to the effect that Kalmuk, Mongolian, and every other ethnic identity within the population of former Soviet Union could express itself only after the demise of that state, so Okna too could finally be what he was only when he no longer had to be a Vladimir. However, in all likelihood, he was and still is both, and his music already was a kind of folkloric hybrid even before such things were named fusion. Samard obviously does not know what to do with this Russian-Kalmuk crossover in Okna's repertoire, so he does not even mention it. At one point, he underscores the fact that all the lyrics of Okna's songs are in the "traditional language", i. e. Kalmuk. However, on the list Okna's songs in the booklet *Shaman Voices* there is one entitled "Volki", that is, "Wolves", but in Russian.

In this catalog Samard makes a special effort to describe the strong impact of Okna's songs, especially of his voice, on the listener. He describes listening to that music as a "57-minute hypnotic trip". "This music leaves a powerful impression on those listening to it for the first time," Samard says, "and goes to the bottom of their souls." He

offers an explanation of that power. Okna's singing is possessed of two kinds of depth. The first is the depth of time. "That handsome and deep voice of his comes from the depths of the ages", Samard says. But also, it stems from the depths of nature, from those of the steppe. The throat singing itself came into being in direct collusion with nature; it is a part of "Mongolian tradition in which music, like the wind, lives in the steppe". That kind of singing supposedly allows one to reach "a special psycho-physical state and gives one an enhanced perception of the world by which one is surrounded. It is a state of communion with the universe and with ancestral souls that is often tied to shamanic rituals." Samard corroborates all that by Okna's own words: "The sounds connect us to space, to the souls of our ancestors. It is increase of energy, elevation of mind." For the experience of being in touch with the depths of time and space to be as full as it can be, the producer has enriched the album by sounds of nature – wind, thunder, wolf howling, and horse neighing – which (no cheating here, everything is authentic!) were all recorded "on location", that is, somewhere in the Kalmuk steppe. "The sounds of nature, wind, thunder, wolves, horses and the like", Samard explains, "which tie the songs together from the beginning to the end of the album, have been recorded on location in order to create an authentic audio-world in harmony with the cosmic dimension of the steppe." Samard cites this harmony of Okna's music with nature and cosmos as a kind of guarantee of effectiveness of his own product, the music album produced by him; guarantee that the album will elicit the experience expected by the listeners of this kind of music. And the producer knows full well what kind of experience it is supposed to be: an "uninterrupted 57-minute hypnotic trip."

An American company specializing in marketing and promotion of that kind of music has summed up in its very trade name, Pure Nature Music, the notion that in the traditional folk music of Central Asia lies hidden a mystical harmony between man and nature. On the home page of this company's web site (*www.purenaturemusic.com*) it is emphasized that the languages of the peoples of Kakas, Altai, and Tuva have common roots, and that those ethnic groups "perceive nature in a similar way, which is reflected in their music." Elsewhere, in an announcement for a concert of Central-Asian traditional music, impressively entitled *Ancestor of Siberia*, the emphasis is on the connectedness of this music to the natural environment, as it is particularly pointed out that the audience at the concert would experience that connectedness in three registers: the mountain, the forest, and the steppe: "They came from the Altaic mountains, the forests of Kamchatka, and the steppes of Tuva. Pure Nature Music Company features some of the most interesting throat singers, folk dancers, musicians, and shamanic spiritual elders from Central Asia and Siberia."

It is interesting that, in addition to its work specific to musical production (concerts, disks), this firm is involved in organizing workshops, seminars, and lectures destined to those American audiences interested in getting acquainted with the culture of the regions whose music the company promotes. That is how workshops on different styles of throat singing, on Tuvan musical instruments, and on the traditional Etelmen dances and seagulls' voices, on forest sounds, the flute *kbomus*, on Russian folk music, and on shamanism and psychotherapy, were announced for April and May of 2004. The leaders or at least major participants in these workshops are singers, dancers, and shamans from Central Asia.

Various natural sounds can be recorded and offered to the audience independently, without any link to music. A music that could be called "eco music" is thus created. Its production and sales are based on the idea that certain sounds are soothing to the ear and heal the soul of the modern urban man, alienated from nature. Russian web site *www.club bi-fi* offers catalog sales of music compact discs, among which seven under the heading "Sounds of nature for relaxation and meditation." They are recordings of the sound of a mountain stream, of splashing of ocean waves, of tropical jungle, of a summer breeze, of "solo" singing of some thirty different species of birds, as well as their collective chirping in nature, in the woods, in the desert, in the prairie, on the seashore, riverbank etc. It is curious that, in addition to sounds in the strict sense of that word, such as the murmur of a creek or the chirping of birds, the offer includes recordings offering sound evocations of certain images or feelings. One disk in this catalog is entitled "Sunset in the country-side", and another one "Summer loneliness".

November 20, 2003

Returning to Ethnotempos web site. Re-reading its catalog, offering to acquaint me with a few dozen musicians, musical groups and world music festivals dispersed over several continents. In which direction should I continue? Internet allows for choppy, discontinuous itineraries. The system of "windows" makes it possible for me, while remaining in one space, to pull over it another, then the third, fourth, and so on. Even more attractive is the fact that I can mix and combine,

enlarge or shrink, put side by side all those spaces, but I also can slide them into one another. No doubt, the Internet is an ideal means of mixing, or more precisely, it is the quintessential medium of mixing and crossing, which stimulates choppy transpositions, dizzying background changes. That is why it is a medium that represents cultural and technological support of world music.

I am deciding, nevertheless, to continue from Central Asia and Siberia, more or less in straight line, in the direction of Northeast. My main incentive to do so is that by moving toward Alaska, Northern Canada, then Norway I will find more examples of ethno music containing throat singing, similar to that representing the main ingredient of the ethno music of various Central-Asian and Siberian musicians and their groups.

And indeed, Inuit (Eskimos), a population living in the extreme North of Canada and in Greenland, can do throat singing. Actually, the singing is done by their women, in duets, as a rule. As an article on Ethnotempos informs me about the matter, "among the Inuit, the throat singing is done by two women facing each other. The best known such duo are Alice Tullaugaq and Lucy Amarialik, and both ladies, now in their late sixties, are natives of the Puvimituk, located in a district of an equally exotic name – Nanavik, under no circumstances to be confused with the district of Nunavut. No doubt, the above toponyms have no other purpose here than to be figures of exotics. Alice and Lucy made a disk, in 1998, entitled *Katutjatut, Throat Singing*. I would venture to say that the first word is Inuit for throat singing. The blurb about the content of the disk gives the English portion of the title, while the Inuit is there to intimate to a Western listener of the disk

the delights of an unfamiliar, distant, strange, but nevertheless real thing. The description of the content of the disk serves the same purpose: "The songs conjure up the voices of animals living on icebergs, hunting scenes, scenes of everyday life, and often end in laughter." The sales of the disk show that in the case of Alice and Lucy the exotic music is quite marketable. For years they are welcome touring artists in America and Europe.

On another disk introduced here, entitled simply *Tradition* (2000), the main star is Chuna McIntyre. Chuna is an Inuit from the ethnic group of Yupik living in the Southeast of Alaska. He was, according to my French guide, raised by "his grandmother who taught him songs, dances, and tales of his ancestors" (Unlike Marta Sebestyén's grandmother, this old woman did not renounce her peasant soul for the sake of foxtrot). One of the numbers on this disk is Chuna's story entitled "Man on the Moon". Chuna also travels a lot these days on concert and lecture tours. One of his activities is teaching the Yupik language at Stanford.

November 28, 2003

I am remaining in the North, but I am moving to Europe, to Northern regions of Norway and Finland, inhabited by Sámi, (known otherwise as the Lapps), a nomadic population which only in recent years has begun to claim its ethnic and cultural identity. Sámi are spread across a very large area, from central parts of Scandinavia to the Kola Peninsula, covering the territories of four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. There exist ten Samian languages, divided, according to their

geographic distribution, into three groups: the Northern, the Southern, and the Eastern. Consistent with this division is a distinction between three varieties of the Samian traditional song, *joik*: *luobti*, *vuolle*, and *leu'dd*? My indefatigable guide, Stéphane Fougère describes joik as a kind of song that has few words, and most often amounts to no more than repetition of vowels or imitation of animal voices, making Samian singing quite similar to Alpine yodeling, or to Central-Asian throat singing. The most interesting part of this presentation pertains to the traditional function of joik, which is to express the essence of a person, a place, or an animal. That is why every Samian has his or her very own joik, his or her musical code or portrait, which demonstrates that this kind of song is a part of Samian spiritual culture, and that the culture is essentially shamanistic. "Sámi identity is unimaginable without joik", Fougère concludes.

One of the best-known Samian rights activists is the singer Mari Boine, who became an ethno music star in the early nineties. Her songs and the music she performs with her group Mari Boine Band are based on crossing joik with jazz, rock, and electronic music. In an article on this singer, whose subtitle is "Echoing shamans", Fougère says: "The music and in the songs of Mari Boine express the form of tribal spiritual life peculiar to ancient shamans for whom man and nature were inseparable...They invite us to hear the voice of the ancients and to re-examine our relationship with the world and the fellow-man" This is a nice example of a narrative in which extolling the virtues of social and spiritual life of primitive communities, presumably superior, in their authenticity, to the warped modern societies – a commonplace in the rhetoric of primarily right-wing movements of the Twentieth century

– fits in with the idea of multiculturalism, politically correct from a democratic point of view. A right wing cult of a natural man, uncorrupted by civilization, is offered here in the name the respect for the Other imperative.

In an interview she gave to *Ethnotempos*, Mari Boine speaks of how she discovered her Sámi identity and of the significance music based on revived and saved from oblivion joik tradition has for her personally. It is interesting that the very first thing she wrote in Sámi had nothing to do with folklore, as it was an adaptation of John Lennon's song "Working Class Hero". But shortly thereafter she discovered joik an shamans and was reborn, healed. "For me, it was therapy above all", Mari recalls. "My soul was like in a prison. When a man does not belong to himself, he does not accept his own culture, his own language. He is not free. Music somehow put me on the road to myself." That road also lead to a conflict with her parents, who view themselves as Norwegians and Christians.

Mari speaks of the significance the shaman spirituality has for her and her music and says that "shamanic pulsation" present virtually in all of her music. She uses the term "pulsation" because "the shaman rhythm is close to heartbeat". "At concerts", she says, "I try to bring myself into a state of trance". And what is interesting is the fact that trance is an important element in today's electronic music. However, it has been a part of my music for some ten years, because it is a part of my people's history. For me, it is not a fad; it is something I am very attached to, all the more so as it used to be prohibited. I believe that this pulsation has medicinal properties. I believe that at the beginning all cultures were shamanic. Shamanic culture is linked to nature, and we all belong to nature, we were all



in touch with nature originally. To me, it is an important aspect of shamanic pulsation and shamanic spirituality."



Picture 16. Mari Boine

Joik itself is also a part of shamanic rituals. Their participants sing joiks helping thereby the shaman attain a state of trance. In that state he enters the "other world". "In my culture, it is very familiar to all", Mari explains, "but in the West it can look as something exotic, mystical... It is a psychic matter, but also a matter of energy. The scientists have studied that issue: energy of the Sun, inner energy... All that can be scientifically explained away, and there still is something wondrous in it; and I would like to believe that science cannot explain everything away! It is

the heritage that all of us carry deep within ourselves. But because of urbanization and modernization many people have removed themselves from it farther than the rest. Those who knew how to live remaining close to nature are keenly aware of it. Not even all of the Sámi have necessarily that knowledge in this day and age. They have become too westernized, they swear only by the "modern", and dislike what I do, because, according to them, it belongs among things to be forgotten."

A great number of people in the world have fallen prey to this same error, and Mari Boine is pondering how the wisdom lying in traditional culture, the kind she discovered in Sámi culture and music, could renew the world. "Sometimes I say to myself I should write book about it, because all traditional cultures keep within them the shamanic wisdom so needed by the world, if it is to avoid being engulfed by excessive materialism."

The power of genes and energy, criticism of the West, of alienation from natural life, here are so many *topoi* characteristic of the world music speak, and of narratives by the musicians themselves, Serbian in particular. If only Mari Boine knew how many soul mates she has among the Serbian singers! In all likelihood, these are the elements of a global "new gnosis", as the emergence of mysticism in the mass culture was termed by Edgar Morin.

Mari and her group try to replicate the rhythm Sámi shamans achieve beating special drums. That rhythm, those drums, they, even today, disturb some people in Norway; for some it is still repulsive, provocative: "For two-hundred years, people were being frightened by stories according to which the Sámi drum was dangerous, an instrument of Satan, and that fear is now in their genes. And here in France it is only music." However, on

concert tours, the group prefers to use African drums, since they are, as Mary explains, "more practical", not being as sensitive to humidity as the Sámi ones, which in humid weather need to be heated up, and that is not always feasible. This detail draws my attention because it shows how even the most exotic musical identity can be constructed even when some elements of that identity are missing, but also when those elements are replaced by something alien. In this case, African drums in Lapp music are not being used for the sake of fusion, but merely as a substitute, justified by practical considerations, for Far-Eastern instruments.

The last ten or so years, Sámi have been able to meet musicians from other Arctic regions and from Siberia, who have attended music festivals in Lapland. Mari says that Sámi feel very different, as a people, from other Scandinavians, but much closer to peoples of Siberia. "There is some kind of a connection between us", she explains. "That is why those contacts have always been very important for my people. Also, we have been able to touch base with the Tibetan people..." The basis for kinship among different types of traditional music of great many peoples of the world, not only Arctic, is the fact that they are very ancient. That is why Mari feels close, not only to the musical folklore of other Arctic and Asian peoples but also to that of Native Americans. "All those types of music", she says, "have roots reaching back to the earliest ancestral times. Even some African and Native American songs have the same roots and come from the same wellspring... A part of my repertoire is a joik which sounds as if an ancient woman were speaking through me, as if some ancestral voice were audible. The same thing happens when I listen to Carlos, a Peruvian flute

player with whom I collaborate: I have an impression that some one very ancient is speaking through him."

November 30, 2003

The example set by Mari Boine was followed by other Lapp, i. e. Sámi musicians. Ethnotempos introduces a few ethno groups and singers who offer diverse interpretations of joik. They are, as Fougère calls them, "joikers for the Twenty-first century", in other words, "new Sámi shamans." He uses the latter expression in his review of a Norwegian quartet by the name of Transjoik, about whose music – a mixture of the traditional vocal base, elements of jazz and electro-hypnotics (if that is how one can translate the French expression *élément électro hypnotique*) – he is quite enthusiastic: it is, Fougère says, "enchanted, bewildering, terribly modern and undeniably primitive, in short, timeless and magical."

The members of Transjoik like to wear their Sámi origin and identity on their sleeves, as it were. For example, the parents of the group leader by the name of Frode Fidgelsheim raise reindeer and have not forgotten joik. However, concurrently, or primarily, Frode and his group like to keep up with contemporary developments in world music, to maintain close familiarity with all kinds of crossovers, so it is no surprise that this group's drummer Snore Bjork "gets his inspiration from traditional songs of Africa and the Middle East." All in all, the music of this group has a way of stirring up the listener, who will encounter in it "throat singing and underwater murmur, simian screams and extraterrestrial drone." But for him, the listener – at least according to my

*guide de voyage* – all this is but an opportunity for an "introspective journey, beneficial to body and soul." Sámi word *Mahkablake* featured in the title of an album by this group from 1997 means precisely that: "going back where we used to live in order to find something we left there." A mystic journey is also promised by the very title of the album *Meavraa* (2000), meaning in Sámi "the voice of the shaman invoking good spirits."

Google offers over 700 links where Transjoik is mentioned, which only goes to show how protracted this virtual journey through Ethnoland can become for someone willing to take a peek into every nook and cranny along the way, to stray from the chosen path every time an opportunity to do so presents itself. And while a cybernaut errs so, behind his back already pop up new links, to which he has to return. Knowing it full well, I am opening only the official Transjoik web site, offering information in four different languages. One bit of information, which I am reading in French, pertains to joik, described here "one of the oldest forms of musical expression in Europe, which possesses astonishing power... This song without words describes the people, the nature, the environment and passes unto us its primal power that reaches the bottom of our soul." The group defines its approach to music as "adapting old songs by adding to them elements of urban life."

In the same section, I find excerpts from newspaper articles on Transjoik, under the heading: "fascinating, exciting, frightening, admirable, enchanting, supernatural", which are the most frequently used epithets used in describing the music of this group. The first excerpt quoted is the following: "A Christmas party of the insane or music by geniuses?... If you let yourselves get carried away by the

music of the group Transjoik, you will depart on a spiritual journey and will reach a supernatural world." Certain evaluations are quoted here of which it is hard to say whether they are a true expression of enthusiasm or just ironic mocking. For example, one critic says that he recognized in the music by Transjoik "quivering of a Neanderthal couple in an amorous embrace". I am downloading a photo-portrait of this group irresistibly reminiscent of Teofilović Brothers, except for the fact that here the musicians are illuminated by some obviously mysterious light creating something like an aura around their heads.



Picture 17. Transjoik group

December 5, 2003

Ethnotempos extensively reviews the work of a few more Sámi musicians, who offer more or less similar treatment of joik. One of them is Vime Sari who calls *free joik* the kind of songs he composes. He too wants to fascinate and hypnotize the listener, to cast a spell upon him. In this he is aided by the group Rineradio. One album that resulted from Vime's collaboration with this group is entitled *Gierran* ("Enchantment"). His voice, Fougère says, "conjuges up the calls of the local fauna", while in the background one hears "the roar of a turbulent sea, the celestial murmur, the thundering of ritual drums, the crackling of icebergs, in other words, the mysterious throbbing of the arctic world." Their other joint album is entitled *Cugu* ("The Puppy"). It ends in a recording made during a concert, on which one can hear Vime's rendition of a young pup's sad squealing, assisted by many voices from the audience. This kind of "naturalness" is not, however, Vime's invention. In the city of Oulu, in the North of Finland a choir was founded in 1987, which did not sing words, but screamed them at the top of their lungs. Its name is Mieskuoro Hu-utajat, that is, the Howlers. It is the online edition of the Finnish magazine "Welcome to Finland" (*WTF*) ([www.publiscan.fi-cu](http://www.publiscan.fi-cu)) that informs me of these masters of musical howling. It posts a review of one of their concerts: "The whole show has something military about it. Thirty husky men come on stage in formation. All are dressed in old-fashioned black suits with white shirts and neckties held in place by elastic bands. Their faces are serous as they take their places on stage. When they open their mouths, not one listener fails to jump in his seat, for they do not sing, but howl. They do that powerfully and

aggressively all the while observing the rhythm." It is hard to discern what the Howlers are "singing" about, but some words do reveal that it is Finnish patriotic songs, national anthems of various countries, fragments of classical music, children's songs. Their repertoire also includes the Declaration of Human Rights!

The author of this review says that the most curious in all of this is the fact that the Howlers are the best known and sought after Finnish choir. They have already performed in prestigious places such as the Paris Museum of Modern Art, Salzburg Festival, and the Vienna Concert Hall. Somewhat less curious sounds the fact that the Howlers have sung at the European championship track and field meet<sup>1</sup>. The Finnish media call them "the primeval force from Oulu" and "Arctic hysteria". As the choir director, Petri Sirvio, explains, howling reveals how much cruelty there is in many children's songs, and on the other hand, it uncovers all the comedy hidden behind the lofty lyrics of military songs."

What is the meaning of this return to the "natural man", who rejects restraint and keeping distance from its own instinctive nature, and joyfully accepts merging with "natural elements", in other words, being ritually transformed into an animal? Everything seems to point at a global phenomenon, a sort of universally accepted popular pantheism and mysticism, a new wave of irrationality, or, as Georges Bataille would say, new popular forms of expression of man's "cursed side". Bringing Bataille up prompts me to notice that not a single commentator of world music, including the musicians themselves, speaks of a possible

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<sup>1</sup> The Howlers performed in Belgrade on October 19, 2004, at the Rex. Note of June 2005



erotic side of the experience of this kind of music. Is this music truly non-erotic? Is Ethno the enemy of Eros?

Secondly, I cannot help noticing that I am not at a loss for words with which to translate some adjectives and expressions used in describing sounds produced by Vime and his likes: grumbling, gurgling, growling, blaring, moaning, soughing, squealing, shrieking, yelping, howling, drone, whining, wailing. I realize that the Serbo-Croatian language is well equipped for this sort of inventories.

December 7, 2003

Three tall Finnish women sit before me, clad in tight skirts and embroidered blouses, their waists girded with multicolored belts. They gaze at me from a photograph I just found on the web site of the group Värttinä ([www.varttinä.com](http://www.varttinä.com)), and that demonstrates that the whole of the Scandinavian scene is not to be reduced only to what Sámi groups are offering. Three female vocalists and six instrumentalists making up this group draw on the musical and cultural tradition of Karelia, a region in the Southwestern part of Finland, which plays the role of the cradle of the Finnish nation, a holy ground in the eyes of the Finnish nationalists, their Kosovo. The "Welcome to Finland" web site provides a historical run down of "karelianism", a political and cultural movement that began circa 1890, and whose main focus was on glorifying Karelia and searching for ancient origins of its people, whose traces Finnish ethnologists of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries were "finding" all the way East of the Ural mountains. That cult of ancestors and tradition gave an impetus to demands for the creation of Greater

Finland, for the annexation of Karelia, which was a part of Russian territory. That demand lost much of its initial support after the Finno-Soviet war in 1939-1940, during which most of Karelia became a part of the Soviet Union.

It is in Karelia that people began collecting and putting on paper Finnish folk epic poems called the rune songs, out of which Elias Lenrot put together *Kalevala* (second enlarged edition, 1849). It is *Kalevala* that mentions for the first time *kantele*, the instrument used to accompany the singing of rune songs, and which, since the time of romanticism, enjoys the prestige of being the national instrument of Finland, the symbol of Finnish identity. Its likeness is often incorporated into coats of arms, grave monuments, or into the seals of cultural associations.

According to *Kalevala*, it was the divine hero Väinämöinen who built the instrument with his own two hands, in order to be able to provide musical accompaniment to his singing of rune. Väinämöinen is the type of people's bard, "singer of tales" that became popular in many countries during the era of romanticism, and in Karelia there are his would be descendents even today. Kantele is a type of zither, which in its traditional form has five strings, and in more sophisticated versions developed in recent times

The "Welcome to Finland" web site offers some hypotheses as to how kantele arrived in that country: "In Finland, kantele elevated to the rank of a Finnish national instrument, even though his origins reach back into the past of Asia. Its emergence amongst us is related to the time when the first Oriental zithers arrived in the Mediterranean area and Europe. It is presumed that kantele appeared in Finland several centuries B.C. The Schits, a nomadic people of Central Asian origin, were the first ones to bring it into the Baltic countries... This instru-

ment has been in existence for several thousands of years, but continues to change. The tradition is still alive."



Picture 18. Värttinä

More information on this instrument is available on the American web site World Music Tradition ([www.cbz.com](http://www.cbz.com)). It mentions instruments similar to Kantele, such as the

Estonian *kannel*, the Lithuanian *kankles*, the Latvian, and the Russian *gusli*. In Karelia itself this instrument is called in some places *kantervo* or *kanteleh*, while the Lapp people call it *gen'del*. That is why, the author of this review explains, it is possible to speak of "the common cultural tradition of the entire geographic area throughout which the same type of musical instrument is present. That area encompasses Finland, Northwestern Russia, and the Baltic states. There is also a term referring to the fact that all these instruments are very similar to each other. They are often referred to by the common name of Baltic Psalterium.

Värttinä was founded in 1983, in a Karelian village, and its original focus was on cultivating traditional singing, accompanied by kantele, before the group gathered enough courage, in the early nineties, to take some liberties with tradition, to partake of the experimentation so prevalent in the world music. Thus, among the instruments used by Värttinä, in addition to kantele, appear bouzouki, kaval, viola with a wheel (*vielle à roué*), and others. One of the band members, Anto Varilo, explains it this way: "There are people, today, interested in their tradition, and they are trying to learn old songs, to revive them. But our approach is different. We too used to play these songs, but now we want to create something more personal. We no longer do *trad*, but what we do is based on traditional styles." If I am not mistaken, *trad* is an abbreviation for folk. i. e. traditional music, and can be understood as a term designating a particular treatment of traditional music with special attention to preserving the traditional sound.

It is interesting that this group cultivates its connectedness to tradition through books. As the female vocalist, Kirsi Kekenen puts it, 'there are old books, old

recordings of songs we use". This bookish source of inspiration is not detrimental to the image of this group as a product of authentic Finnish culture, as an heir to the autochthonous sound of the old Finnish music, and a guardian of it, as a voice by which the Finnish land and the Finnish tundra let themselves be heard. Fougère entitled his article "The Tundra Girls", and it could also be an appropriate title for a photograph from this group's official web site, which was taken in some woods, and which made me decide to chum around with the group for a while. However, this would not have been an ethno music group if it had not allowed some sounds quite untypical of the old Finnish tundra to be heard in it, among them the voices of the throat singing group, Jat Ka, from Tuva (on the album *Vibma*), and a fragment of a Hungarian lament from 1959, sung by Lucina Nagy (in the album *Meri*). Incidentally, on other promotional photographs of this group there is no tundra, and the attire of its members bears no trace of a folkloric costume, but is in a style that apparently dominates the design of clothing for ethno musicians, emphasizing lines and shapes connoting no particular ethnicity, something in between folk costume, priestly garb, and costumes worn by protagonists of motion pictures about Middle Ages.

### III

## CELTIA

December 15, 2003

After Karelia, here I am in Celtia. The road has led me from Finland to Brittany, from where I am now taking brief excursions into other "Celt lands", Galicia, Scotland, Wales. It has taken me more than a week to get myself acquainted with Breton musicians of ethno or *world music* persuasion. The Ethnotempos web site alone, which is my guide in this terrain too – in fact, my most frequent guide is now the author of articles and interviews posted there, whose pen name is Druidix – features several dozens of musicians, permanent and temporary groups of such persuasion. I am trying to establish which among them is the most important and influential. One name appears the most frequently: Alan Stivell. We are dealing here with a virtuoso on an instrument called the Celtic harp, an instrument that – after it was forgotten for centuries – he brought back to the public, and made it an irreplaceable part of what is considered today the traditional Breton music.

On his own web site ([www.alan-stivell.com](http://www.alan-stivell.com)), Stivell recounts how it all began: "The resurrection of the Breton Celtic harp took place in 1953, in *Maison de la Bretagne* in Paris when the little Alan, who than bore his father's name Cochevelou, played for the first time this instrument with a sound like no other. That was the very first Celtic harp of the Twentieth century". Thanks to Alan and his father Georges, the Celtic harp made a comeback in Scotland and Ireland as well, before it went on to become popular worldwide, especially after the release of Alan's CD entitled *Renaissance de la harpe celtique*. For the rebirth of this legendary instrument of the ancient Celts to take place, it was not enough to reconstruct it conservatively, i. e. in its original form – of which very little is actually known – but it was necessary instead to give the instrument a new shape, and also new and modern accessories. That is made quite obvious by the fact that Stivell has made an electrical version of a Celtic harp. By such an act, – based, no doubt, on a conviction that authentic ethno sound is not impaired by the electrical power, but can, on the contrary, only be aided by it in reaching the ears of today's listeners – Stivell has joined the ranks of ethno musicians, actually he holds the place of one of the world music founders.

For Alan, the discovery of the Celtic harp has, from the very beginning, represented a discovery of Celtiness, if that is how the French word he uses: *celtitude* can be translated into English. "He discovered early", I read on his web site, "that the Celts and their culture, openly disparaged in our time, represent nevertheless a civilization of undreamed-of originality, which broadens the boundaries of thought, aesthetics, feeling, human imagination, the boundaries imposed by official schools

and institutions." That is why he "works on himself", educates himself, learns Breton and other Celtic languages, "pushes off into the history of Brittany, among its antiquities, into Celtic mythology, art and literature", and at the same time he takes interest in the "political, cultural, and social transformations of the Twentieth century which have brought into question the official education, secular and religious."



Picture 19. The Celtic harp

Besides the harp, Alan Stivell plays a number of other ancient instruments such as *bombarde* and *biniou*-a variety of Scottish bagpipe, and he includes in his repertoire Welsh, Irish, and Scottish motifs, which – as his web site cannot stress enough – makes him the first



leader of the Celtic music movement, who was only followed by all the other Breton singers and musicians known today. However, Alan does not settle just for that pioneer role in the renewal of the Breton and Celtic tradition, but he sees himself as an important figure in music in general, that is in something he calls "universal music", and which is arrived at when music is rid of various dividing lines, social (between popular and academic music), temporal (between old, ethnic, and traditional, on one hand, and contemporary, current, on the other), sociological (between city and country), cultural and technological (between oral, written, and improvised), and geographic (between regions and continents, Brittany and the World, East and West). He is not unaware that leveling and uniformity among diverse cultures are dangerous, but he is convinced that the danger can be averted, and the differences preserved, and he points at his own experience and work as an example of how it can be accomplished: "He has always attempted to bring closer to people on all continents what is sung in a minor language, bringing out exceptional wealth of his homeland and its Celtic neighbors, without being afraid to imbue that Celtic music with sounds from around the World." Besides, Alan Stivell considers himself a precursor of sorts of the *New Age*, and says that his composition "Ys", from the album *Renaissance de la harpe celtique* could be understood as a manifesto of that culture." Nevertheless, keeping in mind that that the term *New Age* has taken on some negative connotations as well, he is quite willing to accept that a part of his music be related to the so-called *Lounge Music*.

An important place among the pioneers of the Celtic harp belongs to Mirdin (real name: Rémy Chauvé),

founder (in 1984) of The International Meet of the Celtic Harp in Dinan, member of the group Afro Celt Sound System, assembled by Simon Emerson in the decade of the nineties of the last century, and of the Celtic harp duet *Ars Celtica* (1997), whose other member is the female-harpist Zil. In addition to the Celtic harp the two have in common a childhood spent near Cape Fréhel. To that cape is dedicated their album *Fréhel Féeries* (2001). "We had come to the idea", Zil recounts, "to follow an imagined arrival on the cape of visitors from the city. They arrive in carloads listening to their car radios playing city music. Gradually, the sea emerges; or rather one hears sounds supposed to announce it. Then a walk around the Cape begins, which in reality lasts six hours. We have covered that whole route with a sound engineer, musicians, harps... Finally, one arrives at a place called Goat Step (*Le Pas de la chèvre*), from which a vast panorama opens up Westward, toward the the land of the Breton language, and that is why the disk ends in a gavotte, with bagpipes and a bombarde, but also with an African cora, because the vista includes open sea." Here we have an interesting passage from a type of music that is naturally, physically as it were, linked to a native soil, not only by the harp as a symbol of autochthonous music, but also by authentic sounds of the local nature, to a type of music of a mixed genre, mixed globally at that, to music that is known today as *trans-world-fusion*. The passage does not lose its connection to geography and nature, at least not in Zil's story, because it is motivated by the vastness of the view from a Breton cliff and thoughts of Africa that such a broad vista can inspire.

The desire to learn more about ethno musicians who mix instrumental sounds with those of nature, which

phenomenon is known as ethno-eco fusion, is the reason why, for a moment, I am moving from Breton cliffs all the way to Arizona. A leap of such magnitude is made possible by my parent ship Ethnotempos, or more precisely, by an article, therein, by Sylvie Hamon on R. Carlos Nakai, one of the greatest masters of the red cedar flute, the traditional instrument of the Navajo Indians. He was, as Sylvie Hamon puts it (Ethnotempos, May 1998), "brought up in the spirit of veneration of the ancestral culture", the culture of his people.

However this – as we would say in Serbia – Arizona "frulaman", extensively uses in his work modern technology, synthesizers, samplers and the like. In his work, ancestral and modern cultures go hand in hand. Modern technology enables him to incorporate sounds from nature into his

compositions, which he personally records in places of which those compositions speak, and those places are most often canyons and valleys of Arizona.

Nakai has gone the farthest in that direction in the company of Paul Horne, one of the founders of New Age music. In his "spiritual quest" by means of music and within it Horne established the practice of recording music on locations where there are the best-known temples and other holy things, or in places which captivate a beholder with their grandeur or mysteriousness, such as Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramid, or Findhorn in Scotland. The grandiose Canyon de Chelly in Arizona was one of such places, and his plan to record something there brought Horne to Nakai. Sylvie recounts how the two of them recorded the CD *Inside Canyon of Chelly*: "The disk took a weekend to record. They set out, without any prior preparations, for the Canyon de Chelly, located on Navajo land in

Northeastern Arizona. Their work was complete improvisation, inspired by the mystery of that place and that moment. They recorded in different parts of the canyon, using echoes bouncing off rocky cliffs, and those recordings were neither changed nor refined later on in the studio, so that moments of improvisation and actual sounds of nature remained intact (birds, insects, water, wind, distant thunder). Audible on the disk is even an airplane flying over the canyon during recording."

December 18, 2003

Saxophonist and bombarde player, Roland Becker got an opportunity to perform on stage with Alan Stivell at the tender age of eighteen. The year was 1975. Speaking of that to Druidics, Becker recalls how two years later it occurred to him to try something that would be Celtic jazz. Stivell, Becker says, "has represented his music as Celtic folk; the group Dan AR Braz has called the music on its CD *Duar Nevez* Celtic rock'n'roll, so I thought: why wouldn't there be something like Celtic jazz.". Michel Portal helped him understand better what he should do. However, Becker did not share Portal's interest in working with the material offered by the music of different peoples as he preferred to stick to Breton material exclusively. I wish, he explained, "to preserve my Breton identity." He holds it dear, but God forbid that he may be a nationalist. "When somebodz keeps saying 'I am a Breton', 'I am a Celt", Becker explains, "that person ends up making dangerous nationalistic statements. Even in this day and age, there is talk about racial purity. Well, that's what really scares me. One has to be very cautious.

Even decent people often slip into bullshit, like Le Pen..." Becker does not believe that his Breton identity is threatened because he includes elements of jazz in his treatment of Breton traditional music and because in his compositions one can hear instruments that came from the four corners of the world. On one of his first disks (*Fallaen*, which in Breton means "Eclipse", released in 1982) one can hear a Tai gong, a Slovak drum, a Creol tympany, an African thumb piano, as well as the instruments with names such as *flexaton* and *asinine jaw*. All are in the service of intoning one single sound: the Breton one.

His following CD, *Gavr'inis*, named so after a small island in the bay of Morbihan, the home of the famous neolithic tumulus with megalithic stone engravings, also offers an amalgam of traditional Breton music and jazz. The disk comes with a brochure with texts on the stones and their photographs. The brochure begins with the following: "The stone carvings of Gavr'inis represent circles which mean alternation of day and night, low and high tide, seasons of the year, and succession of years. Those circles and rhythms fuse themselves into sound images and at that point my music tends to become something ritualistic and timeless. It transforms itself into a secular prayer, an incantation. It transforms fear into joy, and tries to encompass the time interval in which the events of a fairytale unfold. The same law rules music, dance, and architecture, which means that every motif (every character) reveals a life, a time of a past emotion."

With his following disk, Roland Becker explores a period in the history of traditional Breton music: the mid-Nineteenth century. He is, actually, attempting to reconstitute the sound environment of a given moment of

that history, to conjure up music that could have, one long ago past day, in the middle of the Nineteen century, been heard in Brittany, but also all the other sounds with which that day could have been filled. He had asked him self this question: "Imagine yourself in Brittany in the year 1848, and what do you hear?" In order to be able to answer that question, to reconstitute and bring back to life the sounds of a time past, of a moment in it, he first seeks all of it in books and on pictures. That is, Becker recounts, how came about a "sound report on a traditional society, entitled *Deueh Fest ha Fest noz* ("Festive day and Nocturnal Fiesta"), a sort of a sound documetary film." Beside musicians, in the creation of this CD participated a number of actors, playing fair vendors and cryers, imitating bird calls and animal sounds, or just re-creating the usual background noise of a fair by rattles and clappers, beating on copper kettles, whistling through a hollow hazelnut shell, with an ivy leaf or with other blades of grass. Over all those sounds, one hears bursts of fireworks and the murmur of Breton-speaking children..."

Two years ago Roland gave up folk instruments in order to found together with the accodeonist Régis Iban a duo named Kof à Kof, a Breton name of a dance for two , meaning "belly to belly". With this kind of an ensemble he is attempting to travel back in time, into the years between the two World wars, when in Breton cities appeared for the first time the tendency toward replacing the traditional pair of instruments, the bagpipes an the bombarde with a more modern pair – the accordeon and the saxophone. The later is what the duo Kof à Kof consists of. Their CD entitled *Au Café Breton* (2002) cultivates the rhythms of polka, mazurka, and java, along with references to popular swing musicians of that era.

Like *Gavr'inis*, this disk is accompanied by a booklet containing explanations and photographs.

In Roland's opinion, music does not receive its identity from the instruments on which it is played, but from what the musicians play on those instruments. That is why he does not hesitate to use instruments of diverse origins, such as accordeon and saxophone, without any fear that the Breton character of his music might be betrayed by it. A duo compized of these two instruments, he explains, „can be found in China, Russia, Romania... A person can listen to a Polish, Tunisian, Algerian, or Breton thing, and after hearing three bars , tehy will say: well, this is a gavotte, thhis is Breton music! One can see right away that it is not something Chinese. Besides, the accordeon is a German instrument (basically Austrian), and the saxophone was invented Adolph Sax around 1840. So, it is a Belgian instrument. So, we have two instruments not connected to our tradition, but we still succeed in playing on them music of which people will say: yeah, this is Breton. All in all, these fomulations of this artist's personal poetiscs can boil down to one basic postulate, to the conviction that the Breton Musical identity is unwaivering, that it successfully resists all influences, that the Breton sound does not lose itself when mixed with other sounds, that it can be expressed, without any damage or danger to its identity, on any musical instrument. Stories of its transormations only reaffirm its continuity.

December 20 ,2003

Searching for information on "bagads", Breton for folk music groups (*bagad*, plural *bagadoù*), I am discovering

that these groups exist in many Breton localities, that they enjoy the support of local and regional authorities, that there is an organization in charge of promotion and selection of these groups through a system of competitions. The most important competitions are the Championship of Brittany and the State Championship. Following the model of sports competitions, the participants of these are divided into four leagues, i. e. categories, and the first place winner in a given category, at the State Championship, earns the right to compete in the next higher category the following year. Many bagads have their own web presentations. I am reading some of them. The web site of the Green Mill bagad from Quimper (Bagad ar meilhoù Glaz) emphasizes the fact that among its founders (1951) was the then mayor of Quimper, which goes to show that in this case, the same as in the cases of gusle societies existing today in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the initiative had come from people close to government, members of the local political elite. It is quite interesting to observe that among all the virtues of this bagad the top spot belongs to discipline. "Bagad", it says there, "has rapidly earned its good reputation thanks to its discipline, its continuous growth, and the youth of its members." Actually there is nothing unusual in this: amateur folkloric ensembles have everywhere, not unlike the boy scouts, something military about them: uniforms, parades, flags. Enclosed is a chart showing the gradual ascent of this disciplined bagad to the major league: "3rd category 1983, 2nd category 1989, 1st category 1995!"

I see that there are two kinds of bagad. One is made up of amateur ensembles which are essentially a means of including local population in politically correct social and cultural activities, which help preserve tradition, identity,



and the like. On the other hand, there are bagads formed by professional musicians, which also can exercise the function of building and perpetuating the Breton identity, but who simultaneously, and often primarily, see themselves as participants in musical and social processes on the international scene. In the first case, bagads are a matter of local folklore, in the second, they are a part of *world music*.

(Here i have to take a break. The monitor screen is beginning to flicker. The mouse is acting up. Time for major repairs?)

December 23, 2003

The group Anjel I. K., founded in 1998, cultivates music which is a mixture of traditional Breton singing and *groove*; in Breton it is called *Groov'Breizh*. In the interpretation of Gael Nicol, the group member, thos mix is possible only because both *groove* and the Breton music are chatacterized by a monophonic form, so that "groove is inherent to the Breton music". This group wishes, as Christan Nicol, one of its founders, puts it, "to do the traditional repertoire, while being turned toward the future." Its goals are political, which means that the group Anjel I. K. Is striving to aid the expansion of the movement for the affirmation of the Breton language and identity. "We are trying", Christan continues, "to attract as many people as possible, among those outside our movement, so as to broaden the support for the cause of Breton language in our part of Brittany. For it must not be forgotten that, after all, language is that which connects together our entire history, that it is a living historical experience, a repository

of our cultural acquisitions." As far as traditional songs are considered, Christan describes their treatment as a way of infusing them with a new life, new strength. "They now sound in a new way. They have found response and still have it here in Brittany. We give them today new strength by turning ourselves toward the future." It is a chance, he adds, for the traditional instruments and their master-players to break out of the narrow confines of the traditional repertoire. The traditional music and folk culture in general of Brittany has a passionate defender in the person of Gilles Servat a musician and the author of a series of science-fiction novels inspired by Celtic legends (*The Arcturus Chronicles*). In his opinion, The traditional folk culture has many advantages over modern high brow culture. First of all, „the tradition does not encourage generation gaps." The elderly sometimes dislike what the young do, but there is no real problem of mutual lack of understanding. Conversely, the high culture divides people. For instance, the elite music that is studied at conservatories, Servat warns, "bores ordinary people, because they have no musical education, and do not understand what is being played to them... You do not have that in traditional culture. I think it is not so bad to live without divisions from time to time, for different generations to live together without calling one another "old farts" and "dumb kids".

Servat is a leading advocate of introducing the Breton language into public schools and public life. Speaking on that issue, he claims the necessity of preserving the diversity and cultural wealth constituted by the multitude of languages in the world. "Each language", he says in an interview on *Ethnotempos*, "shapes the way people think." As far as I can tell, he is not worried too much

about one logical consequence of that diversity which is that it makes understanding among people that much more difficult. He hates the French republicans for imposing the French language as the only official language of the land. He views as "moronic" their conviction that the growth of The Breton language could lead to the secession of Brittany from France.

December 28, 2003

The Breton musicians are striving to revive the traditional music

of Brittany, as a part of a larger "Celtic tradition". They readily collaborate with their colleagues from the neighboring "Celt countries", such as Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Galicia, and other parts of Europe. An example of that is the *Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient (Festival interceltique de Lorient)*, a gathering of admirers of traditional culture, and, above all, traditional music, from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Galicia, and other parts of Europe where there are artists who feel connected to the Celtic tradition. As Druidics put it, "the role of this festival is to rally up the living forces of all of Celtia."

However, while reading interviews with Breton musicians posted on the pages of Ethnotempos, I have an impression that to the collaboration with other Celts they prefer working together with musicians from the four corners of the world, from other continents, i. e. they prefer musical blending and crossovers referred to as *fusion*. The logic of that mixing differs from a simpler one underlying the collaboration with partners closer geographically and culturally. That is why I find particularly

interesting the explanations musicians give whenever the question is raised about the motives for blending diverse and from each other geographically and culturally so far removed musical traditions. It would be interesting to find out who encourages such practices, and with what kind of an agenda, as well as to determine to what degree it is a part of the policy of certain countries or international organizations, and how much of it is music market driven.

Pierrick Tangy, the leader of the Breton bagad Men ha tan (Stone and Fire) has collaborated over the last few years with Doudou N'dijaj Rose, one of the best-known griottes in Senegal, the composer o Senegal's national anthem. The result of that collaboration is an album entitled *Dakar*. In his answer to the question as to how his collaboration with the Bretons had begun, Doudou explains that the incentive had come from his publisher (Run Productions): "They always want to connect me with great musicians in order for us to try crossing different cultures" When Doudou heard Tangy's bagad play, on an audio-cassette sent to him by his publisher, he discovered that this music was akin to that of his own country, more or less identical to it. "I believe", he says, "that their music is similar to a large portion of our culture. When these Senegalese and Bretons met for the first time, a single day of rehearsing sufficed before they could comfortably begin a two-month concert tour around France. Doudou was pleased with the tour, because during it he was working with people who "love their culture as much as I love mine." And what pleased him even more was the fact that they "do not dwell on what their culture already has, but bring to it new things, and seek new cultures." Doudou N'dijaj Rose uses the term *evolution*, which appears in discussions about world music whenever somebody needs

to stress the difference between a conservative, on one hand, and an innovative, evolutionary approach to musical tradition, on the other.

Doudou generally speaks as convinced fusion advocate and his speech is full of statements such as: "I have always said that I am for mixing cultures together", or "My dream is crossing Senegalese culture with other cultures." However, when opening himself up to other cultures he limits him self to working with those artists who first and foremost, i. e. before opening themselves up to anybody or anything, guard the identity of their culture. "I need people", he says, "who have roots, who truly wish to be rooted, to safeguard their heritage and their culture, so it does not get lost." Doubtless, this Senegalese musician knows how to use both main registers of ethno music narration. In one of them, somewhat older, glorified are identity, heritage, and their universally accepted metaphor; roots, in the second, newer, glorified are crossovers, mixed genres, and the power that music has to cross borders, for it is the so-called universal language.

The manner in which Doudou has formed his fourteen-member musical group negates his stated willingness to cross his music with somebody else's, as the whole group is made up of members of his family, his children, his sons-in-law and nephews. It is good for the music, the leader of the group and the family head thinks, because his "group is homogeneous, we all get along great." The getting along has its ethnic side, because it means being able to read a specific code of signs that Doudou's gestures and hints represent: "When I gesture, they know what every single gesture stands for. We have to communicate in that way, because there is no sheet music. I have made my own partition out of gestures, glances, and my body

movements." The conclusion is unambiguous: "You have to be a member of my family in order to play with me." Nevertheless, we know that he can make music with total strangers from far away. Doudou's group is made up exclusively of percussionists, who play on drums from the broad category known as tam-tam drums. The art of drum beating is handed down from generation to generation, and it is particularly important to learn different beats appropriate for different occasions in which the drummers are called on to perform., in other words, suited to different purposes of drumming. That is how there are different rhythms for weddings, for tattooing and circumcision rituals, for baptisms, than for rain making rituals, for stopping noise made by crickets, rhythms for training people to work with animals. While talking about all that, Doudou makes a reference or two to the fact that he does treat his heritage freely, and he does not hesitate to claim that he has perfected the legacy of the ancient ones : "Because one must still grow."

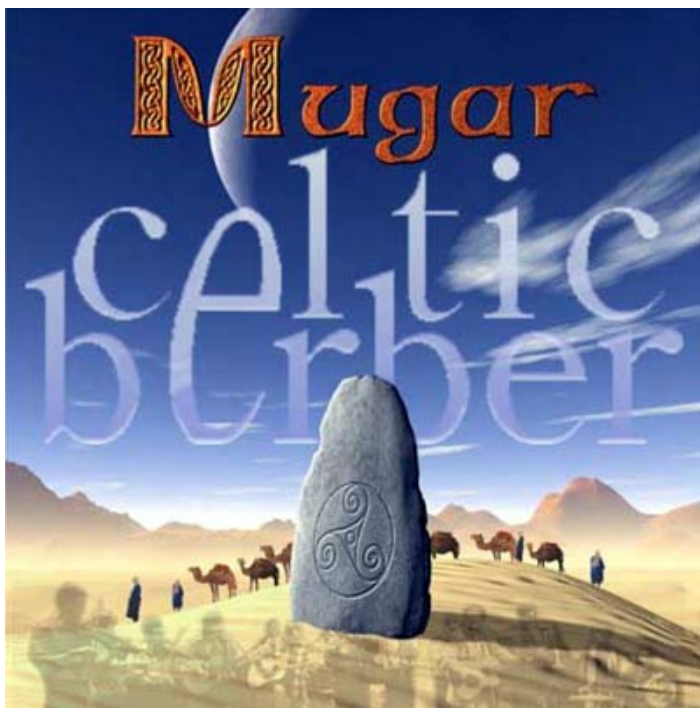
After Doudou, Pierrick Tangy takes the floor. His group performs in varying formations, but it has a core made up of the members of the Saint-Nazaire bagad (Bagad de Saint-Nazaire). Homogeneity of the core is reflected in that its musicians function well artistically, but there is something else: they get along well as people. Tangy does not say: like a family, but the idea of some kind of unity guarantying brotherhood is implicitly present here: "It functioned well in the artistic but even better in the human sense", Pierrick says. When asked what makes his music suited for the collaboration with African musicians, Pierrick says that Africans have a sense of kinship with the Breton tradition. He once played with some Congolese musicians, and they told him the same

thing he has heard from Doudou, that when they listen to Breton music they have an impression of listening to something from their own country. He emphasizes the fact that for the collaboration with the Senegalese he did not have to select anything special from his repertoire, but held onto the same repertoire his group had played with Henri Taxier. Moreover, in his opinion, musical experience of the same kind is arrived at in both cases. "We equally enjoy", he says, "playing with Taxier as with Doudou. When we play with the latter, it does give rise to more cultural differences, but when we are at our best we produce the same kind of music."

January 10, 2004

"A Megalith in the Sahara" is the title of an interview, posted on Ethnotempos, with the members of a Breton-Kabyl group *Mougar*, made up of Michel Sikiotakis, Youenn Le Berre, and Nasredine Dalil. *Mougar* is a Kabyl word, meaning the meeting place of desert caravans. How did they meet? *Mougar* too was founded under the incentive coming from promoters. This time, it was the organizers of the Celtic Spring Festival, held in a Paris concert hall. In 1996, they proposed to Sikiotakis – who was born in Paris to a Greek father and a French mother, and who devoted himself to Celt (Breton and Irish) traditional music – and to a Breton by the name of Le Berre to organize an encounter between Breton and Kabyl Music. These two approached Nasredine Dalil asking him to find musicians on the Cabil side, in other words, Berber musicians. Because, as Dalil explains, The Kabyl are only one of the ethnic groups making up the Berber population, a very old people, if not

even the oldest in the world, for it may have "existed even before the dinosaurs" (Dinosaurs have not occurred even to the most imaginative representatives of the Serbian autochthonic school, not even to Mrs. Olga Luković-Pjanović, the authoress of the famous book *The Serbs – The Oldest Nation.*)



Picture 20. The jacket of the first album of Mugar



Youenn Le Berre answers the question concerning the connection between Celt and Berber music as follows: "When people from different countries, who play their traditional music on percussion instruments, get together they very easily communicate with each other, their joint music making achieves harmony primarily thanks to rhythm". However, in addition to this basic kinship of all percussionists, and thus of Celt and Berber drummers, based on the fact that rhythm is close to all of them, Le Berre thinks that in most regards there is an "astonishing similarity between Kabyl and Breton music, rhythmically as well as melodically." If one keeps this in mind, it is no surprise that in Mougars's repertoire "the blend sounded very natural, very spontaneous."

Conversely, Michel Sikiotakis emphasizes that it is "equally important to show that it is possible to align even musicians who at first glance have nothing in common." He thinks that linking together and crossing different types of music is very much "a matter of volition". "One of the messages of our group", Michel says, "would go like this: you see how people can get along even though it looks so hard to do at the beginning." The Mougars group, has shown thereby how one can introduce many things into Celt music that are substantially different from it, "because of the spirit of friendship and the affinity, which, in the last analysis, are more important than the issue of similarity of musical structures."

Fougère, who is conducting this interview, wants to get to the bottom of the question of motives for various musical crossovers, so he asks the members of the group if, in their opinion, there are some crossovers that should not be practiced. "Nothing is forbidden", Le Berre says. "However, certain things go together easier than others.

For example, Berber and Celt music are easily blended together also because there is a large Kabyl community living in France." And he goes on to state his multiculturalist progressist creed: "Music is not an idea, nor is it something pure that must not be touched; music is culture, something people practice. It does not belong to anybody but those playing it and those listening to it."

January 12, 2004

Wishing to find out more on Mouggar, I discover the web site of the Rhone-Alps Traditional Music Center (*Centre de Musiques Traditionnelles Rhone-Alpes* – CMTRA; [www.cmtra.org](http://www.cmtra.org)), and on it – a quarterly virtual Information Bulletin, posting, since 1997, updates on ethno music, and what is of particular interest to me, conversations with musicians and other people involved in this kind of music. In there – in the Bulletin № 34, July-September, 1999 – is published the interview with Michel Sikiotakis, conducted by Catherine Chantrenne. Speaking of the collaboration between Breton and Kabyl musicians, Michel places more emphasis here on the alleged kinship between The Bretons and the Kabyls, "on the musical and historical level, because they are communities that were persecuted in the past, which share the misfortune of immigration, and "whose music was repressed for a great many years". In addition to that, he finds some musical similarities, a consequence of the fact that the music of both communities had to be urbanized. The Kabyls found themselves forced to migrate into cities, first Algerian, then French. "When they arrived in the city", Sikiotakis recounts, "these musicians had to adjust in order to be

able to survive in the new environment, which is reminiscent of what happened to Irish musicians when they landed in the United States, or to Bretons arriving in Paris." He remarks that these three peoples have some similar habits. Thus the Bretons, the Irish and the Kabyls like to sing around a table, for their own fun, with drink and food. Michel himself sits down sometimes with Parisian Kabyls and sings along with them. He particularly appreciates the spontaneity of the atmosphere at such get-togethers: "Everyone participates, some sing, while others keep the beat, tapping on the table with their hands, and it is the exact same atmosphere I know from Irish pubs, everything is natural somehow." The Mougar group strives, at its concerts, to conjure up the ambiance of these spontaneous musical get-togethers by a stage set suggesting a pub interior.

One place in Sikiotakis' narration particularly draws my attention: it is the place where he talks about what Breton and Kabyl musicians perform together when they cross their respective musical traditions in the same musical numbers, and what when they desire to remain each group within its own tradition. "It is a rare occurrence", Michel says, "that Berber musicians would play Breton melodies, or Breton musicians Berber melodies, on their own. As a rule, everybody plays what is his." Nevertheless, "there are moments when a complete fusion takes place." That is how new music is born. Everyone "retains his way of performing, his style, in order to put it in the service of a new kind of music." Sikiotakis distinguishes three kinds of mixing: first, mixing of cultures, second mixing of professional and amateur musicians, and third, mixing of traditional and composed music.

When asked if the kinship between Celt and Berber music is a result of certain historical circumstances, Michel humbly admits that he is no authority on historical questions, but that he heard that Celts had once dwelt in North Africa, of which also a certain number of megaliths in that part of the world are alleged to be the proof. He prefers to speak of "bewildering" musical similarities: "some Kabyl feminine wedding songs unusually resemble Breton gavottes, and we have also noticed that some Berber rhythms agree very well with the Irish gígues." There are also similarities between Irish *slow airs* and *sean nös* and certain things that can be heard in North Africa or in the East. Thanks to that, in one of Mougari's numbers it was possible to "tie Breton onto Kabyl lyrics and to transition smoothly from one language to the other, smoothly phonetically only, because in other respects the speakers of each language can, of course, notice the difference." Michel emphasizes here too that for him the human message is more important than the musical one, the former showing that it is enough for people to get together to see what they can do together. He sees himself as kind of a Messiah of multiculturalism. "I think that people are moved by a hope our music raises, the hope expressed by the words: we are different, but we can still live together."

January 13, 2004

Perhaps the most interesting project of crossing different types of traditional music was attempted by the British musician and producer Simon Emerson, founder of the group Afro Celt Sound System. On Ethnotempos, I find

two interviews with Emerson, one he gave in November 1997, and the other in October 1999. These conversations were held after the release of each of the first two disks by Emerson's group: *Volume 1* (1996) and *Volume 2* (1999). In the first interview, Emerson recounts how the group came into being. "It happened", he begins, "in 1991, when I was working on the album *Lam Toro* in Senegalese capital Dakar, with a local griot by the name of Baaba Maal. On that disk, Maal sings an exquisite Senegalese lament, as the Irish player, Davie Spilane, accompanies him on a flute. Spilane told me, on that occasion, that many Irish experience African music as something very close to them." It is from Davie that he heard that, before the arrival of the Celts, the original Irish were, perhaps, black.



Picture 21. Afro Celt sound System

It prompted Emerson to do some research on his own, and he discovered two Somali brothers who lived in Wales and spoke Welsh", while in a book entitled *The Black Celts* he found out that Berber language was pretty similar to Welsh, as well as that "several centuries" ago a great migration of people from North Africa toward Europe and the Celtic isles took place. It is in that same book that he found the bit of information that subjects of the early Egyptian empires had migrated in two opposite directions, toward India and toward Europe. "It is possible", Emerson concludes this erudite consideration, "that the ancestors of Baaba Maal's tribe had gone Southward, across the Saharan desert, Mauritania, all the way to Senegal." Emerson was, in his own words, enchanted by that history to the point that he did not wonder if it was true. In order for him to accept it as true, it was enough that it to see that Africans from the above-mentioned Senegalese tribe "truly feel at home in Ireland." Moreover, he felt about his work on his first disk with Afro-Celt music (*Volume 1*) as though it were the fulfillment of some old, mysterious covenant: "You see", he confided in *Druidics* in November 1997, "it is a bit like a mission of sorts, a Grail, a Quest...I needed four years to accomplish that, beginning with my stay in Dakar. It is a little bit like a mystical vision. It belongs among spiritual matters, and that is why it is difficult for me to explain, but it is something that had to happen to me." It is interesting that this seeker of sources of musical affinity between the Senegalese and the Celts is neither of the two, but an Englishman instead, a former DJ in London. And, what was very important for the success of Afro Celt Sound System, Emerson knew personally Peter Gabriel, the owner of Real World, the biggest world music label. He accepted Simon's project, saying: "O.K. It's a good idea."

In an interview given to *Druidics* in October 1999, to what he had said earlier about incentives for creating a mixed Afro-Celt group, Simon Emerson adds the influence of the environment in which he grew up. The journalists who have difficulty understanding the music this groups offers "could understand it completely if they took a walk through the section of London where I live." "My neighborhood", Emerson adds, "is truly cosmopolitan and this mutual closeness of different cultures has lead to the emergence of anew kind of music we in London call *global beats*. In this interview he vehemently criticizes the groups Deep Forest an Sacred Spirits, which, in his words, use cheap exotic samples, and what is the worst, behave like real extortionists. "I am sorry to have to say this", Emerson concludes, 'but they unscrupulously pilfer from native cultures."

January 15, 2004

Every straying away from the main road – and here it is the stretch that leads through Breton and other "Celt" groups of world music, and that I am continuing to follow with the guidance of *Ethnotempos* – makes me vulnerable to the temptation of getting lost in a vast labyrinth of new web sites to which new links lead. Among them are some that specialize in this kind of music, and that I have not co-me upon so far, such as World Music Central ([www.worldmusic-central.org](http://www.worldmusic-central.org)), Buda musiques, Les musiques du monde ([www.budamusique.org](http://www.budamusique.org)), World Music Institute ([www.heartworld.org](http://www.heartworld.org)), and Mondomix ([www.mondomix.com](http://www.mondomix.com)). I will have to return to some of these web sites, but for the time being, I am still capable of controlling my urge to dive

into the wealth of their archives, with hundreds of new documents, new articles and interviews with musicians the majority of whose names are completely new to me. Alright, I comfort myself, I haven't set out to meet all of them, not even most of them. They don't even have to be the best among those musicians. But one thing is for sure – I must not fail to acquaint myself with the ones that have, in the course of the last fifteen years or thereabouts, given direction to the development of this music, and especially with those who formed a judgment about its values and social and political function. Easier said than done!

Nevertheless, I visit the web site devoted to one of main African drums, called djembe (*www.djembe.com*). It is made of wood and goatskin, and the drummer usually carries it around by a shoulder strap. It originated in Western Africa, from the territory of Mandingo people, now divided between Mali, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. My attention was caught by the motto of this web site, the saying: "La vérité viendra de la percussion" (Truth shall come from the drums), because a similar saying is used in praising the veracity of Balkan gusle-playing bards' narratives: "Gusli do not lie." The site offers information about ritual and other social functions of djembe in the traditional African society, as well as about the role of a guardian of national identity, assigned to African drummers and other traditional artists when their countries became independent (In this regard too, the similarity with the Balkan gusle and gusle-playing bards is salient). Particular emphasis is placed here on the cultural policies of the former leader of Guinea, Sékou Touré, who strove to create top quality ensembles of national music (*Ballets Africains de Guinée*, in 1959, and *Ballets Djoliba*, in 1964) through a network of schools and folkloric ensembles. In



recent times, the author of this article on djembe, Christophe Delaeter says further, the African countries are less interested in their own national artists, who for that reason emigrate en masse, and go on to play in all kinds of musical ensembles. That is how "little by little, djembe is becoming a part of our Western culture."

This web site on djembe posts as well the text of a mythical story of how people got this instrument. For me, it is another example confirming that the growing popularity of ethno music leads to a growing interest in traditional culture in general, not only music, but also in folktales and folk legends. "Once upon a time", this myth tells us, "people did not know what a drum was; only the chimpanzee had drums. At that time – that was before rifles existed – a man by the name So Dje was the leader a band of trap-using hunters...One day as he was hunting, he noticed a group of chimps in a treetop. They first ate fruit, and then began having fun by beating a drum. Se Dje then dug a hole in the ground and set up a trap over it. The following morning he came back to that place, and heard the whole chimp tribe cry, old and young. The drummer chimp was caught in the trap... As the hunter approached, all the chimps dispersed in fear of him, and the drum remained in the net. So Dje took it to the village. That is why the chimpanzees no longer have a drum, but instead beat their chests with their fists."

January 17, 2004

I am going back to the Bretons. I am reading the interview with the trio Red Cardel on Ethnotempos, from May, 1998. Stéphane Fougère – I am tempted to say my

very own Stéphane, for that is how long have we been traveling together, even though he may not even have a clue about it – introduces them as a group that crosses folk with rock music, an also, thematically, Breton with Slavic, Berber, and Oriental music. He mentions some of this trio's song lyrics, stressing the fact that they "vehemently bash obscurantist intolerance and call for more responsibility, social as well as poetic." Does the Breton foundation subsist in everything they play? The trio member Jean-Michel Moal explains the success of musical crossovers among the Breton listeners by the fact that the Bretons have always been "avid travelers", so they have brought other peoples' music from their travels, which then gradually merged with theirs and became a part of it. "I believe", he says, "that one can find, in Breton music, rhythms that remind one of Berber dances, or the music East-Europe, or the tango."

Another Breton group, Car Manchot, distinguished itself by its collaboration with musicians from Guadalupe, with a group called Akio- Ka .That collaboration was encouraged by the producer of the Breton group, on whose recommendation the group member, Hervé Le Lu traveled to Guadalupe and met there his Akio-Ka colleagues. That group turned out to be a part of a society for the preservation and cultivation of the traditional Guadalupe Akio culture. The group's mission was to connect the younger generations to the musical tradition of Guadalupe. However, Hervé immediately noticed that their music was very similar to what the Breton group was doing. Both cultivated dance music. That gretly facilitated collaboration between the two groups. Speaking of that, the guitarist Gilbert Le Pennec particularly emphasizes that crossing two types of music, as these two groups, do compromises the identity of neither.

"It is a mixture, but with all the respect owed to both cultures. All too often, mixture turns out to be such a soup in which ingredients of different cultures are no longer recognizable. We are striving to prevent that sort of thing from happening, to make sure that in our soup parsley, carrots, and potatoes are identifiable, in other words, both cultures. And, we do succeed." Le Pennec goes on to explain that in Creole the word *ka* means drum, and that the drum has most often been the instrument of rebellion. The Caribbean slaves used it in their struggle against slave owners. It is, he says, "music charged with emotion... when I accompanied them for the first time, and they were playing a piece entitled "Foce", which in Creole means strength, through my head passed all the school lectures I once heard on slave trade in the triangle Europe – Asia – Africa. However, it was only while listening to these musicians that I began to understand what uprooting really means. Even when you do not understand Creole, the drum speaks to you so powerfully, that you understand everything. It is truly the Caribbean blues."

However, this willingness to collaborate with musicians from the far away Guadalupe, this empathy with the tragic history of its people expressed by eloquent drumming has its limit. And Le Pennec sets it: "A man cannot spread himself too thin at the time, otherwise we may lose the soul of our music and our contact with the people here. The spring may dry out, And I do not wish it to happen... My family is here, the people I love are here, I would not want to lose them. If you remove yourself too far from the wellspring, you will dry out." Well, what are you seeking so far away from home, dear fellow, why are you dipping your cup into strange fountains if they cannot invigorate you soul?

January 18, 2004

Eric Marchand, one of the best-known Breton musicians that interpret the traditional heritage in a new and modern manner, founder (1981) of the group called Gwertz, has recently been collaborating with the Romanians. Marchand explains the possibility of that collaboration, i. e. crossing Breton and Romanian musical traditions, by what he calls "the modal character" of these two traditions. However, it applies to crossing other types of music, because, in Marchand's opinion, "in many different peoples' music the music systems are very close to each other; they are the modal types of music that use melody more than the richness of harmony, even though in some countries harmony is also developed." In addition to that, the kinds of folk music from different countries resemble each other also because it is performed for "similar social purposes and on similar occasions", at dances, weddings, and other celebrations.

Nevertheless, Marchand collaborates the most with the Romanian musicians from the Banat locality Karanshebes. With them, he formed a group named Taraf de Caransebes. In a new interview for *Etnotempos*, (not dated, but most likely given in 1999), Marchand adds to his earlier statements a remark about the "exoticism imposed upon us for touristy and economic, or political reasons, and according to that exoticism people living outside our borders are very different from us." Actually, Eric concludes, "even if we do not go as far as saying that it is all the same everywhere, common points are visible every step of the way." In certain numbers performed by these Bretons and Romanians, the tunes from both traditions are included, but are sung predominantly in Breton. It constitutes

no obstacle to understanding the music itself, because in the Balkans, according to Eric, "people are used to listening to similar music sung in different languages."

The Molard Brothers (Patrick, Jacky, and Dominique) founded, in 2000, the group *Bal tribal* (Tribal Ball). For some of their projects, they enlisted the collaboration of the Bulgarian songstress Kalinka Vulcheva. Speaking of that (in *Ethnotempos*, December, 2001), Patrick advances the opinion that there are closer ties between Breton and Bulgarian than Breton and Scottish or Irish music." He even says that the term "Celt music" refers to nothing, since there are no points of contact between Irish *reel* and Scottish *sthraspy*, and Breton *gavotte*. "Celt music", Patrick claims, "has never existed". It is some sort of French, or Breton myth. As the main reason why interpenetration of Breton, Irish and Scottish music never took place, Patrick sees the closed character of Scottish and Irish cultures. By contrast, Brittany is culturally very open, which was demonstrated by Breton acceptance of Scottish and Irish bagpipes, which became common in Brittany during the forties of the Twentieth century. The Bretons "have always made the first step toward others, but the other side never quite reciprocated", that is the Scots and the Irish were never interested in learning how to play the Breton instruments the *biniou* and the *bombarde*. Their pipebands are conservative, and do not go beyond minor technical innovations on their instruments, unlike the Breton *bagads*, which are given to exploring, changing arrangements, trying new tunes.

From whence do these differences come? Jacky Molard takes the podium in order to explain it: "We have something Latin in ourselves that the Northerners do not have. In Galicia, people are very open toward the North.

By contrast, in the North, the eyes of the people are not turned toward the South so much." On the other hand, he points out "unbelievable correspondences between the Breton music and that of some parts of North Africa" and, also, "conspicuous similarities between the Breton and the Romanian dances", such as, for instance, hora and gavotte, which have the same step, as well as the "astonishing closeness between the Breton and the Bulgarian music, especially between their melodies." Kalinka Vulcheva learned a Breton lay, but to the first stanza, she learned to sing in Breton, she added two more that she wrote in Bulgarian. "Now it is for her", Jacky Molard says, "a Bulgarian song, she included it in her own repertoire."

January 22, 2004

This journey through musical Celtia brings me to Loreena McKennitt, a Canadian musician of which Druidix says (in an article of November 1997) that she is "the leading figure in the area of Celt-based musical crossovers". Her compositions are mostly inspired By Irish traditional music, but the instrumentation and the arrangements are the fruit of multiple crossing over. For example, in the album *Parallel Dreams* (1989), Loreena renders Irish lays and laments, and among the instruments one hears a violin, a mandolin, a harmonica, congas, table and an *udu drum*, in addition to synthesizers. The album *The Visit* (1991) brings new tunes and new crossovers. Included in it are Loreena's compositions based on Tennyson ("Lady of Shalott") and Shakespeare ("Cymbeline"), in arrangements full of

Oriental elements. Included also is a composition ("All Souls Night") "inspired by a Japanese ritual for the migration of souls to the other world, which supposedly has its Celt equivalent. As Druidix says Loreena set out to explore the sources of the Celt tradition, and she cheerfully crosses boundaries between continents."

Her following album *The Mask & Mirror* (1994) is a product of "pan-Celtism colored by sounds from other shores." In it she continues her adaptations of great poets, Shakespeare, Yeats, and others. What is in the foreground of this album, Druidix says, is an "examination of the spiritual growth of Western cultures. The troubadours, the Catarrhs, the Templars, and the Sufis are mixed together here with Gnostic songs, pictures, images of the Holy Tree, tales from the *Arabian Nights*, along with the pilgrimage to St. Juan de Compostela. The title of the very first song (if it is a song at all), intimates what the crux of the matter is: "Mystical Dream". Everything is possible in a dream. This is not unfamiliar to our Sebian singers either, for instance, to Teofilović Brothers, the authors of the CD *Čuvari sna* (The Guardians of a Dream).

Januaru 23, 2004

One of the main instruments of the traditional Welsh music is the triple harp. In recent times there has been renewed interest in it thanks to the harpist Robin Hue Bowen. He studied the origins of this instrument, and – as he relates to Fougère in an interview on Ethnotempos (November, 2001) – he established that an Italian by the name of Eustachio, had been the first one with the idea of a harp with three rows of strings. That harp became

popular throughout Europe during the Seventeenth century, and, consequently, in Wales. But already as early as in the Eighteenth century, it began to fade away, gradually supplanted by the new pedal harp. It survived only in Wales becoming a part of Welsh musical tradition. This is just another example of how a musical instrument of a foreign origin can lose its connection with its native environment and become a symbol of the cultural identity of the country that adopted it. The saying according to which nobody is a prophet in his own village applies, so it seems, to musical instruments as well; they too attain the prestige of a national identity symbol only when they find themselves outside their country of origin.

Nevertheless, the bagpipes have not been forsaken by contemporary Scottish musicians either. Martin Bennett is one of those who co-opted this instrument into the ethno music. A review of an album of his on Ethnotempos (Oct. 1998) shows how musical crossovers can simultaneously move in different directions, to no apparent end. The album is entitled *Bothy Culture* (1998), the tunes on it "sound Irish and Scottish", but there is recognizable Middle-Eastern influence in that music, as the following can be heard on the CD: a Persian variety of dulcimer, known as *santur*, the Turkish *ud*, the Armenian wooden flute *doudouk*. Throughout this album reverberate the sounds of various African drums, while the Indian music is represented in it by a *sitar*. Not even the North of Europe, more precisely the Lapp joik, is overlooked in the album. Naturally, with all those sounds from the four corners of the world one also hears the Scottish bagpipes. The presence of exotic tunes and instruments is underscored in the titles of some numbers, such as "Ud the Doudouk", "Joik", and "Togues of Kali". Is this known to Patrick



Molard, who seems to believe that Scottish music is closed to outside influences?

The Scottish group Tartan Amoebas, whose leader is Fraser MacNoughton, practices "fusion of different styles". In their case, it means that they intertwine *Scottish tradition*, and above all the bagpipes, with various genres of pop music, such as rock, funk, jazz, and soul. In an interview with Druidix (May 1998), MacNoughton speaks of the fact that bagpipes have alienated young people in Scotland because they are predominantly used for official occasions, and because they are the staple of military music. Speaking of musical crossovers, he says that they are "inevitable", but are no danger to musical identities of participating countries; quite the contrary is true: that is how those identities are strengthened. "Accepting the influence of other countries' music", the leader of the Tartan Amebas says, "does not impede preserving the musical identity of the country from which the accepting musician comes. By including in our music what comes from others, we further reinforce and enhance its identity, which is truly wonderful." And he concludes: "Mind needs to be open. Closure is dangerous."

January 28, 2004

Not all the bagpipes in France are Breton. Eric Montbel has found them in Auvergne and Limoge. He was eighteen when, in the early seventies of the last century, he went, with a few friends, on a search for the remaining pipers in central France. He found both players and makers of bagpipes. He himself learned to play *chabrette*, a variety of bagpipes from Auvergne. One day, an old

woman from Limoge brought to him some bagpipes, telling him: "I found this in my house. Here, you can have it. Do whatever you wish with it." Eric had the present reconditioned thinking he could find a few more instruments like that in Limoge. "To my great surprise", he recounts, "I discovered, not only the tradition of playing but also that of building bagpipes, which had been totally unknown to the public. These pipes are called today *chabrettes limousines* (chabrettes of Limoge), or *chabretas*, or *cornemuses à miroirs* (bagpipes with mirrors). These are bagpipes incrustated with little mirrors." The discovery of this "treasure" prompted Montbel to study ethnomusicology "in order to acquire necessary tools of research and analysis". However, his motivation to explore the world of the bagpipes was primarily that of a musician who, more than anything else wanted to play that instrument: "It was not a research by a detached observer, but rather one of sympathetic complicity. We learn music through human contact; we reconstitute it, and then perform it on the spot, trying thereby to revitalize a tradition."

Eric Montbel has released several albums inspired by the French traditional music. On the first two he introduced the French, or more specifically, Limoge bagpipes: *L'art de la cornemuse* (the art of the bagpipes)(1986) and *Chabretas, les cornemuses à miroirs du Limousin* (Chabretas, the mirrored bagpipes of Limoges) (1995). In the album *Le Jardin de l'Ange*, (the garden of the angel) (1998), Montbel took up motifs from the French religious folklore that he had found in wake songs (*chants de veillée*) and in charity collection songs (*chants de quête*). He says that initially he was distrustful of religious folklore, being at that time "of an anticlerical

mind, very suspicious of religion." Nevertheless, once he reached the age of maturity and greater spiritual openness, he said to himself: "What these songs are talking about is exquisite, that universal love, which is at the very foundation of religion. That is how the album *Le Jardin de l'Ange* came into being, with its songs intended "carry out a message of hope", even though the singer is neither a priest nor is in any way "obsessed by the Church". He discovered spirituality in the traditional music of various peoples, which – Eric emphasizes – is not to be confused with the fashionable *word music*. He is convinced that every region has music marked by its very own brand of spirituality. "When we listen to Indian music or to that of the Middle-East", he says, "we discover spirituality which is in tune with that music. I think we ought to seek this sort of thing in our own culture."

However, it turned out that the songs from this album attracted the most a "very Catholic audience", and Eric realized that there was a "small problem there, a misunderstanding", so he decided to make a sort of a negative of that album a direct opposite of it. The result of that effort is the CD *Le Jardin des Mystères* (the garden of mysteries) (2001), where he has taken up fantastic and irrational motifs found in French folklore, including stories of crimes, replete with gory details, in other words, things not "Catholic" in the least.

Interesting are Montbel's observations about folk music audience in America. For ten years he extensively toured that country, on average six months out of every year, so he had an opportunity to familiarize himself with the work of several associations organizing concerts and other activities in view of popularizing folk music. In fact, not only the greatest but actually the only genuine

interest in Eric's Limoges bagpipes is shown by the American aficionados of folklore. Even though he is consciously trying to express, by playing that instrument, the specifically French spirit of the Limousin region and France in general, those who have embraced that spirit as their very own, as it were, were almost exclusively folklore lovers in far away American cities. And Eric Montbel has played in every state of the Union. Among those who listened to him, there were not only people of French origin, or those with the knowledge of French. Those that had nothing to do with the French language were even more numerous. Among the networks of folklore lovers in America, he points out the one that gathers Jewish Americans, or, as Eric puts it, "people very attached to tradition, to everything that is memory." Most of his concerts were organized by that network. He also was a guest of networks for the cultivation of Irish music.

February 10, 2004

The Swiss have their own Dragacevo gathering! This is what I just found out in two articles published in the online edition of the Geneva daily *Le Matin*: "Folklore continually renewed" (September 6, 2003) and "French-speaking Swiss and the folklore: a mad love affair!" (September 7, 2003). They were devoted to the Federal day of folk music celebration (*Fête fédérale de la musique populaire*), a quadrennial event, which takes place in the city of Bulle, the capital city of the cheese producing province of Gruyère. On Sunday, September 7, 2003, it was the ninth time this event was held. The author of the first article, Gérard Delaloye emphasizes the fact that this

is an event of not so long a standing, as well as the fact that what it is about, i. e. the Swiss folk music, is not much older either. "Like every other human activity, music changes along with the people who create it", he says. For instance, the Swiss folk music has undergone the influence of "hired hands, merchants and highlanders descending into cities as far away as Milan, Munich, or Geneva to sell their cheese and cattle, and returning to the hills with new tunes in their backpacks." The oldest known tune for the alpine horn was written down as recently as 1767. And what is then so old in all of this, Delaloye. It is the musical instruments themselves. In a Swiss town called Glaris was discovered the oldest Jew's harp (guimbardes), dating from the Thirteenth century.

Around 300 orchestras and groups participated in this celebration of folk music, competing for prizes awarded by a jury of experts. Also chosen was "The King of Folk Music". The author of the second article in *Le Matin*, Nikolas Reutsche wrote down a few statements made by participants in these events, as well as by members of the audience. A well-known Swiss TV and radio personality describes his special experience of folk music as follows: "I come from a rock music background. But a piece of folk music can send shivers down my spine. When I anchor a folk music program I really feel good. I feel no stress, and I am steady on my feet." Stress and other gastric and neurological discomforts must come back with a vengeance if there is any other kind of music on his program. He is full of praise for various groups appearing in this festival. In his eyes, they are "real highlanders", real "Romand" people, who are "renewing our folk music and opening it up to the world." One female participant, a yodel specialist, says that when she sings in the Alps, the

yodeling "flows out my throat all by itself. When I am in the mountains singing comes really easy." This one is Bilja Krstić's

bona fide soul mate. The author of the article himself testifies to the physical effect of folk music, as it were, because it affects him too irresistibly. The traditional Swiss organ (*Schwyzerörgeli*) and a woman's voice have a way of "taking away your breath, descending into your very gut."

This journalist conversed with the members of the group Sonalp - this name meaning The Sound of the Alps - which does yodeling. These "highlanders", "jolly giants" (*solides gaillards*), as the author of the article characterizes them, do not strive to render folk songs the closest to their original form, but they rather give them a treatment. They categorize their music as *ethno-yodel-world*. "This may shock some purists", the author of the article says. However, it is a matter of attempting to "explore new venues for the folklore of the future capable of awakening new interest in the tradition among the young, in the tradition not as something petrified for all time but as something that can be integrated into the new society." That is how a part of Swiss identity will be preserved. The members of Sonalp are concerned about that identity. They say that in the future there will probably be fewer and fewer people doing folk music, because it is not known well enough. Nevertheless, "it is a part of our roots." Conversely, one of the attendants envisions the future of the Swiss folk music with optimism: "My hope is that it will always be alive... it provides us with firm roots. I see that it has its continuators, and I do not fear for its future." As we would say in Serbia, not even the Swiss are an "uprooted pumpkin lying in a field."

Even better known than the musical fiesta in Bulle is the musical festival in Nyon, held regularly in that town since 1974, and since a few years ago, under the name *Paléo festival Nyon*. I am being informed of all this by the festival's web site. Initially, the festival was exclusively about folk music, but as time went by, it broadened its scope as to include other kinds of popular music, even other kinds of art. Nevertheless, folk music remains well represented therein. In recent years more room has been made in the program of the festival for other countries' traditional music, the influence of ethno, i. e. *world* music has been increasingly felt there. Starting last year, the festival has set aside space for that kind of music only: *Le Village du Monde*. (The World Village). The organizers make it a point that the look of the "World Village" be in agreement with the kind of music that will be performed there, so this year it has been made to look like a village somewhere in Africa, for the main guest-performers were musicians from various parts of Africa." In addition to the musical program, the visitors were exposed to furniture, food, and behavior "à l'Africaine". The visitors were constantly reminded that they should move about the village African style, rhythmically, as though they were dancing. In charge of the ambience was the host of a local radio program. That role was bestowed upon Adama Dahico, an actor and a stand up comedian from Ivory Coast. He – as is stated on the web site of the festival – was enthusiastic about the idea of organizing an African village, where the audience can discover a different Africa, not a continent plagued by poverty, AIDS, and wars, but a realm of sunshine and good cheer. Dahico has proposed some additions the program of the Village for next year, so as to insure "more interactive communication, to allow

people to beat the djembe, or to try to play the balaphone, or to try on traditional African costumes." Even more than that: "A small African community should be created, a place of exchange where everybody would be welcome."

In contrast with him, Ahlo Gandenna, who has a stand in the Village out of which he sells folk craft products from Burkina Faso, expresses apprehension that space set aside only for Africa can turn into an African ghetto, in the midst of the festival crowd in which people spontaneously mingle and make merry. The Swiss musician Jean-Marc Baehler, known in his country under the nickname *Monsieur Couleurs Tropicales* (Mister Tropical Colors), does not perceive that as a danger. The Nyon festival web site introduces him as a world music expert and author of a compilation entitled *Women's world Music* (1995). "I am amazed that Paléo is opening itself to new explorations such as this one", Jean-Marc states. "You see, this here is really beginning to look like Africa. The people are dancing while eating in front of food stands...and they are doing it because here they feel at home, because musicians such as Angelique Kidjo and Tony Allen come among them, sit down around a small table in the middle of the crowd, and carry on a conversation with Dolo... Anyway, our radio stations have lost that sense of immediacy and improvisation. In such gatherings around *l'arbre à palabres* (talk tree), as it is called there, the essential is attained. I adore this Dolo and his ability to get others to talk about the problems of society, culture, in a word, about that which concerns all people." What else can one expect from someone with the nickname Tropical Colors besides good old exoticism? Everything is there: criticism of Western rigidity,



formalism, inability of it to be as spontaneous, warm, humane as only the Africans and other peoples unaffected by the constraints of Western culture can be, constraints with which, alas, the rest of us have to live.

# IV

## FROM BENGAL TO BYELARUSS, VIA TIBET

April 15, 2004

After a two-month hiatus, I am returning to my guides from Ethnotempos, with whom I am going to visit some musicians from India who have accepted to be in the "Dante-like boiling cauldron of world music." From the word go, my attention is drawn to the Bengali, Purna Das Baul, one of the upholders of the tradition of traveling singers, *bâuls*, which in Bengalese means "the ones dazed and carried away by a wind", in other words "the ones made crazy by a wind." They got that name because their songs inspire their listeners to let themselves go to a mystic, i. e. "crazy" trance. While they are having that effect on the listeners, their approach to religion and mysticism is rather eclectic, representing a mixture of Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic influences. That syncretism, Fougère explains, is characteristic of Bengali culture, which had, for centuries, undergone a broad variety of influences. Once upon a time, the *bâuls* journeyed across Bengal, from village to village. Today they cruise the space of the global

village, taking part in the global trade of music and musicians. It is no burden to them, for a baul is by definition an open and a curious creature, and crossing over to different musical forms is a part of his nature." It is how Purna, one of the best-known Bengali "crazies" today, was able to connect with ease with the likes of Alan Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, Joan Baez, and Mahalia Jackson. Upon the invitation by Albert Grossman, Ginsberg's and Dylan's manager, he arrived in San Francisco toward the end of the sixties of the past century before he proceeded, in the years that followed, to introduce his music at concerts in 66 different countries.



Picture 22. Purna Das Baul In Hollywood

Purna Das Baul has founded his own academy in the United States (Purna Das Baul Academy), which is represented on his own web site ([www.purnadasbaul.org](http://www.purnadasbaul.org)) as a "non profit organization" whose task is to safeguard the legacy of Purna Das Baul and other Bengali bauls, by means of concerts, education and scholarly research. At another web address ([www.beatofindia.com](http://www.beatofindia.com)) I find Purna's own "life story", in which particular attention is paid to his encounters with stars of Western pop music. Purna dwells very little upon his childhood and youth in India, while spinning with obvious pleasure a long and detailed yarn about his life in the West. His narration begins with the late sixties, when for the first time he travels abroad, to the United States. Albert Grossman took Purna to Bearsville to meet Bob Dylan, and where he would sojourn for some time, recording with Dylan for their future joint album. In the style of British travel writers of the Victorian era, Purna depicts Dylan's birthplace: "Bearsville was situated in the township of Woodstock. Known worldwide as the quintessential New England village, Woodstock is a pretty tiny town and the Western pilgrimage for music lovers and artists. It's a desolate town in the downtown area you'll find quaint shops and galleries with spiral staircases. It's a unique experience to explore its alleys and hidden side streets. Its countryside is full of surprises with cozy farms, mysterious inns and hospitable country stores."

Purna makes a special effort to conjure up the idyllic nature around Bearsville, whose very name shows tracks of bears formerly present in that part of the country. "Bearsville gets its name", Purna says, "from the bears, which were on the prowl there to eat apples from its orchards and grapes from vineyards. Thankfully, I never came face to face with a bear. I would live to see deer

rolling on the grass bed carpeted with apples. Rabbits would scurry around and birds would chirp all day. That idyllic scenery is a background for a portrait of Bob Dylan: "I remember Dylan traversing the countryside on horseback and strumming his guitar seated on a barrel." Dylan liked to refer to himself as an baul of America, claiming that his patchwork jeans looked just like Purna's colorful *guduri*. "We both sang songs celebrating humanity", Purna says, posing a rhetorical question: "...so where did the difference lie?" I am noticing that Purna speaks here as a tired big city dweller who has found, in a small picturesque American town lost in a vast wooded area, harmony between man and nature as well as its authentic poet who is at one with that nature. We have here a typical example of Western narration demonstrating how easy it is for that narration to adopt figures of exotics peculiar to oriental stories. So, there is Oriental big city fatigue that can be cured in the West.

It is in the style of an exotic travelogue that Purna also describes his encounter with Mick Jagger in Nice: "Nice is a city with great scenic beauty. Green pine forests fringe the deep blue shores of the Mediterranean and the landscape soon ascends into a rocky and hilly terrain...The Rolling Stones building was on the seashore was of palatial grandeur. It resembled the Victoria Memorial and had a beautiful glass ceiling from which sunlight poured in. I would spend hours gazing at the crystal blue waters of the Mediterranean and the amazing aquatic life down below." This introduction is followed by a description of a dinner party at the Jagers', in their villa near Nice to which Mick personally gave him a ride: "He was driving like crazy while taking us up the hill to his home. He had turned an old castle to his home set amidst grape vines. Rolls Royce

and sports cars were parked in front of his house." Here we find out that Jagger held Purna in high esteem not only as a musician, but as a spiritual master as well. "Mick was then married to Bianca", Purna recounts, "a daughter was born to them, he specially requested me to bless and name his daughter, as I was a spiritual person from India. I named his daughter Krishna."

In recent times, around ten CDs with baul music have been published, and among them, two discs by the group Baul Bishwa, whose founder is Purna's son Bapi Das Baul: *Jaan Sufi* (1999), and *6th Sense* (2000). Bapi spoke about himself and his work to my friends at Ethnotempos (March, 2000): "We do not worship any God, do not belong to any cast, and we refuse to serve any system that incites people to fight each other. Our cult is the cult of the human being. We need no God, mosque, church, or any other place of worship. We only pray for the welfare of the human being, wishing to make it happy, to bring inner joy to it." Bapi is an heir to the tradition of poor "wind-groggy" singers, but he is adapting himself to modern times while continuing that tradition. Following the example of many traditional musicians from the so-called Third World countries, he spends most of his time in the West, where he records albums and gives concert performances. His public pronouncements belie a well-read man, trying to bring Indian culture closer to the West by using Western concepts. For instance, when he describes the "baul philosophy", which contains "traces of Sufism, Buddhism, Hinduism, an other lesser known religions", or when he tries to explain the "philosophical background" of baul songs: "The bauls are above all yogis. What they sing is nourished by philosophy, by inner, emotional life. Their songs talk about that which a person

seeks, can give and take. The majority of the *bâul* songs are philosophical messages."

Bapi especially stresses the fact that *bâul* singing is free of the many conventions present in Hindu classical music, that it is spontaneous, natural, and free. "All that is necessary", he says, "is walking in nature, listening to the voice coming from within the man, to what he thinks and feels. That is the *bâul* freedom. A *bâul* sings about what is within and around him." So understood, this old Bengali singing becomes understandable and accessible to everyone. It can even be done by the French. "Even when you write in French", Bapi explains, "if it is about human soul, or heart, it will be a *bâul* song." However, in his *bâul* song openness discourse transpires that same restriction, which usually calls to question or at least makes problematic similar talk of the ability of music to reach people when it has to cross boundaries that otherwise separate them. That restriction appears here in its strongest rhetorical version, as the heredity "of blood" and attachment to "roots". And, Bapi has obviously adapted this part of his discourse to his Western audience, as he, in all likelihood, did not fail to notice the importance of blood and roots metaphors in Western discourse on culture. The Baul Bishwa group, he says, "truly fits what I am and what my kin is. The repertoire we perform is in my blood, in my roots. Whatever I do, I can never abandon them. Bapi says this in order to shield himself in advance from a possible critical remark that he already has considerably removed himself from his roots, that he constantly exposes them to the danger of becoming inextricably entangled with alien ones, that he, in other words, runs the risk of stripping his music of its original ethnic identity by mixing it with other types of music.

Indeed, Bapi has tried multi-layered musical crossovers. He founded a musical group named Senses, which – in his words – is "more oriented toward fusion." He did crossing over with Russian, English, and French musicians.

Before they caught the attention of Western world music producers, the Bengali bauls had already become respected artists in India, i. e. they were accepted there as a valuable part of the traditional culture, so that, from the mid-Twentieth century on, some of the best upholders of that tradition became well-known and highly esteemed musicians. Bapi proudly points out that Rabindranath Tagore had written a few poems in the baul style, inspired by what he had heard from Bapi's grandfather Nababi Das Khepa Baul, as well as that, in 1967, the president of India had declared his father Purna Das Baul to be the "King of bauls" (Baul Samrat).

April 20, 2004

Another upholder of the baul tradition is currently enjoying world fame – Paban Das Baul. For a number of years his music has been published by world's largest publisher of ethno music, Gabriel's Real World. Just a few days ago, he was one of the topics on a BBC show – I am finding it on [www.bbc.co.uk-music](http://www.bbc.co.uk-music) – in which the album *Tana Tani* was reviewed. On that album Paban is featured together with Sam Zaman, a London D J, and leader of the group State of Bengal. The material on this disk was in part recorded in Zaman's London recording studio, and in part in Paban's Paris apartment. Thus, this fusion was actually a matter of Anglo-French collaboration.



Paban had his very first experience of a musical crossover when collaborating with the London guitarist, musical producer, and a PhD in anthropology, Sam Mills. The two are making music on the disk *Real Sugar* (1997). In 1979, at the age of sixteen, he began to play the guitar with the group 23 Skidoo, classified in Real World's catalog as *ethno-funk*. Impressed by the baul music he heard at a concert in London, Mills became interested in Asian musical tradition, and decided to study anthropology. As a student and a PhD candidate, he spent a few years in Japan, Bangladesh, and India. He visited Bengal, where he met a few bauls. By that time, however, Paban was already a world-famous musician and an owner of a spacious home in Calcutta, with a grand piano in the living room. Their encounters are the subject of a rather lengthy promotional article on Real World's web site ([www.realworldusa.com](http://www.realworldusa.com)). "I would sit on the veranda of the house in Calcutta", Mills, recounts, "where was located the piano Paban and Milmu Sen played. Paban would often sing accompanying him self on it, and we would join him making the noise. He would hand me *kamak* and *dotara*, the two instruments I could play, but not nearly as well as the bauls. At that time I was listening to a lot of music, learning the language, and discovering the background of Paban's work...I listened to many Bengali songs that were very complex and melodic, and I was pondering how they could be fitted together with the chords we use in pop music in the West, how they could be adapted to the rhythms peculiar to African music, to funk, or to any other music."

Paban has also crossed his music wit the Swedish saxophonist Jonny Wartel. Their work is discussed on the web site [www.rootsworld.com](http://www.rootsworld.com): "This is how fusion is done. A Bengali and a Swede, getting close together one

moment, pushing away from each other the next, are creating unique new music, shocking at times, of an East-meets-West variety, which is sometimes brilliant, sometimes frustrating, but surely never dull." The web site brings up Wartel's reminiscences of his first encounter with Paban and the first few years he spent in his company. "I met Paban, more or less by accident, in Paris during the eighties", he recounts. "A close friendship ensued, and shortly thereafter, I found myself in India, traveling with Paban through West-Bengal. Through him I got to know other *bâuls*, and we all played at festivals, in villages, at our friends' homes, in mansions of the Calcutta rich, in various temples, in the streets, on the roofs of moving buses... We played non stop, always on the go, but never with a schedule so firm that a wind couldn't change it." Unlike Dylan, who tried to become a *bâul* by chumming around with one of them, in his American home nevertheless, Wartel attempted to identify with the *bâuls* by joining them in Bengal. However, in both cases it is only the Western musicians who are talking openly about the desire to be "like the other." Their Bengali friends are not sounding a word about aiming to identify as much as possible with Western culture and having "inner experience" of Western music. It is not expected of them, at least not on the world music market.

Further browsing, beginning with the word *bâuls* or with the names of well-known masters of this tradition, reveals to me an unexpected abundance of new web sites speaking of them. The web site of Mondomix describes *baul* instruments, made by the musicians themselves out of coconut shell and gourd, and at the present time, even out of tin cans. They are: the single-stringed *ektara*, the small

drum *dugbi*, the corrugated drum *ghamok*, the four-stringed lute *dotara*, the dulcimer *kortal*, the small drum *dubki*, and the jingle bells called *gunghur*. In Bengali villages, the site further informs us, one can run into bauls carrying around all these instruments. (Perhaps, somebody will recognize Jonny Wartel among them!). Ektara is the most important of these instruments, for it functions as a symbol of this musical tradition. The singer holds it high above his head, so that his coming from afar can be seen as well as heard. I am finding more information on ektara on the web site *www.banglapedia.org*, published by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. The word *ektara* means in Bengali "one-stringed" (*ek* – one, *tara* – string). I learn on this site that ektara is played, not only by the bauls but also by the fakirs, described on Banglapedia as *Muslim devotees*.

In the case of the bauls, it is possible to show that hybridization is not only known, but is quite customary in traditional music. It comes naturally and spontaneously, because in traditional music there is no notion of cultivating only a single, "one's own" tradition, and of the necessity of keeping it apart from any other. It is rather a sort of spontaneous syncretism. I am pondering it while reading on Real World's web site a text on Paban's and Mills' album *Real Sugar*, in which are presented the basic facts about West-Bengal and its population that "embodies the spirit of syncretism between the Tantric, the Muslim, the Buddhist, and the Vishnu musical traditions." As a matter of fact, one can talk about syncretism only from an "etic" point of view, in other words, it is "perceived" only by observers and investigators who start out with the idea of the diversity of musical traditions as an initial state of affairs, later to change into syncretism. From the "emic",

insiders' point of view, on the other hand, syncretism does not exist, because among insiders there is no awareness of different origins and qualities of individual elements of the music autochthonous musicians perform. The ethno musician can be defined as the one who approaches the traditional music from an "etic" position, seeking in it an audio-embodiment of the idea of different ethnic identities and demonstrating that those distinct musical expressions can be peaceably brought in tune with each other.



Picture 23. Ektara

Sam Mills' interest in Hindu music goes well beyond Bengal. His attention was caught by the English songstress of Tamil descent by the name of Susheela Raman, with whom he made, in 2000, a CD entitled *Salt Rain*. On it, Susheela sings songs based on the classical music of southern India, dating from the Eighteenth century. However, the group of musicians performing on this CD includes a percussionist Djenuno Dabo from Guinea-Bissau, the Cameroonian bas player Bobby Jokey, and the Greek clarinetist Manos Ahalinotopulos. In an interview she gave to *Ethnotempos* (June, 2001), Susheela says, in reference to the joint effort with Sam and Djenuno, that there were "good and very natural vibes" between the three of them. What I find interesting is the fact that musical crossovers, resulting in a hybrid of musical traditions from three different continents, are being experienced, or at least portrayed here as something natural.

April 25, 2005

The Far East piqued the interest of the French duo Guerbigny – Thebaut. These musicians collaborate with the Pakistani group from the region of Balujistan whose name is Pastoral Baluchi Group, and whose leader is "the charismatic Aktar Shanai Zeri", referred to as such by Stéphane and Sylvie, who write about the collaboration between these musicians and interview them on *Ethnotempos* (February, 2002) under the title "A Eurasian Pastoral". The group's musical and stage production project is entitled *Koyi Baat Nabi*, which in Urdu means "no problem". They have performed with comparable

success in both France and Pakistan, "leaving the impression that geographic and cultural differences are easily diminished." There were some problems indeed, but only at the beginning, as the musicians did not have an interpreter. "We communicated by signs... and with the help of music", Robert Thebaut remembers his first encounters with the Baluchi. Nevertheless, all fell into place by itself, "because different types of traditional music have so much in common." The French soon began thinking like Baluchi. "It is the same as learning a foreign language", Benoit Guebrigny explains. "At the beginning, one speaks English, but still thinks in French, but eventually, as one continues to speak English, one ends up thinking in it... It is the same sort of thing."

We know nothing as to whether the Baluchis began to think in French while playing with French musicians. Nevertheless, regardless of what language he may have thought in, Aktar, the leader of the Pakistani group, by all means had excellent understanding of why French musicians had gotten interested in him, and why The Alliance Françaises willing to finance this project of "Eurasian" musical crossover. "When we play together", Aktar says, "I see no difference between the French music from Poitier and our traditional music. So, I believe that the crossover is a success, and that many people like it. By this successful experiment of ours we are sending out a message of hope that different peoples and their cultures are close to each other, capable of getting along just fine." This sounds as though it is meant for those who might doubt whether projects of this sort are worth the money invested in them. At any rate, Aktar is demonstrating here his ability to look at cultural issues from an "etic" and political perspective.

May 17, 2004

The Tibetan songstress Yungchen Lhamo defected, through India, to Australia, where she had the good fortune to be noticed by Peter Gabriel. He later published two albums by her: *Tibet, Tibet* (1997) and *Coming Home* (1998). The producer of the second CD was the French composer Hector Zazou, who left, in an interview he gave to Fougère, an interesting testimony on working with this Tibetan songstress. He had problems communicating with her. At times he felt as though he were dealing with "someone from another planet". "I had", Zazou recounts, "to make an effort to understand what made her tick, to find some points of contact with her in order to facilitate our communication, to get her to relax, resorting even to cunning." He understood that her way of relating to music was different from his, and the difference was in that "the music she did not see was the music that did not exist". Whatever comes through her headset, even if it is very loud, Yungchen does not hear, because "she needs to see in order to be able to hear", Zazou explains further. "She always sang solo, or accompanied by a *gimbarde*. She would sing staring at the player, and I suppose the musician's movements and the sound are linked together in her brain."

Secondly, Yungchen refused to have any sound of traditional instruments in her songs, and sang with great enthusiasm when accompanied by violin and guitar. After much persuasion, she did accept the inclusion in her recordings of the voices of a Tuvin group Shu-De, their voices yes, their instruments no. These are whims apt to be quite unnerving to a producer of ethno music – in whose eyes ethno music without the "original" autochthonous instruments is no better than a Balkan grill without shish

kebob. Another inconvenient side of collaborating with Yungchen Lhamo is her habit of getting up at 5 am, and, having said her prayers, beginning work at 6 am, leaving breakfast for after the work is done, around 9 am. Also she would pray during breaks. "I did find all that rather charming", Zazou says, "even though it made our job quite a bit more difficult." These habits did not prevent this vocalist from having her own web site, where one can hear her "life story" and see a few of her favorite photos, with Dalai Lama, but also with Paul McCartney and Peter Gabriel. Thinking about it, there is no incongruity here, as all three are pop culture "icons".



Picture 24. Yungchen Lhamo and Peter Gabriel



In an interview (Ethnotempos, May, 1998), Yungchen Lhamo speaks of her beginnings. She too learned how to sing (and to pray) from her grandmother. He retained her prophetic words, even though she did not understand them when she heard them for the first time: "Given your talent and beautiful voice, you must also use the spirituality you possess within yourself. Your voice should sing in order for you to be able to help others." That is the mission Yungchen understood and embraced when she grew up, but she has had one more source of inspiration, deeper and more mysterious than her grandmother's legacy. The first one to recognize and properly announce her mission to the world was a village sage, a "holy man", to whom, in accordance to Tibetan customs, her mother brought her as a newborn for baptism. He gave her the name Yungchen Lhamo, which means literally The Goddess of Singing o The Goddess of Melody. This is her only name, for in Tibet there are no family surnames. Offering songs to people means offering to them an experience of the spirituality residing within them. Yungchen emphasizes the spiritual dimension of the songs she composes by adhering strictly to existing Buddhist texts. At the end of this interview, she deplores the fact that people neglect, for the sake of trivia such as money and craving power, "the part of spiritual love everyone carries within him." "I wish", Yungchen declares, "my songs to encourage people to turn themselves more toward spirituality that is within them." But, isn't Yungchen herself very well positioned to realize that turning oneself toward spirituality does not necessarily push one away from money and power?

May 21, 2004

The time has come to pay more attention to a man known to all and ubiquitous on the Internet, the English musician and producer, Peter Gabriel. There is no doubt that he is one of the most important personalities in the field of ethno, i. e. *world* music. He is the founder of the Womad festival (World of Music, Art and Dance Festival, 1982) and the publishing company Real World (1989), whose expressly stated goal is to promote the best representatives of traditional music from all over the world, as well as to encourage and facilitate their contacts with Western audiences, as well as their mutual collaboration. He is spoken of in the West as a genius, a wizard, a visionary. "Peter Gabriel a Wizard" is the title of an article posted on the web site [www.ambfrance.com](http://www.ambfrance.com), and signed Jean-Marc F. "The visionary mind of Peter Gabriel," it is written there, "his talent and his sense of experimentation have made him the discoverer of world music." At another place, at the address [www.rescando.it](http://www.rescando.it), I am finding out that in the Italian language alone there are five books on Peter Gabriel. I am pulling out two titles: Tommaso Ridoli: *Sognando un Mondo Reale* and Alfredo Marziano: *Suoni Senza Frontiere*. Since I am already tired of reading phrases about music without borders, I thought of a parody of the second title (Eng. Sounds without Borders): "Without Soundproofing"

Gabriel sees in music a suitable weapon in the fight against racism. He says: "Music is a universal language bringing people together. It is a living proof that racism is stupid." On his web site, there is a separate web page devoted to the cooperation of this musician with human rights and environmental organizations, such as Amnesty

International, Witness or Greenpeace. It is definitely a praiseworthy political involvement. However, opinions of his work as a producer, especially of the manner in which he uses traditional music are rather divided. The already mentioned Jean-Marc F. praises him as the first one who "used traditional instruments and 'samples' of various kinds of ethnic music without adapting them to Western standards." However, on the web site *www.tubular.free.fr* it is stated that "his treatment of traditional music is much contested in some circles". There are opinions that he has totally distorted that music, altering its very essence in order to make it more pleasing to the ears of Western listeners."

Gabriel's turning toward what is called today *world music* found first full expression in the score he wrote for Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1989), recorded, among others, for the film by Djivan Gasparian playing his duduk. The album with that music was published under the title *Passion*. Because of the participation of African, Asian and Latin American musicians in its creation, this album is called, on *www.rescando.it*, a "magnificent ethnic symphony" (una grandiose sinfonia etnica). It is not known to me if anybody before Peter Gabriel may have had the idea of accompanying images of the passion of Christ with music based on folkloric motifs, taken from several musical traditions at that. For the listener's better orientation in the intricate musical geography of this album, Gabriel has made an informative supplement under the title *Passion Sources*, listing names and national origin of musicians whose work inspired him while he was composing the score. Among them are Baaba Maal, Ravi Shankar, Fadella and Abdul Aziz El Sayed. Gabriel's album *Up*, released in

September of 2002, is an example of his method. He recorded a part of his material in his studio in England, and the rest in Méribel, France, In Dakar, in the Italian spa resort Bagni di Luca, as well as in a studio aboard a boat, navigating the Amazon.

I am arriving at the web site set up by French fans of Peter Gabriel: *www.pg-fr.com* , as the visitor № 101,234, but the only one on the site at that very moment. One can read there lyrics of Gabriel's songs, some of which in French translation. I am reading the song "A Wonderful Day in Our One-way World", an ironic sketch of the consumer "one-way", or as Marcuse would put it, one-dimensional way of life:

*Saturday is shopping day--  
I drive my car but there's no place to park it  
--no respect for superman in supermarket  
I guess there must be trouble but I not been alerted  
Looking round the store it was all deserted and I'm  
Stranded here with my empty basket  
So full of question got nowhere to ask it*

*By the one-way out  
Strange voice shout  
Don't let that good man out*

*Have wonderful day in our one-way world  
One way, one day  
Have a wonderful day in our one-way world  
One way, one day  
One-way man  
One-way mind  
Get along with mankind*

*Oh, there's an old man on the floor, so I summon my  
charm  
I say hey scumbag, has there been an alarm?  
He said yeh, been selling off eternal youth  
They all got afraid cos I'm the living proof  
My name is Einstein do you know time is a curve?  
I said stop old man! You got a nerve  
Cos there's only one rule that I observe  
Time is money and money I serve  
By the one way out  
Strange voice shout  
Don't let that good man out  
Have a wonderful day in our one-way world  
One way, one day  
Have wonderful day in our one-way world  
One way, one day  
One-day man  
One-day mind*

I read messages Gabriel's fans exchange. It is apparent that they are teenagers, using this forum as a means of obtaining easier their idol's disks, tickets for his concerts and the like. Their admiration for Gabriel's music is a matter of course its verbal expression is reduced to exclamations such as "brilliant", "super", "fantastic" and such. I see no useful purpose in getting involved in their chat.

May 25, 2004

I found on the web site *www.ancient-future.com* a list of artists doing fusion, i. e., as it is stated on the site

"artists who have devoted good portions of their careers to *World-Fusion Music*". There are around Two hundred of them. In addition to them, listed are the names of some one hundred musicians who have worked under the influence of this kind of music. The list includes the Beatles, as a group which once upon a time recommended to its fans the music of Ravi Shankar, the Hindu sitar master. He became well known in the West mostly thanks to George Harrison, who, as early as in 1965, became interested in that instrument, and wanted to learn how to play it. Shankar was his teacher. Harrison deserves credit for the fact that the Beatles did not fall behind the Rolling Stones. They let the Stones have Purna and the Bengali ektara, but they kept for themselves the Hindu sitar and its greatest master.

Doubtless, fusion presents itself to me as one of main topics to reflect upon. Before I can do anything else, I must establish what and who is getting "fused". So far, I have encountered two kinds of fusion: crossing traditional music with jazz, rock, or other types of popular music, and crossing traditional music of different peoples, resulting in music composed and performed with the intention of demonstrating the advantages of such crossing. The original version of the former kind of hybridization appeared in jazz before the emergence of world music in today's sense of that expression, while the latter could be tied to world music specifically. Among those interested in fusion, a distinction can be made between musicians and producers, on one hand, who are simply trying to keep up with the growing interest in *world music* in the music market, and, on the other hand, those in the position to influence national and international cultural policies, who view musical

crossovers as a means of promoting a policy of intercultural and interethnic cooperation.

Creating music by crossing boundaries between distinct musical genres and traditions, characteristic of world music, represents, in the eyes of some educators, an edifying experience, useable educationally inside as well as outside the classroom. In the United States, world music is featured in school curricula as well as in programs of continuing education. I am obtaining this bit of information from the web site of the non-governmental organization *Center for World Music and Related Arts* based in San Diego ([www.centerforworldmusic.org](http://www.centerforworldmusic.org)). The objective of the Center is to spread knowledge and understanding of major musical traditions of the world through teaching, musical programs, and study traveling. One of the best-known programs of this center is *World music in the Schools*. Thanks to that program, the pupils of a number of elementary schools in San Diego had an opportunity to see and hear the Balinese group Varsa and several musicians from India.

The composer Mihail Alperin knows very well what culture mixing means. The course of his own life saw to it, before he even got into musical crossovers. He is a Russian Jew, born in Ukraine, and raised in Moldova. He lived and worked in Russia, and lately has been spending most of his time in Norway with a Norwegian wife. That is why it is not surprising that the group Moscow Art Trio, founded by Alperin, and whose other two members are Arkady Shilkloper (English horn) and Sergey Starostin (singer and clarinetist), readily engages in crossing with music from diverse geographic areas.



Picture 25. Huun-Huur-Tu, the Angelitas and the Moscow Art Trio

On the Ethnotempos web site – which remains my flagship, if I may say so about a virtual vessel in which I am a stowaway – I am reading an article under an ethno-eco title "Stories from the mountains, songs from the valleys", published in March 2001. It talks of the collaboration of Alperin and his group with the Bulgarian choir Angelitas and the Tuvin quartet Huun-Huur-Tu, whose fruit are two



disks: *Fly, fly, my Sadness* (1996) and *Mountain Tale* (1998). The article contains fragments of a lively discussion in which a few members of these groups took part, and whose moderator was Fougère. At first, Sergey Starostin described the beginning of the collaboration between the Russians, the Bulgarians and the Tuvins: "When we met in Bulgaria, in Sofia, we looked at each other as one looks at animals in a zoo, wondering how we would ever be able to communicate." No one knew the other two languages. However, music turned out to be our common language, and when the Bulgarian songstresses and the Tuvins began to sing we all felt harmony and were able to understand each other..."

Alperin expressed the opinion that the cultures, seemingly far removed from each other, to which belong the three groups actually have common roots. Those roots, at least as far as the Bulgarians and the Tuvins are concerned reach back into the deep past, into the time when these two peoples supposedly lived as neighbors in the same region somewhere in Asia. "I believed it from the very beginning", Mihail says, "When we began working on this project... I couldn't help noticing so many things the Bulgarians and the Tuvins had in common. They have common roots, historically speaking; they migrated at the same time, and previously, they had lived in the same geographic area." I am noticing that in this contribution of his to the genre of narration known as ethno genesis Alperin leaves out the Russian group, not saying a word about its possible ethno genetic ties with the colleagues. I suppose that it is so just because he assumes that the Asian side of the Russian identity is common knowledge in the West, and that the West need not be reminded of it here.

It is yet in a different way that Alperin interprets the artistic and the cultural background of those among his compositions he infused with elements of the traditional Norwegian music. For example he wrote a piece he entitled "Russo-Norwegian tail for a Bulgarian choir". When he talks about it, he makes it apparent that he does not base the "logic" of this kind of musical hybridization and fusion on the existence of some ancient, and by now already forgotten common roots (for example, polar, why not?) of the Russian and the Norwegian cultures, but rather on the natural openness of artists toward the new and the different. "It seems quite natural to me", Alperin explains. "In order for something like that to be made, it is very important for the mind to be 'vacant', to be well rested in order to be able to accept new things". In other words, for the crossing of different musical traditions to be possible, it is not necessary that they be geographically, historically, or in any other way, mutually related, it is already enough that they be, as a matter of principle, open toward each other, compatible, mutually translatable.

These two, in many regards different, concepts of musical hybridization have at least one point in common, and it is that they both emphasize the naturalness of hybridization. It is clear that Alperin, in one way or another be it when he claims some distant common origin of musicians he is "cross-breeding", or when he asserts openness toward the future, common to all of them, is actually aiming at contravening a possible objection that what he is doing is unnatural. When he runs out of breath expounding intricate historical and psychological arguments in defense of crossovers he practices he will simply say: "We all inhabit the same planet, after all."

Sometimes, Alperin finds himself compelled to demonstrate and justify the "naturalness" of musical crossovers to the very musicians with whom he collaborates. For there are some among them who think that one ought not go too far in that direction, those for whom differences and boundaries between cultures are sacred and a taboo. One member of Huun-Huur-Tu group (unnamed, unfortunately) told the interviewer how shocked he once was having realized that in a French TV program on Mongolia the music used for the show was Tuvin and not Mongolian. "It is quite unpleasant for us", he says. "We were quite angry about it. We realized that the French cannot tell the difference. It is the same as if the soundtrack of a documentary on France was all made up of German music! The Italians, the French, the English and the others live as neighbors without hindrance, but do have different cultures, don't they? You ought to know what you are showing on TV, instead of confusing black with white." To the question whether throat singing is of Mongolian or Tuvin origin, the answer of this Tuvin lets there be no doubt about the issue at hand: Tuvin, of course! What else?! "And we do not appreciate", he added on behalf of that "angry" Tuvin "we", "when others confuse the two cultures, as each considers itself different from the other". At this point Mihail Alperin intervened: "I wouldn't agree with this. I see no difference. Maybe I am an idiot, but what is there to be done about that?" After that statement, Stéphane Fougère reports, everybody burst laughing, which he saw as an opportunity to move away from that debate, which had shown that practicing fusion does not always mean acceptance of the notion of manifest virtues of cultural mixing and crossing.

June 20, 2004

"My grandma was an exceptional story teller". That is how Ivan Kirchuk, the founder of the Byelorussian trio Troitsa, begins the story of his life. His biography, entitled "Threads Connecting Generations" can be read on the unofficial web site of this group [www.troitsaethno.narod.ru](http://www.troitsaethno.narod.ru), which I am reading in its Russian version, offered along with a German and an English one. The group was founded in 1996, and besides Kirchuk, comprises currently Yuri Pavlovsky and Yuri Dmitriev. Ivan has not remained by his grandmother's side indeed, but he has not forgotten her either. He went to Minsk, where he completed a university degree in folklore, becoming eventually a professor at the Fine Arts University in that city. He took part in several field research projects on folk music, where he collected material that he was able to use for his own compositions in his grandmother's, that is, folkloric style. He also has a large collection of musical instruments. "How much my grandmother meant to me", Ivan continues to reminisce, "is something I apprehended when she passed away". He also apprehended the importance of other ancestors, blood relatives and extended family, of which he speaks in excerpts from his diary, offered to the readers of the web site: "I auscultate the distant breathing of Genus, Family, Bloodline (all of these words capitalized), through generations of the ones like myself – my dear Ancestors, Forefathers...I listen to them for awhile and then I move on." He paid a tribute to his village, his grandmother, and his other ancestors by a solo album entitled *Nasledie pogibshib dereven* (The Heritage of Extinct Villages, 2000). It was recorded in Holland, far away from Kirchuk's native village, and was intended for Western audiences.



Picture 26. Ivan Kirchuk

However, Ivan Kirchuk knows well that the past does not come back spontaneously, all by itself, that an effort of invoking it is necessary to bring it back. That is why he goes on an organized quest for his ancestors, putting together his own genealogical tree, gathering documents pertaining to his family history. In doing so, he noticed that in this day and age our ties with our ancestry are

increasingly weakened, that they break easily. So it is in his case too. "More and more often it occurs to me that our connection with our ancestors is no longer strong", he says. "For example, my sons no longer live at home..." He finds it comforting that many resist that trend, that "many people, even though they migrated from rural to urban settings, remain connected to their roots." In this, they are aided by the church, which Ivan respects these days. He remembers going to church with his grandmother, but he remembers as well that at that time he did not understand its importance. In his childhood and youth, he was a "pioneer", and eventually became a member of the "Communist Youth" organization. During religious holidays, "in front of every church there was a pioneer organization leader writing down the names of all the children that would show up for the service." Nowadays, Ivan can go to church freely. "I go to the temple with my father", he tells the interviewer, "and we converse on our way home from the service...No doubt, God is within both of us." That has not made him fanatical, exclusive. Not at all – Kirchuk respects all religion. What is important, he says, it is "not to believe in knives, in money, but in something bright and joyous."

Nevertheless, all goes to show that Kirchuk feels closer to pagan rituals and beliefs than to Christianity. "Everything I have done", he says, "indicated to me that I was gradually getting ever closer to understanding the essence of the ritual in the life of human communities. That essence dwells in a peculiar harmony between a man and another man, and nature. It is neither good to insult plants nor animals, nor to speak ill of man." And that all this is a matter of a contemporary variety of paganism is also indicated by a word Kirchuk readily uses: energy, a

term by which modern pagans designate a mystical power that rules the world. "Everybody knows today", Kirchuk reminds us, "that Egyptian pyramids as well as the temples of all religions and confessions possess special energy. I am sure that an old song passed down from generation to generation is also endowed with that same energy."

Is Ivan a contemporary shaman? The title of an interview he gave to the Russian newspaper *Muzikalnaya Gazeta* reads: "Ivan Kirchuk's Shamanism" (June 3, 2003). Nevertheless, he himself speaks of it with reservation. To his interviewer's remark that in his music "there is an element of invoking dark powers, of magic, of shamanism" he replies: "None whatsoever! I never use anything of the sort, because I frequently came across things like that earlier. And now I think it is unnecessary, because there are things which are interesting without black magic. On the contrary, I strive to show people's wisdom, not some twisted side of them." However, a little later he will say: In Byelorussian folklore there is magic around every corner... Wherever you turn, and begin to talk to somebody, you sense some magic in their voice; you pay closer attention, and realize that a contact is being made. And if one thinks about something, or is sending a thought to someone... It has been proven that even plants feel man's thoughts. All living things are mutually connected, except that we do not notice it."

Kirchuk gave one of his concerts the title "The Wizard", having conceived it "as a stage show", as a *folk fantasy*. He ordered for that performance a custom designed costume including a leather cape, "decorated", as Kirchuk emphasizes in his interview, "with pagan symbols." That concert by Kirchuk was described, in the newspaper

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Byelarusi (Communist Youth's Truth in Byelarus) of June 5, 2003, by the journalist Sergey Malinovsky, as follows: "On the stage there is a circle inscribed and divided into four segments, each covered by a blanket symbolizing one of the four seasons. Ivan slowly goes around the circle finding for each season a corresponding song and an instrument on which he accompanies his singing. His songs link the first cry of a newborn (spring) the wedding (summer) the burial (fall) and the passage of the soul into eternity (winter). Miraculously, Ivan Ivanovich succeeds in finding and conjuring up the invisible thread connecting all that." The article ends on a critical note, with a remark that Byelorussian cultural policy making bureaucrats prefer entirely different songs, which is why Byelorussian ethno music is better appreciated in Holland than in its own homeland". I wish I knew which those other songs are that cause the Byelorussian ethno music to be better loved in Holland than in Byelorussia. Would they by any chance have anything in common with Serbian turbo folk? Serbian journalists too often observe with resignation that domestic audience does not show much interest in domestic ethno musicians, who are more appreciated abroad than at home.

The Troitsa web site offerings can be read in Byelorussian, Russian, English, and French. Nevertheless, we do not have here the same texts in four different languages. The diversity is not only in the length of the texts, or in the kind of data they present, but is a result of a desire to offer an image of the group to native speakers of each of the four languages according to what they are presumed to be the most receptive to. Thus, in the Byelorussian and Russian versions of the web site, lost



rural customs are discussed at length, and Kirchuk is featured there as a student and philosopher of people's life, its poet, and its defender. On the French page, in the foreground is talk of multinationalism, multiculturalism of Byelorussian folk tradition, of Ivan Kirchuk's wish "to popularize old Byelorussian songs by attempting to tie them together with musical traditions of the entire world", and to use, while doing so, "not only purely national instruments, but also those from other countries." Critics have, as is stressed in this article, "dubbed the style of his group *folk-fusion*, recognizing in it considerable influence of world music."

## V

# IN AFRICA

June 23, 2004

The Ugandan musician, Geoffrey Oryema, has been living in France for almost thirty years. He left Uganda after his father, a former minister in Ugandan government, was assassinated in 1977, during the dictatorship of Idi Amin. For Jeffrey too the encounter with Peter Gabriel, with whom he began collaborating in 1989, proved fateful. Gabriel linked him up with Brayan Eno, who produced his first album entitled *Exile*. In a presentation on his work on the web site *www.infoconcert.com* it is emphasized that Oryema, all the while playing a traditional African instrument called *likem*, "refuses to be a professional African" He is "strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon culture, and is a fan of Leonard Coen."

In an interview posted on the web site *www.rootsworld.com* under the title "The Lyre of an African Odysseus", Oryema is quoted as saying the following, in defense of the Third World musicians' right to draw inspiration from Western music: "The Third World artists get criticized for adopting the European sound. Yet, Western artists, Paul

Simon, for example, get accolades when they dig deep into the cultural wealth of Africa. This is a double standard, no longer acceptable to many of us." He takes up the same issue with Fougère (Ethnotempos, no date). "When Peter Gabriel is interested in the Third World, in Africa", Geoffrey says, "when he borrows its musical ideas making brilliant albums with them, nobody objects. However, when a Third World artist borrows something from the West, he is told: why don't you stick to your tradition. I don't think it is fair."

In addition to Western music, a number of other things inspire Geoffrey Oryema in London, but also in Paris, one of them being the Eiffel Tower. "My fourth album", he relates, "contains lyrics I had written in outdoor cafes while contemplating the Eiffel Tower. It is beautiful, and there is nothing to be added to it." One could cite, as an illustration of his stand that musical crossovers should be two-way, an episode from his collaboration with Gabriel: "I remember needing a sad voice for a number talking about oppressed nations, I wondered whom to ask to sing it for me, I glanced at those present, stopping at Peter. 'Do you have five minutes for me?', I asked him. 'I do', he replied."

June 25, 2004

Salif Keïta, a Malian musician living in France, gave an interview to *Africultures*, an online periodical specializing in African cultures ([www.africultures.com](http://www.africultures.com), February 14 2002) on the occasion of the release of his album *Moffou*. I find this interview interesting because in it appears the "returning back home" motif, in other words, returning to his native tradition of a musician who, for a long time,

crossed and fused it with jazz and other musical genres popular in the West. "I have collaborated with a great number of Western musicians, especially with those from the field of jazz", Salif says, "so I figured the time has come to return home, enriched by all the experience I acquired in the West, to turn myself back toward my own culture". The very title of his album symbolizes his return to the Malian tradition. *Moffou* is, Keïta explains, an instrument almost forgotten even in Mali, and it is made of a millet stalk, on the side of which a hole is made that turns it into a sort of flute. "Only the old folk know how to make this instrument", he says. Keïta also gave the name *Moffou* to a music club he founded for the purpose of providing assistance to young Malian musicians. "All this means for me", he states emphatically, "that we must not forget our tradition. The tone of this instrument is so soft, that we must not abandon it, we must revive it just like we must revive our culture."

With his new album, Keïta returns to acoustic music, after a period during which he kept it on the back burner. He is now coming back to it "because it is natural music, the music whose lack I felt deeply." That would mean that by crossing his music with alien music, by working with other musicians, he somewhat betrayed himself, worked against himself, against his own nature, as it were. "I have worked with many musicians", Salif says. "and now it's time for me to return to myself, to create music that's like me, very simple and emotional."

Nevertheless, Salif Keïta would prefer this "homecoming" of his not be a break with the West nor to confine him inside the boundaries of Malian musical tradition. He reminds the interviewer and the readers that, at least as far as music is concerned, there is already some

of Africa in the West, so that a Malian musician can feel at home there too; when he does jazz, for example. "Jazz has an African sound", Salif says, "it may have more notes, but its basic sound is close to the music from Ségou, a region in Mali." On the other hand, from a musical point of view, returning home to Mali means remaining open to various influences, as openness is a characteristic trait of traditional Malian music. When asked to explain for what reason was such a motley variety of instruments used in his album – and the album features a kavakinho from Cape Verde, an Arabian ud, a harmonica, a flute, steel-drums, an African mandolin - ngoni, guitars... – Keïta gives a laconic answer: "Malian music allows for a diversity of sounds." In my eyes, such statements are just another example of narration about ethno music in which, as a rule, two voices can be heard, one saying: return, roots, sources, identity, and the other: world, openness, boundary crossing, diversity. While sounding as though they cannot exist without each other, they contradict and hush each other up. Or is this narrative two-timing to be viewed, perhaps, as an application of a specifically musical method of developing a theme – the counterpoint?

June 26, 2004

The Senegalese musician Baaba Maal is also one whose music is referred to by the irresistible expression "music without borders". That expression could be an example of a meme, as Richard Dawkins calls, by analogy with the genes, the cultural replicators, the ubiquitous stereotypes spreading like viruses, and living like parasites in our

brains.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the meme "music without borders" means that in Maal's compositions one can recognize the influence of various kinds of contemporary music, as well as the fact that he collaborates with musicians of origins different from his. For instance, on the web site of the French TV channel TV5 ([www.tv5.com](http://www.tv5.com)) I find the information that contributions to his disk *Nomad Soul* were also made by an Irish vocal quartet (Screaming Orpheans), along with the Jamaicans Robby Shakespeare and Lucian and Brayan Eno. On the same disk, in the number entitled "Lam, lam", one can hear an Mid-Eastern flute *nay*, used there to conjure up a musical tableau of Istanbul, and – in the words of Sylvie Clairefeuille, in an article devoted to Maal, on the web site of French RFI radio ([www.rfimusique.com](http://www.rfimusique.com)), to "transport us smack in front of the Blue Mosque."

But here as well, as some sort of counterweight to the meme "music without borders", emerges the meme "return to the roots", as a part of a narrative on traditional African music, primarily the music of the Tukuler people, to which Baaba Maal himself belongs, and to which he also wants to return. This is a major topic of his biography, rather extensive, and published in July of 2004, equally on the web site of the musical editors of RFI, where I find out that Maal attended the Conservatory in Dakar, and later the one in Paris, so that for him, as

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<sup>1</sup> It was an essay by a Hungarian art historian Zoltán Sebök, "Life as a Journey", published in a Serbian translation by Arpad Vicko, in the review "Polja" (№ 429, July – August, 2004), that brought Dawkins' memes to my attention. The same essay was later included in Sebök's book *Parasitic Culture*, (Stylos, Novi Sad, 2006). – Note added: July 2006

well as for many other composers and performers of ethno music, schooled in ethno musicology, "return to the roots" means primarily field research and exploration. With two of his colleagues, he founded, in 1977, a traditional music group under the name Yeli Taaré Fouta, which up stream along the Senegal River performing and gathering musical material. Baaba Maal made the most important contribution to his search for sources by working with the group Daande Lenol, which in Tukuler tongue means *the voice of the people*.

The two approaches to music denoted by the metaphors "beyond the borders" and "back to the roots" appear here as two sides of the same endeavor, the same musical practice. Because, leaving home, embarking on long journeys and getting acquainted with things alien is a part of the traditional culture and music of the Tukuler. The very fact that you left the Tukuler people gives you away as one of them. They, as Baaba Maal says, explaining the conception he followed in creating the disk *Nomad Soul*, in which varied musical traditions are mixed together, are "nomadic people, which explains my own need to travel and see the world." ([www.rfimusique.com](http://www.rfimusique.com)). Maal's music is faithful to the nomadic spirit of its own people when displays openness to the world, to outside influences, which is why in the performances of Daande Lenol group, one can – in addition to the African instruments kora and tama – hear the sound of electric guitar and keyboard. Do you hear a guitar? It must be the Tukuler!

Baaba Maal is an advocate for his people's roots and identity in a specific political context. In the song "Demgalam" (my language), he raises his voice in defense of the black, particularly Tukuler, minority in Mauritania,

for which reason he has fallen and remained out of grace in that country for quite some time. In Senegal, as one of the most popular people in that country, he is often consulted on matters having nothing to do with music. His social and humanitarian work, especially his involvement in the fight against the AIDS epidemic in Africa, earned him, in July of 2003, international recognition in the form of the title of honorary representative of the UN development program. In that capacity, he spoke to his American audiences, during his US tour, in March and April of 2004, about the ongoing struggle against poverty and AIDS in Africa.

June 30, 2004

Yesterday, the London Guardian marked the seventeenth anniversary of the term *World Music*, that is, the day on which it was decided that there should be a common label for certain kinds of music which previously had been appearing on the market under various names. The decision was made by a group of music producers at a meeting that took place in a London pub in 1987. I have come across this bit of information in the earlier stages of my journey through Ethnoland. I have noticed that it is often brought up only for the purpose of pointing out the arbitrariness of a name thus chosen and of the manipulations by which is made music designated by it, for the purpose of condemning the maneuver undertaken by music producers and publishers in view of maximizing financial gain: The peddlers got together and around some Guinness decided what to call the merchandize they peddle. However, this article in the Guardian rings



somewhat different notes; the event in question takes on a different dimension. It relates the memories of four participants in this meeting of seventeen years ago (the DJ Charlie Gillett, Ian Anderson – currently the publisher of the musical review *Roots*, and music producers Joe Boyd and Ian Scott). To convey the full import of this occasion, the article was entitled: "We Created World Music". As is appropriate in ritual reminiscing, the *Guardian's* correspondent (Robin Densilou) met the four at the original location of the meeting, but it was no longer the pub with the resounding name *The Empress of Russia*, but an eatery with a rather prosaic name – *The Fish Shop*. Given the fact that the term *World Music* has survived, despite criticisms, for almost twenty years, and that no other term came even close to replacing it (at least not in Western languages), the ritual evocations of its beginning gradually take on, no doubt, the traits of a myth of creation.

September 12, 2004

As is the case with the other world music stars from Africa, humanitarian, and sometimes political actions greatly occupy the time and the energy of Youssou N'Dour, introduced by a Senegalese web site as "the best-known Senegalese artist in the world" ([www.kassoumay.com](http://www.kassoumay.com)), and the web site of the French TV5 channel as a "major figure of world music", and as "one of the greatest ambassadors of African music in the world." On the web site [www.afrik.com](http://www.afrik.com) I am finding out that, in an opinion poll done in 1998, N'Dour came out as the greatest African artist of the Twentieth century. His international reputation

is corroborated by the fact that in 1993 he became a UNICEF ambassador, and that he was commissioned by the World Soccer Federation to write the official anthem for the 1998 World Cup tournament held in France, which he entitled "La Cour des Grands" (the soccer field of the Greatest). N'Dour enjoys, no doubt, his world fame, and he sees himself as an artist speaking to the whole wide world, not only to the Africans. On [www.kassoumay.com](http://www.kassoumay.com), I am finding among Youssou's pictures one that had captured a moment of a concert of his, in whose stage set a large image of the globe is prominent, and is probably intended to suggest the global character of the music performed on the stage.



Picture 27. Youssou N'Dour in concert

Unlike so many African musicians who, having achieved success and fame in the West, end up living in one of Western countries, N'Dour has remained faithful to his native Dakar. In addition to his reputation as a great artist, he is respected there as a successful businessman, who owns a production company, a publishing house, a cassette manufacturing firm, a recording studio, a radio station, a newspaper, and a club with a restaurant. I have read somewhere that he employs over 200 people. Some of his songs show clearly that this world-famous musician and a successful businessman feels the need to put his talent and status in the service of the development of the Senegalese society, to play a part in its edification and enlightenment. That is how N'Dour takes over and in his own way continues the tradition of his family, which has, for generations, given *griots*, medicine men-singers, in whose song lyrics people find education, remedy, and comfort. Nevertheless, the lyrics of his didactic songs intended for his countrymen do not strike a listener as something out of an ancient folkloric genre; to me they almost sound like Soviet style "socialist realism". In the song "Ligeey", Youssou extols the virtues of hard work and industriousness:

*To work tirelessly is the only key to success,  
we work for the well-being of our families,  
through work we strengthen our faith,  
work is the duty of all of us.*

*And you come to work at 8  
And already at 9 you leave to take care of personal  
business.*

*When you are in a position of leadership  
you are supposed to set an example for others,  
to come to work before them*

*and to leave work after them.  
Let work matter more than anything else  
That's how a nation is created!  
To work, everybody!*

In the archive of the online edition of UNESCO's publication *Currier* ([www.unesco.org/courrier](http://www.unesco.org/courrier)), I found an interview with N'Dour, published in the issue of July-August, 1998, entitled "Youssou N'Dour – a Global African". The interview reveals the fact that humanitarian and social activism can also provoke controversy. One of humanitarian actions he undertook in Dakar was that of cleaning and fixing up Medina, a poverty-stricken section of the city, in which he too grew up. Recounting the project, Youssou says that a part of the general beautification was "removing anti-government graffiti, and replacing them with attractive murals". To the remark that by doing so he played the role of a "political firefighter", Youssou replies that "walls are not an appropriate place for political protest. It is better to act on a political level."

Even more interesting a bit of information, contained in this interview, is the fact that N'Dour, a committed fighter for human rights, has remained an adherent of polygamy. When asked if he does not think human rights and polygamy do not mix, he replies: "I am a Muslim, and Islam supports polygamy. Besides, is it truly a negation of human rights?" "It is", his interlocutors, Sophie Boukhari and Seydou Amadou Oumarou, object, "in contradiction with gender equality? Would you be for polyandry?" "No", Youssou replies. "Besides, for the time being, I only have one wife. But for me, religion is above everything." "Even above the human rights?", the interlocutors persist. In an attempt to moderate his pro-polygamy position, Youssou

replies: "Yes and no. If we set polygamy aside, I am all for respecting human rights. I, for one, am against female circumcision as well as for the emancipation of women. However, I believe they should remain the pillars of African values, such as family.

In this interview, Youssou N'Dour had to answer the question "Is there such a thing as African music?" "There are very many", was his answer. "Each region has its original traditional style. And on top of that, there is the modern, eclectic African music, encompassing many local and foreign influences, with me as one of its exponents. These two kinds nourish each other. The traditional music continues to exist thanks to the fact that modern artists utilize its elements, its potential, and its colors." It is clear that he has adopted the basic premise of world music's poetics and ideology that in this day and age a musical tradition can survive only if it opens itself to modernization and foreign influence. Moreover, he sees in thusly-assured survival of African music a great opportunity for African culture to assert itself globally, because, in his opinion, music is "the engine of our culture and music is capable of creating works of universal value." Carried away by that idea, N'Dour takes up, in this interview, the stereotype of Africa as a musical Eldorado, where music is the medium of psychological and social life of the Africans. "Here in Africa", he says, "music is in the air we breathe, in the very physical constitution of the people, in their gait. The Africans do not read much. They listen. And they do it with their entire body. And a song is, above all, rhythm." That is why, in his opinion, any political and educational action would benefit greatly from "using the power of music as a

carrier of messages to the people, as a rallying point that would offer them a sense of happiness."

However, elsewhere, in an interview he gave to RFI (February 25, 2000). "People have an image of African music, but it is not the only image possible. Africa is not only jungle. It is not only exoticism. Africa is also modern. Cities like Dakar, Kinshasa, or Abidjan are modern urban entities. People of those cities like modern things. That is the image of Africa I wish to show, and I think it is more original anyway." N'Dour figuratively expresses his conception of the relationship between the traditional and the modern: "I like living in an African hut, but I like it air-conditioned." He believes that the assertion of that "other Africa", which is not only "the rain forest" but a country well on its way to becoming modern, is strengthened by the fact that his music is wide open to influences coming from Western pop music, by the fact that it is a cross between traditional and modern styles and genres. Thanks to that modern approach to tradition N'Dour's compositions are well received in the West, but they also play an important part in creating new audience in Africa, which follows N'Dour and other African ethno musicians in their striving to interpret the heritage of their own countries by integrating it into the main stream of the global musical scene. Youssou does not consider his great success to be only the fact that, thanks to Peter Gabriel, he became famous and appreciated in the West, but also the fact that, with his help, Gabriel became well known in Senegal and in other African countries. N'Dour must be pleased as well with what is written about his music in the web publication Mondomix, which introduces him as a "modern African" and a "musical alchemist", crediting him with having "touched the

Western soul without betraying his native roots by joining together the syncopated rhythms of the Senegalese *mbalax* with the international pop as well as his native tongue, *wolof*, with English."

However, Youssou does not neglect that part of his native country's audience which expects of a "born griot" to do his usual job, to devote himself to topics that interest that audience, to address it in a manner consecrated by tradition. He meets those expectations fulfilling his calling as a traditional griot along with his function as a musician whose messages are apt to have a universal human meaning. "I have the ability", N'Dour says, "to write a tune that will be well received in Paris, but also one that will be liked in Senegal."

September 13, 2004

Victor Hache, who interviewed N'Dour for the French newspaper *l'Humanité* on September 8, 2004 ([www.humanite.fr](http://www.humanite.fr)), speaks of a "turnaround" in Youssou's "position on Islam", about the fact that the star "has felt the desire to celebrate the Muslim religion, whose follower he is as well." That turnaround is reflected in N'Dour's last disk, *Egypte*, whose lyrics speak of the saints of the brotherhood of the Mourides, to which N'Dour belongs, and of the holy men (marabout) who uphold that religious tradition today. The article emphasizes the fact that N'Dour promotes an open, tolerant and a peace loving Islam.

How did he get the idea to direct his music toward Islamic themes? "During Ramadan 1999", N'Dour recalls. "I generally do not work during that holiday. After sundown, during the month of Ramadan, there is a lot of talk about

Islam, which gave me an idea to create an audio background, a kind of music to accompany properly our conversations." Are there erroneous interpretations of Islam? Certainly, but the incorrect interpretations are the doing of "extremist minorities". However, "music and film could help people understand that Islam is a religion of peace." What does he consider to be the main virtue of the spiritual leader Sheikh Amadou Bamba, to whom he devoted a song on this disk? "He was convincing. I cannot help believing everything he had said during his struggle for Muslim faith in Senegal. Needless to say, the colonizers didn't want Islam to be the dominant religion in Senegal. It cost him dearly, he was deported, blackmailed... He was a leader who had the ability to form trustworthy disciples, who play today an important role in building social peace and order in Senegal... When a marabout intervenes in a conflict, everybody listens. His word is the word of a true leader, who does not get involved in politics." Is there any cultural similarity between West-African rhythms and Egyptian melodies? "From the learned Sheikh Anta Diop we have found out that musical rapprochement between western Africa and Egypt would be something extraordinary."

The last question was: does N'Dour have a message of his own for the readers of this paper? He had one, indeed: "Peace to all. Diversity of religions, cultures and languages is not an obstacle, but on the contrary, it is wealth." That multiculturalist creed was placed in the very title of this interview: "Diversity of Cultures and Religions is Wealth – Youssou N'Dour". Clearly, the French communists and one of the best-known world music stars have mastered the rhetoric of multiculturalism. It also appears that multiculturalism, understood as the respect of difference, is good enough for N'Dour as a framework for the



affirmation of "the Islam that respects others", but also of a system in which a religious leader resolves conflicts, while standing above politicians. Therein transpires the idea that Multiculturalism implies the possibility of coexistence of secular and theocratic states, democracy and authoritarian political systems. There remains only one value common to all of them: peace.

N'Dour's *Egypte* is interesting as an example of inter-regional crossing taking place independently from the West. In V. Hache's own words, in the foreground of this CD are the sounds of Middle-East interlaced with rhythms of western Africa, which is an "original connection", guiding N'Dour in his search for the sources of Senegalese Sufism." This and other examples of crossovers between African and Asian, but also between African and Latin American music, show that, In addition to the main direction of the communication and exchange going from Western producers, composers, and groups to all the other parts of the world, there exist other, lateral, directions, which leads to a certain kind of decentralization of the phenomenon of world music.

September 15, 2004

Reading on the web site of RFI articles on African musicians who are currently stars of world music, I notice that a few others also emphasize their religiosity. Among the Senegalese, allegiance to Islam, besides N'Dour, professes Ismaël Lô, dubbed in the West "the African Bob Dylan". He dedicated one album (*Dabab*, 2001) to the Senegalese spiritual leader and cleric Dabah Malik, who died in 1997. During his stay in Morocco, he did the

pilgrimage to the mausoleum of the Sheikh Ahmed Tidian Sharif, the founder of the Muslim brotherhood tidianniya, to which Lô belongs.

Papa Wemba, the dean of African ethno music in France, became a fierce Catholic. He got religion while serving a prison term, to which he had been sentenced for his part in smuggling African illegal immigrants into France. "In the prison cell", Wemba recounts in an interview on RFI, "I heard the voice of Jesus telling me: 'You ought to be my servant.' And I consented. Truly, the prison transformed me spiritually. The very first building I entered, after I was released from prison, was a church, a cathedral in Evry. I stayed there for forty minutes, thanking the Lord." Speaking of his concert in the Zenith concert hall, for which he was preparing himself at the time of this interview, Papa Wemba says that a new man will appear before his fans: "On Saturday, it will be something quite different from all that went on during the last thirty-three years. It will be the beginning of my new career, with Jesus by my side. The message will be markedly biblical."

I am encountering today another devout Christian among world music stars from sub-Saharan Africa. He was born in Cameroon in 1967, in a musical family: his grandfather was a griot and a percussionist, and his mother a vocalist. He began to play the balafone at the age of 4, and at 12 he made his first guitar. Later on, when he heard the playing of Jocko Pastorius, the bass guitar player with Weather Report jazz ensemble, he switched to bass guitar. He was already 22 when, for the first time, he arrived in Europe, first in Düsseldorf where he attended classes at the local music conservatory for a while, and then in Paris. Playing in clubs, he became familiar with the

Parisian jazz and pop scene, and met other African musicians. He achieved his first major success in 1995 with a ballad, entitled "Eyala", inspired by the war in former Yugoslavia, which won the contest Discoveries (Découvertes) organized by RFI radio network. In the same year, he was denied the extension of his alien resident status in France on account that there were already 1604 unemployed bass players in that country already! That is why the laureate of RFI new talent contest, married to a French citizen to boot, ended up in New York. There, he collaborated with musicians of all stripe, gliding with ease from jazz to salsa, not hesitating to collaborate even with country music stars.

In 1999, his first album is released; its title is *Scenes of my Life*, and is a cross between jazz, pop, and African rhythms, with lyrics speaking of faith in Jesus Christ, abandoned children in Romania, and apprehensions of parents awaiting the birth of their child. On the second album, *Révérance*, one feels a greater influence of the traditional African music, as the songs speak of reckless destruction of forests, of coercive arranged marriages in Africa, of growing up in Cameroon. In the third album, *Munia – The Tale* (2003), this musician continues to speak of modern world's problems, and for one song, inspired by the war in Iraq, he recruited a famous Malian singer Salif Keïta. Among the things he did subsequently was a musical score for a Japanese children's animated cartoon.

This has been the CV of Richard Bona, which I have based on data provided on the RFI web site, posted there in May of 1994. I am focusing on some episodes of Bona's life and artistic career, as I feel that they contain several elements typical of biographies and careers of world

music stars from Africa and other non-Western parts of the world. In fact, it is a matter of elements musicians and journalists taking with them, or writing about them, offer as the most important, the journalists seldom going beyond what the musicians say, and contradicting them even less frequently. I found an example of a critical approach to an autobiographical life story given by a star of this kind of music only in an interview with N'Dour on the web site of UNESCO's Herald, which I read a few days ago. The journalists who conducted that interview "went the extra mile", and talked to his former neighbors and childhood friends from the poverty-stricken Medina quarter of Dakar, and then included their statements some of which were unfavorable to former neighbor and comrade, they also made an effort to acquaint themselves with some of N'Dour's problematic and controversial positions on music, religion, and other issues.

In this portrait of Richard Bona as a prototypical world music star, the following traits are prominent: an early manifested, natural and hereditary (in this case from the grandfather and the mother) musical talent, a need the musician feels to broaden his musical horizons, a journey to the West, readiness to receive all influences, but also faithfulness to his own roots, his religiosity, tolerant and peace-loving nevertheless, his concern over the fate of his countrymen, but even a greater concern over the global problems, his involvement in the struggle against contemporary evils, such as wars, famine, disease and other perils. On the web site of Mike Zwerin ([www.mikezwerin.com](http://www.mikezwerin.com), March 20, 2000), Richard Bona explains the motives which moved him to take an anti-war stand (in the song "Eyala"). He is attempting to put a personal spin on his otherwise politically correct anti-war

rhetoric: "My mother had always taught me that a solution to every problem can be found when people talk to each other. People clash for want of talking to each other. 'Eyala' is a plea of sorts for establishing lines of communication among people. People do not talk to each other enough, and that is why there are wars, and bullets are exchanged before words.

Following the release of the album *Munia*, a conversation with Richard Bona, entitled "Richard Bona Between Two Worlds", was published on the RFI web site (September 23, 2003). The very first question pertains to the "roots", to returning to them: "More than ever before, the presence of Africa is felt here as a return to the sources?" Naturally, when sources are already so offered, Bona embraces them wholeheartedly, even reinvigorating the metaphor by turning sources into an inner dwelling he had never left. "It is an ongoing thing, for I have always been at the source, I have lived in it."

Bona is preserving his African sources far away from Africa, in Brooklyn, N Y, where his home is. Home is the proper word here, for Bona speaks of his family house in Brooklyn with the warmth that befits only the word home. He dedicated the song on the album *Munia*, entitled "The Little Bona", to his 4-year old son. He sings it in French, so the original title of the song is "Bona Petit". The music of this song, Bona Senior explains, is in the rhythm of the Brazilian *Bosa Nova*, and the whole thing is "something of a family story, as you can hear my 4-yr old son's laughter in the background." Thus, one can conclude that this is not a simple opposition: spiritual sources in Africa as opposed to an earthly, material existence in America. In addition to African sources, one can hear in this case the gurgling of European, French sources, as well as that of Latin, Brazilian

sources, while the idea of the warmth of a family home is not very far from the source of the American patriarchal attachment to "home sweet home", with a charming wife and cute kids. So, what do we have here? From behind controlled, stereotypical discourse about musical sources and their amalgamation and crossing transpires the somewhat more complex theme of exile and kingdom, the one dealt with by that great French writer, born in Africa, among Algerians.

October 3, 2004

On a Malian web site *www.mali-music.com*, I am reading a lengthy report by Lucy Durand on Ali Farka Touré, one of the deans of African traditional music. The report includes Farka's childhood memories, his life story, and a tableau of nature and people of northern Mali, where he spent his childhood and youth. The tableau is presented as a poetic travel journal, leading the reader by a boat up the stream of Niger, from Koulikoro, a locale near Bamak, to Niafounke, Farka's native village. During that journey, Lucy Durand writes "one has an impression that time has stopped. Long narrow pirogues glide slowly, loaded with fishing nets, various merchandises, and passengers; the boatmen aptly guide their vessels in between islets covered with bushes and yellow grass. On both sides of the river, across endless sand and burning hot rocks, across steppes and thicket, spreads out Sahel: blue and glaring sky, yellow and red dirt, gray village houses, black rocky hills, dappled with cultivated plots of land, assiduously watered by the villagers... The boat makes stops at the handsome riparian places, Jenne and Mopti, before slowly continuing the

voyage, gliding past magnificent mosques from whose minarets one hears the muezzin's call to prayer. We pass many pirogues decorated with multicolored ornaments, move by rows of girls doing their laundry along sandy shores, by women selling clay pottery, fruits and vegetables, and by fisherman taking care of their fishing nets."

This romantic description of a trip down the Niger river – which indicates that the authoress had before her eyes literary models similar to those that inspired Purna Das Baûl's description of Bob Dylan's birth place – is offered as a means of arriving at genuine deeper understanding of Farka's music: "This voyage requires a lot of time", Lucy Durand says, "time to be used for reflecting on the power, the diversity, and the natural rhythm of the local culture in which Ali's music is deeply rooted." An important part of this culture which follows a "natural rhythm" is, no doubt, belief in *ghinbalas*, spirits that inhabit the depths of Niger. "They rule both the spiritual and the material world", Lucy explains. "When the equilibrium between those two worlds is disturbed... when unknown diseases or unexpected weather disturbances emerge, the people gather together to ingratiate themselves ritually, by some animal sacrifice, to the spirits. And in that, music and dance play a key role. Thanks to music, the spirits can accept sacrificial offerings, and if they accept them, it is considered a good sign. People with the ability to communicate with the spirits are called Children of the River."

Farka was the tenth child to his parents whose all other children died young. That is why, as is customary in such cases, he was given a nickname to protect him from disease. The parents chose the nickname Farka, which means donkey, an animal symbolizing endurance and toughness. As a toddler, he "listened with fascination to

musicians sing and play instruments most pleasing to the spirits", and those are: *jurukelen*, a kind of single string tambura, *njarka* (also single string instrument, but played with a bow), and *ngoni*, a traditional four-string tambura coming from Mali's Bambara people. He was 12 when he made a *jurukelen*, his very first musical instrument. He was just another year older when he experienced a spiritual transformation, which took on the form of an illness and recovery from it.

"It was a night I will never forget", Farka recounts the event. "I was thirteen. That night I stayed up late chatting with friends. It may have been two in the morning, when I found myself with the *jurukelen* in my hands. I walked up to a place where I saw three girls looking like suspended above each other on some stairs. I lifted my right foot, but the left was frozen. I remained in that position until four. The next day I went back into the field, but without my instrument. I came upon snake with a strange mark on its head. I still remember its color. It was black and white, without a trace of yellow or any other color, only black and white. The snake coiled itself around my head. U managed to throw it off. It fell to the ground and escaped into some hole. I was saved. That is when I had my first attack... I entered a different world. It is different from the world in which you ordinarily live; you are not the same person in it. You do not feel anything, neither fire nor water nor beating. Later they sent me to be cured in the village of Hombori, where I ended up spending one year. When I recovered, I returned home. The spirits received me well; I continued to play, mindful of all the spirits. I was born and I grew up among them." (This reminds me of Alim Kasimov and his claim that his singing transports him into another dimension.)





Picture 28. Farka with a guitar, wearing



Picture 29. Ali Farka with jurekelen jeans, receiving an award after some musical competition

Farka inherited his gift of communication with the spirits from his grandmother, who was a "famous priestess of ghinbalas". However after the grandmothers death, his parents did not allow him to take over her office, but instead he was raised as a "pious Muslim". Farka comments about it: "For the sake of Islam I do not wish to get too involved with things of that sort. Those spirits can bring you both good and evil, and that is why I talk about them only in my songs. However I do not wish to forsake these customs, as they are a part of my culture.

Another encounter left an indelible mark on Ali, and marked a new turning point in his life. It was in 1956 when he saw and herd the guitar played by Fodeba Keita, at a concert by the national dance ensemble of Guinea.

"When I saw him play that guitar, I swore I would become a guitarist. I do not know what kind of instrument he had then, but I liked it to no end. I felt I could do the same thing. No sooner than twelve years after that concert, was Ali able to afford his first guitar. It happened in Sofia (Bulgaria), during his first trip abroad, in April of 1968.

I am taking note of the importance the encounter with the guitar, or perhaps some other modern instrument, has for "Third World" musicians. It is a counterpoint to the topos of an instrument homemade by the musician himself or by a builder who managed with whatever materials were available around him. I am returning to the "legend of the guitar" I found on M. Zwerin's web site, in an article on Richard Bona, entitled "From Duala to Manhattan (March 20, 2000): "One day, a traveler was passing through the village; he made a rest stop, and began to play his guitar. Other children ran up to Richard, crying: Richard, Richard, come quick to hear this music. He had never seen or heard a guitar before. It was before him. It was love at first sight, and Richard decided he would make his own guitar. Wood was not a problem, but where to find strings? So, he went to a bicycle repair shop. I was a great comedian, Bona recalled later. I could make people laugh. I entertained the repairman, and while he laughed, I managed to steal some cable for the breaks, and used it to make strings for my guitar."

October 5, 2004

One of the best-known African musicians of the second half of the Twentieth century, the Nigerian Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938 – 1997), is considered the founder of the

hybrid musical genre *afro-beat*. It is a mixture of jazz, soul, and African genres juju and highlife. Fela was raised in a respected middle class family; his father was a pastor in Lagos. Accordingly, the first instrument he learned how to play was the piano. Accordingly as well, he studied in London, where he earned a degree at the Trinity College of Music. Nevertheless jazz attracts him more than classical music, and saxophone more than piano. Toward the end of the sixties, during a visit to the United States, he met some members of the Black Panther organization and was taken by the ideas of Malcolm X.

Upon his return to Nigeria, he became one of the fiercest fighters for political liberation and cultural affirmation of the Africans. His musical group was named *Africa 70*. He quit singing in Yoruba language, adopted pigeon English, an African version of spoken English, so that the message of his music would reach as many Africans as possible. In Fela's view, English was a handier and more efficient a means, than was the local Yoruba tongue, for attaining the objectives of the struggle for African rights. However, on the symbolic level, it was the other way around, and English had to yield to Yoruba. His "slave" name, Fela Hildegart Ransom, was to be replaced by a Yoruba name Anikulapo Kuti, in which the first word means "he who has death in his pocket", and the other – "he who cannot die at any man's hands."

Fela subordinated to the struggle for the realization of Pan-African ideals, not only his music and his name, but everything else in his life. He left his Protestant faith for African animism. He turned his property on the outskirts of Lagos into some sort of experimental African state he named Republic of Kalakuta, a home to him and his thirty wives, to his musicians and their families, as well as to

several hundreds of students and followers. Thus, the "African village" – used at some festivals and exhibitions (case in point the music festival in Bil, in 2003) as a space featuring traditional Africa – is transformed here into a revolutionary experiment. Playing music "as it was done once upon a time", on traditional instruments, possibly in old folk costumes, practiced today by many musicians, assuming the role of upholders of a tradition, which may or may not be close to them, has grown here into a project of living "as it was done once upon a time." Those who have attempted to found cities and states based on a dream of theirs were, for the most part, politicians, and, in some cases, religious leaders, The Kalakuta Republic is the first ever, and to the best of my knowledge, so far the only, realization of such a dream, undertaken by a musician.

Fela's songs, in which he frequently castigated Generals, who were overthrowing each other as heads of Nigerian regime, did not leave indifferent one of them, General Obasanjo. On a January day, in the year 1977, the General's forces broke into the republic and beat up everybody they found there, including the Black President, as Fela's followers had dubbed the founder of Kalakuta. Fela described that incident in the song "Unknown Soldier": "They suddenly pounced upon us! They beat whomever they came across; they gauged one pupil's eyes, raped women, set my house on fire, and threw my mother out into the yard through the window. They killed her, they killed my old mother." The song got its title, "The Unknown Soldier", because a Nigerian court, where Fela eventually pressed charges, ruled that his property was raided by "unknown soldiers".



Picture 30. Fela at the gates of Kalakuta Republic with his wives and followers

That is not the last of Fela's troubles with the authorities. Another General, Buhari, kept him in prison for five years, from 1981 to 1986. In the meantime, his health began to fail, and he died of AIDS in 1997. The new Nigerian government declared on the occasion of Fela's death a four-day mourning period, and organized a state funeral, attended by over a million inhabitants of Lagos.

I am finding all this information on the web site Of Kalakuta Republic ([www.kalakutarepublic.free.fr](http://www.kalakutarepublic.free.fr)), taken care of now by Fela's son Femi Kuti, also a musician. One can find out, on the site, about Fela's political ideas by reading the lyrics to his songs, in which his politics are made explicit. So, I read that Fela thought that "An African should fight for his freedom by going back to his sources,

where he will find his identity and his truth." So, the real thing is that the African has, not only his identity, but has his truth as well. There is an African way of thinking that needs to be re-discovered. "Slavery and colonialism have destroyed our way of thinking. That is why we must re-discover our African personality."

The anonymous author of a review of Fela's philosophy he calls "Felaism" explains that the creator of the Kalakuta Republic had viewed with a critical eye and deplored many things in post-colonial Africa, criticizing second and third generations of Africans, living now in independent states, but remaining "cultural mutts". "Many of them speak French or English better than our native tongues", Fela used to say. "Our Western education taught us to look down upon, even to despise, our own identity. That typically African complex compels us to imitate Western ways to a comical extent, such as wearing a jacket and a tie and a trench coat even when the temperature is 95F in the shade." In Fela's opinion, the author of the review says further, "the rebirth of the Africans requires of them, above all, an awareness of their own identity, which would reveal the truth to them and give them back their dignity." That awareness means realization that the ancestors left us important knowledge, which has significant advantages over modern Western science, for example, in the medical field. "Many diseases, such as hemorrhoids or malaria, before which modern medicine is powerless, are easily cured by herbal remedies", the author of this text contends. "It is difficult to fathom the full depth and breadth of knowledge possessed by traditional healers, those faithful heirs to centuries of observing and studying nature." All this sounds familiar somehow, I recognize familiar commonplaces of the

narrative of identity and comparative advantages of folk medicine and authentic culture in general, which abound in the "patriotic" discourse in Serbia. I am also noticing a similarity between laments over lost identity, whether Serbian or African. For instance, in the song "Why Is The Black Man Suffering?", Fela depicts the catastrophe that befell the Africans longtime ago: "We lived serenely until strange people came to our shores and attacked us. They took our men far away, stole our land, took away our culture from us and gave us one we do not understand. Today, we do not know who we are, we lost our heritage we fight each other, and we are never get along together. But we must think of the future, we must think of our children, and that is why we must unite.

In the song "Beast of no nation" – that is, "beast recognizing no nation", this last paraphrase of the title being in synch with today's anti-American and anti-globalism movements – Fela raises his voice against the UN and its verbal defense of human rights: "The world leaders hold conferences and preach: 'Respect human rights!'... Nevertheless, our Prime Minister Botha is very cozy with Mrs Thatcher, Mr. Regan and other heads of states. And they all are throwing dust into our eyes with their "human rights". Those wild beasts without a nation have created a secret network, a mafia that deliberately creates confusion in the world." I see! ... the conspiracy theory is not only popular among members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, but also among African musicians.

A cult place, *lieu de mémoire*, for Fela's followers is not only the Kalakuta Republic. That role belongs even more to Fela's discotheque which was preordained for it by its very name *Shrine*. Thanks to Patrice Monfort, the author of an article on Fela's discotheque, published in *Revue Noire* (Nº

30), whose online version I am reading on Kalakuta Republic's web site, I can imagine myself, in Monfort's company for a moment, mingling with all those admirers if the Black President. We arrive at the discotheque around 1 am. It is located in the street called in Lagos "People's Street". Already at the entrance, we come upon a crowd of people in a cheerful mood. In the heat of the night, the scent of perspiration blends with the smell of bier and the odors coming from the grill. There is one more aroma Monfort identifies for me as that of *ogogoro*, local palm brandy. We enter a building, made of concrete and black sheet metal with a trench dug around it, we enter the auditorium with a stage and so filled with smoke that we can barely see through it the musicians on stage. It is, Monfort explains to me, the group Egypt 80, with a singer whose name is Baba Ani. In the sweat of their brow, they perform songs from Fela's repertoire> Red lights illuminate graffiti-covered walls and a crowd of men and women swaying in the rhythm of *afro-beat*. Monfort, evidently convinced that such a scene requires somewhat more powerful, poetic, words, whispers in my ear: "These are angels in the company of Yoruba gods dancing to the afro-beat." Then he points at metal cages suspended at the ceiling, in which female dancers fall into trance, twisting their unusually supple bodies.

However, in Monfort's judgment, everything happening here is just a ritual celebrating the memory of Fela, who has become an object of a genuine religious devotion. While he was still alive, my guide says, this musician was capable "of creating a mystical aura around him, which facilitated the emergence of his posthumous personality cult." And, while he is telling me all that, young men in front of us repeat the refrain of one of Fela's songs, "I'm



not a gentleman; I'm an original African man." I notice that they wear American baseball caps backwards. That is why they may as well sing a line I am offering to them: "I'm not a gentleman: I'm an original young man."

October 10, 2004

Richard Bona and Ali Farka Touré were fascinated, from childhood, by the guitar as a symbol of the modern, wealthy world. Fela grew up playing piano, and later fell in love with saxophone. Unlike these three, the Algerian musician Amazigh Kateb, born in 1972, son of the famous writer Yacine Kateb, living in Grenoble from the age of fifteen, had already had his group Gnawa Diffusion when he discovered that would fascinate him. It was *guembri*, a primitive musical instrument that originated among Gnawas, the black slaves in Maghreb (North-African Arab countries), particularly in Morocco. It consists of a wooden resonator in the shape of a bowl, over which is stretched camel hide, and over that membrane are stretched three strings made of goat gut. The middle string is tuned according to the singer's voice, for that instrument is used exclusively to accompany songs sung by a *maalem* (master), a *guembri* player and a singer of Gnawa songs bearing the title of master. Amazigh Kateb provides all this information in an interview posted on March 31, 2003 at [www.radiochango.com](http://www.radiochango.com), in which he tells the story of his encounter with the *guembri*: "My former percussionist came back from a vacation in Morocco, and brought me a *guembri* as a birthday present. To this day, I have been playing that same instrument, and the first time I picked it up with my

hands, I did not let go of it for eight hours. I was dripping with sweat, trying to get something meaningful out of it. Since I was doing everything wrong, my fingertips had open sores. I went on struggling until I met, later in Morocco, masters of Gnawa music who showed me the proper technique of playing that instrument."



Picture 31. Maalem and guembri

I am downloading from the web site *www.mogador.fr* a photograph showing a maalem in addition to the instrument. I am finding here a detailed description of the nocturnal ritual *lila de derbeda*, the most important religious ritual exercised by the Gnawas, in which music and dance induce a state of trance, which in turn, can bring out the spirits some people are possessed by. The most important parts in the ritual are played by clairvoyant healer-women and guembri masters. The latter sing, accompanied by their instrument, songs intended for specific spirits, i. e. *genies*, songs representing passwords to which the spirits respond, each to his own song, while each of them has its own unique scent, color, and a ritual object, symbolizing its identity. When a maalem begins to play a song and to sing the password-lyrics, meant for a particular spirit, the person possessed by that spirit goes into a trance and identifies him or herself with it, while the healer immediately covers the person with a veil of a color peculiar to the spirit in question, and burns the appropriate kind of incense.

Sick people are subjected to this ritual, which is a part of Gnawan traditional medicine, but is not reduced to a mere curative function. It is also an initiation at whose beginning is the disease, but at whose end there is more than just a cure, for those who experience the disease, and then recover their mental balance thanks to the ritual, often become respected members of the Gnawa brotherhood. Some of them succeed in gaining total control over the genie that tormented them at the beginning, qualifying thereby for the function of maalem or of leader of the cult. The religious dimension of this ritual is apparent in the notion that, as I discover on this

web site, "for the Gnawas it is a road to discovering inner light."

Even today, a great number of people attend, in Moroccan cities, the *lila de derbeda* ritual, during the month preceding Ramadan. However, its organizers and participants are up against a twofold opposition. Both the Islamist fundamentalists and the adherents of modernization are trying, each group in its own way, to uproot this ancient religious practice. The later encourage its folklorization, i. e. a reduction of it to a sort of folk music and dance. An example of this kind of politics of folklorization is the annual Gnawa & World Music festival, which took place for the sixth time in 2004, in the Moroccan town of Essaouira, formerly Mogador. I am reading about this festival on the web site [www.magbrebarts.ma/musique/gnaoua.htm](http://www.magbrebarts.ma/musique/gnaoua.htm). It is a Moroccan version of the Gucha festival in Serbia, except for the fact that not everything in it is subordinated to the guembri and its masters, while all of Gucha festival is about the trumpet and its masters. It was attended by 180,000 fans, who for four days listened to Moroccan maalems, but also to many other musicians, representatives of ethno music, which had come there from various parts of the world. I am noticing here, in this promotional write up, bearing all the traits of a tourist catalog, how the strategy of folklorizing music and dance of religious origin can lead to creating new rituals, and to inciting new forms of collective enthusiasm. Essaouira will, the author of the article says, "receive its guests with open arms, and with appropriate ceremony and ritual that will make their nights as beautiful as are days", and he refers to the festival itself as a "vast musical mass". That is the medicine that goes along with world music.

October 13, 2004

I am returning to Amazigh Kateb. He recounts, on the web site *www.cmtra.org/entretiens/archivelettres/lettres51/gnawa.html*, how, thanks to Gnawan music he "got reconciled for the first time to a part of himself", that is, to his African identity. He was only nine then. He accompanied his mother on a trip to Timimun, a town in the South of Algeria, where, for the first time, he saw Gnawas, and heard their music. That journey to Timimun "revealed to me the African side of Algeria, with all the intensity with which an impressionable nine-year old can experience things". Some time later, he was to hear Bob Marley for the first time, singing none other than his song "Africa Unite", and he had a distinct impression that that music had roots in southern Algeria. Those early experiences deeply marked Kateb's subsequent work, and shaped the basic character of his group Gnawa Diffusion.

As he put it elsewhere (*www.ababoard.org*), "the backbone of this group is the African side of Maghreb: Gnawas are black slaves, deported by former wealthy nobility of Maghreb to North Africa, and their music is a kind of Gospel, except for the fact that Gnawas sing about Allah and Muhammad, not about Yahweh and Jesus." On the same web site, Amazigh Kateb emphasizes that his music, inspired by that of the Gnawas, could serve the purpose of final admission that in Algeria and Maghreb in general there was slavery, "that slavery and, consequently, racism are a part of our history." It is imperative, if one expects the West to do the same about its own history, at least the part of its history linked to Maghreb. "That is why I am proud of playing guembri, an instrument of slaves that helps me feel free", he says; not only named so, for

Amazigh means "free man" in Berber, just like the Serbian name Slobodan.

Amazigh's quest for African roots of the Algerian identity, for his personal experience and musical expression of that Algerian Africanism, are grounded in his background. Nevertheless he is not a descendent of the Gnawas, but rather of their former masters, slave owners of former North Africa. It is precisely the realization that in distant past his ancestors may have been slave masters that became the strongest motivation for Amazigh to embrace the culture and the music of the descendents of former slaves. "If it turned out that a distant ancestor of mine was a slave owner", he says, "I would then, four centuries later, say that I feel closer to those who were his slaves than to him." This feeling of closeness, based on ethical sensitivity toward the oppressed and the downtrodden, on universal human solidarity, rather than on solidarity with one's own ethnic community, can be passed onto victims of persecution and genocide in various parts of the world. Similar kinds of suffering can, in Kateb's opinion, lead to the creation of mutually related musical forms, thus "the similarities between Gnawan music, Reggae, Salsa, blues etc. ... It is one and the same family of genres of music, born in like conditions of slavery and exile."

This implies that mutual relatedness of these genres does not stem from some ethnic, racial, or some other "primordial" specificities of native African music, but emerges as a consequence of similar harsh conditions in which this music came about. It means, further, that this kinship of above mentioned musical genres created by descendents of slaves in North Africa and America could apply to other kinds of music born in similar conditions

of persecution and genocide. Africa leads the way toward the universal", Kateb says, "and it is the best thing that can happen to us." Kateb sets an example of that openness toward the universal by his own music, most literally by his songs' lyrics. Along with his interview, conducted by Christian Brouillard, posted, as an illustration, on the same page of the web site *www.ababoard.org*, are the lyrics of his song "Charla-town", from the album *Souk system* (2003), a song dedicated to the suffering of the Palestinians, to "half a century of genocide over the Palestinians". For that suffering, Kateb blames Mosad, the Jewish Diaspora in the West, the "pimp-America", the UN, some Third World countries, "Arabic world and small Arabic princes." They are all "charlatans", practitioners of "ethnic cleansing", "makers of wars, Kamikaze, and columns of soldiers". The refrain:

*Hey, charlatan, stop, let me tell you,  
Charlatan, scram, take you tanks away,  
For this is the Palestinian land  
It isn't on sale for whatever some one wants to pay*

To ward off any suspicion that his embracing the Palestinian cause may be a matter of inter-Arabic solidarity, Kateb will explain (on the web site *www.radiochango.com*) what his true motives are for taking such a position: "I am a Marxist-Leninist. I cannot condone colonialism. I am defending Palestine in the name of all peoples' right to self-determination and independence, just the same as many people taking to the streets in protest against the war in Iraq are not doing it just to defend the Arab cause. It is a matter of owing solidarity to all oppressed people." He deplores the fact that this solidarity surfaces only when

something big is happening, for it ought to be ever-present. "When I see what is going on in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria", Amazigh says, "I begin to dream of a global revolution against all those regimes that should be wiped out."

However, Amazigh Kateb confines his action to music alone, expressing his discontent only in song lyrics, whose serious political messages are not quite in synch with lively and cheerful dance rhythms of the music itself. This was noticed by Sabrina Kassa, authoress of a short article on Kateb, posted June 11, 2003, on the web site of the web publication *Altérités* ([www.alterites.com](http://www.alterites.com)). Having quoted a line in which Kateb sings that this world gives him "the wish to take up arms", she remarks that the rhythm of his songs compels the listener to dance, adding sarcastically "Let's dance some before we take up arms." There is no doubt that this or some other derisive remark at the expense of his singing of world revolution to a dance beat has reached his ears. He was asked about it by Christian Brouillard (in the above-mentioned interview): "In addition to politics, there is, in your music, some of the holiday-like gayety. Is there a risk that the edge of your critical discourse be somewhat dulled by this playful side of your music?" Kateb responded in opposition to the notion that politically committed music ought to be something somber, heavy, and overly serious. To the contrary, he says, politically involved music should not be separated from the holiday spirit: "Carrying out a beautiful revolution demands enthusiasm and energy... The future revolution is in the education of our children whom we shall teach to respond to capitalism with merrymaking."





## VI

# BACK TO THE BALKANS

October 20, 2004

Browsing through web sites on Moroccan musician brings me up to Said Tichiti, the founder and the leader of the Moroccan group Chalaban. He catches my attention because he founded his group in Budapest, of all places. True, this group, as it describes itself (*[www.chalaban.com](http://www.chalaban.com)*), "finds its inspiration in the traditional Moroccan music, which it fuses together with other ethnic and modern cultures." No doubt, Budapest is a place, today, that offers good conditions for cultivating this sort of fusion-oriented Moroccan music. The Moroccans have found there a few Hungarian colleagues ready to join them in their work, such as Zoltan Pinter, Tamas and Kupa Deak or Bea Palya, but also the English guitarist David Shep, the Armenian accordionist David Yengibarian, and the American jazzman Jalalu. This unexpected visit to Budapest reminds me of Marta Sebestyén, one of the very first ethno music stars I came across during this Ethnoland cruise of mine. It was a year ago, and it was my Russian guide during that stage of

the cruise, Sahuá D. who showed Marta to me. At that point, I was not paying any attention to how Hungarian and East-European ethno musicians related to Gipsy music, which has a stronger presence in that part of the world than anywhere else, and which is included in the traditional music of other peoples living in that region to the point of being virtually inseparable from it. Yet, separation and distinction are being pursued, if only for the sake of demonstrating, subsequently, close relatedness and compatibility of things separated from each other. Today, the following questions seem important to me: to what extent does this centuries-old mixing of the folk music of original East-European nationalities with Gipsy music has – as some ethno musicologists claim – become a part of the "poetics" of certain ethno musicians and their producers, and do they use that tradition toward newer, more modern forms of crossing Gipsy music with musical heritage of other East-European peoples? Does the old distance toward the Gypsies subsist in world music narratives, one of whose main topoi is "crossing all boundaries"? How do the Romany musicians, who also have joined the world music market, relate to the history of musical crossovers in Eastern Europe?

So, searching for the answers to these questions, I am revisiting Marta Sebestyén; I am going back to *Ethnotempos*, which – in its July 2000 issue – posted an interview with Marta and a cimbalom and bass player Daniel Hamar, one of the founders of Muszikás group. I see that for the two of them delineating their music from that of the Romany, i. e. drawing a clear line between the music played by Hungarian Romany and the traditional rural Hungarian music, represents a fundamental creative postulate. There is an "enormous difference" between those two types of

music, Daniel says. And he explains: "That which is called "Gipsy music is music composed in the so called 'folkloric' style, and is generally intended for people of modest educational background. It was created in the Nineteenth century for uneducated rich people, whose musical taste, was limited, to put it mildly, and who were willing to pay very well for that type of entertainment, so that Gipsy music invaded all of Hungary, villages especially, and many accepted it as authentic traditional Hungarian music." However, this is far from the truth. For, the true Hungarian music is one "of rural origin, anonymous, and which springs from the Hungarian cultural heritage." Anyone hearing a few bars that genuine Hungarian music is bound to realize how different it is from Gipsy music. "In order to realize that", he adds, "one needn't engage in a lot of research; attentive listening should suffice." Nevertheless, he refers to explorations of Hungarian folk music, notably the one done by Belá Bartók. He reminds the interviewer that "Bartók had made a clear distinction between these two kinds of music." Generally speaking, Bartók is a great teacher to both Daniel and Marta. They repaid him with an album entitled *The Bartok Album* (1999), which includes numbers with Hungarian folk tunes. The album first offers Bartok's recordings, then Bartok's compositions based on the music he recorded, and finally, compositions by Muszikás, based on the same tunes.

While, on the one hand, Daniel and Marta emphasize the difference between Hungarian and Gipsy music, on the other, they point at the kinship between Hungarian music and that of other East European nations. They deem the authentic Hungarian music to be the one Bartok collected among the Hungarians living in the Carpathian region in Transylvania. In this region, Hamar explains, "cultures are

so intermixed that the same melody may be considered Hungarian in a Hungarian village and Romanian in a neighboring Romanian village. "There is a common culture", he concludes. He says that the music performed by the group is the "music of the Carpathian mountains, and it is as much Hungarian as it is Romanian, or Slavic...We are singing about the same things, playing the same instruments, and we have identical styles. Our task is to assert the Hungarian music...but we do not wish to segregate cultures. For example, we have friends who play Serbian music (Marta has performed with them), and that music was written down among the Serbs living in Hungary." All in all – and this is one of Hamar's main points – "it turns out that precisely those willing to learn more about their own roots are also the ones who are the most open toward the other people." So, what about the Romany people, about openness toward them and their music? Apparently, this description of openness toward others, stemming somehow from self-absorption, does not apply to the Romany. The reason for that tacit exclusion must lie in the fact that Hamar's model of being interested in the others pertains only to those others having something to be self-absorbed about, i. e. roots. The Romany people are not among them. They are "another" other, if I may put it so.

Hamar's notion that only seeking our own roots can give rise to our desire to know others is just a subtype of an already threadbare nationalist "dialectics", according to which our firm adherence to what is "ours" will enable us to respect those different from us, to respect that famous Other, a term coined by nationalists long before it became the darling of the multicultural tolerance rhetoric. Nevertheless, it seems to me today that there is something

else to the idea of our desire to get in touch with our own roots turning us toward others: a trace of an experience older than nationalism. In many nations' folklore, there is a character who seeks his soul, destiny, strength, forgotten origin, or a lost love, who finds what he is looking for only when he redirects his gaze away from himself and toward the others, realizing that the object of his quest is in the possession of another, and is something else altogether. It is the topic of those folk tales about a hero whose "strength" is outside him, in some animal, some object, or another man. Likewise, in the stories about prophets, the truth a prophet seeks is always somewhere far away. As Marc Augé remarked, "all prophets had in common extensive travel, and some were even exiled from their homeland. Their peregrinations are a reflection of the intuition which leads their activity, and boils down to the insight that that which is the most important lies somewhere else, and not in the closed universe of particular cosmogonies" (Augé, 1994, 146).

October 22, 2004

That which Daniel Hamar finds in Transylvania, the Turkish musician Nadir Ipek has in his native Istanbul: a rich and diverse traditional folk music. But among the elements of that wealth he also cites Gipsy music. On the web site CMTRA (September 2003), I am reading a short interview with him on the web site CMTRA (September 2003). "The heritage of the Ottoman empire", Ipek says, "which had the Balkans and the Arab world under its rule for five centuries, is the main reason why in Istanbul, where I was born and raised, different ethnic communities live together. Greeks,

as well as Macedonians, Bulgarians, Gypsies, Sephardic Jews, Armenians all met and stayed together there, joined also by Arabs and Iranians. All these peoples, as well as the Turks, spontaneously make music, and there is centuries-old practice of musical exchange among them."

However – Ipek explains – that ethnic and musical diversity of Istanbul was not to the liking of the founders of modern Turkish nation and of their followers, so that during the thirties and the forties of the Twentieth century the Turkish musicians and musicologists were urged by the government to explore the Turkmen musical tradition, to do field research in Anatolia, to visit "the most remote backwoods of the country, in order to find Turkish folklore." That was in keeping with what was being done, during the same time, in Turkish linguistic, which had the national duty to create the "pure Turkish Language, purged of Ottoman words". It is only during the sixties that Turkey became reconciled to its past", so that musicians and musical institutions were free again to turn to the Ottoman tradition too. As far as I know, in European parts of former Ottoman Empire no such initiatives for the reconciliation with the Ottoman past appeared, as that past is still experienced there exclusively as a trauma, so much so that even the faintest trace of that past – in folk music, for instance – is apt to traumatize some listeners.

Dragan Urlić (Urlich), a Romany violinist who has, since the early nineties of the past century, been living in France, where he founded the Loulou Djine group, talks (also on the web site CMATRA, June, 2004) about an area in which there existed a close net of musical mixing. He means - former Yugoslavia. "Former Yugoslavia", he says, "was a cross-road of cultures and religions... The music bore traces of the Ottoman times, but was also influenced by the Orthodox

countries (Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria), as well as by other counties of Eastern Europe. Granted, it was a communist country, but it was open to all musical influences, hence it produced a blend of the West, the European East and the Middle- East, present also in its Gypsy music."

Dragan found himself in France fleeing the war in Bosnia. "When I arrived in France", he recounts, "I did not want to mingle with people from Yugoslavia, neither Catholic, Greek Orthodox. I wished to create music without local color, so I turned to gypsy music which, as far as I am concerned, is colorless and odorless. It is music that gives everyone a passport to walk in and walk out at will; it gives freedom." Even more than that ... "It is the music", Dragan explains, "which links everybody together, its leitmotif is the desire to be mobile, to forget differences. True, there is a racist kind of hatred of Gypsies. They have been persecuted by everybody ever since they arrived in Europe, yet they have continued to accept the musical influences of the countries in which they were settling down." This is how the Romany musicians can be represented as forerunners of multiculturalism before that concept even existed as such.

Oct 24, 2004

On the web site *www.etudestsiganes.asso.fr* I am coming across an essay by Alain Antonietto entitled "History of instrumental Gypsy music in Central Europe," finding therein interesting facts about the role played by Gypsy musicians and Gypsy music in constructing the image of Hungary and its "soul." Mentioned there is the violinist Mihaly Barna, who was a musician at the court of



Ferenz II Rakoszy, and who, in 1705, composed, in honor of his lord, the famous "Rakoszy March", and Rakoszy reciprocated by hanging in his living quarters Barna's portrait with the caption: "A Hungarian Orpheus." This essay cites the fact that toward the end of the Sixteenth century Gypsy musicians began to play military conscript dance music called *Verbunkos*, which became "a symbol of Hungarian national resistance to Austrian domination at the beginning of the Nineteenth century. The fame and the veneration of a musician that had made a major contribution to Hungarian national music were also enjoyed by Pistá Dankó (1858 -1903), an author of several hundreds of songs which later became, in Antonietto's words, a part of the "treasure trove of Hungarian folklore." After Pistá's death, his native town of Szeged erected a monument in his memory, which still stands. In Slovakia, Pistá's counterpart was the Gypsy violinist Jozko Pito (1800 – 1896), who included traditional Slovak songs in his repertoire, and for that he was rewarded by the citizens of Lubko, who commissioned and displayed in their city hall a painted portrait of him.

I am reading about reactions provoked by Franz Liszt's write-up entitled "The Gypsies and their music." He was criticized, Antonietto says, for portraying the Gypsy music as the music of all Hungarian people." The Hungarian nationalists of that time were forcefully opposing to the Germanic culture the vestiges of old Hungarian music, free, not only of Germanic traces, but of Gypsy ingredients as well. "Liszt attributes to the Gypsies the creative genius of the Hungarian people", the musicologist Emil Haraszyti wrote. Similar nationalistic argumentation was adopted by Belá Bartók. His colleague and collaborator Zoltan Kodály wrote that there was, in Gypsy music, "excessive

sentimentality rather foreign to the Hungarian mentality." Nevertheless, despite this kind of resistance, the popular idea of Hungary has remained, even throughout the Twentieth century, inseparably linked to Gypsy music. As the French musicologist Pierre du Bois remarked, "The enormous popularity of the Gypsy musicians had contributed to the creation of an image of a society completely absorbed by entertainment and merry-making, and their success was amplified by the content of their music. They seemed to embody the Hungarian tradition."

October 25, 2004

Google locates the expression "Gypsy music" in just a little less than 400 links. Often are there examples of positive stereotypes of the Romany and their music, old clichés about hot Gypsy blood and natural talent for music. "The Sounds of Gypsy Music"- one can read on the page devoted to the Romany group Sar e Roma of *www.geocities.com* (April 10 2004) – range from melancholy and sadness of a romance song to fiery rhythm of strong emotion and stirred up blood, all the way to gentleness of a lullaby. Suffering and joy have mixed together for centuries, leaving footprints of anonymous musicians and singers, as well as the big marks left behind by concert stage stars... those sounds spring from blood, body and soul."

Hot blood and inborn musicality of the Romany are represented as some sort of their comparative advantage. However, their advantages are usually mentioned with a number of their comparative disadvantages, among which is particularly emphasized the fact that they have no

homeland, no sense of strong national identity. So, the hot temperament and physical oneness with music and dance, as it were, are transformed into signs and symptoms of a fatal handicapped character, of an incomplete humanity of people without homeland, without national identity, who can sing somebody else's songs from the heart, only because, in reality, they do not have their own. Even in the expressions of most sincere sympathy toward the Romany, there is a trace of the belief that their extremely likeable humanity is actually abnormal. For instance, the singer Haris Džinović, who frequently collaborates with Romany musicians, says on his web site ([www.harisdžinović.com](http://www.harisdžinović.com)) about his motives for that collaboration: "I experience Gypsy music as my very own, mine by birth." However, he adds right away something that shows that, in order to be publicly declared and accepted, this closeness to the Gypsies has to be the closeness to a stereotypical romantic image of them: "As though I were born somewhere in the Russian steppe", Haris says. It would have hardly occurred to him to say: "As though I were born in the cardboard shanty town on the outskirts of Zemun."

However, the limit of Džinović's affinity with the Gypsies, the point at which it turns out to be a form of compassion toward people who are human in a specific and, actually, incomplete way, because they haven't become a nation so far, shows explicitly in this same text, when he states: "The Gypsies do not exist as a people. They are people without a homeland. They are perpetual nomads. They possess nothing except that which they can carry with them – and with them they carry an enormous heart, a heart that is like a sea. They have no deceit in their feelings, and it is that which is the most powerful, sincere, and human."

October 26, 2004

The Gypsies are not the only ones today playing Gypsy music. It is performed, among others, by Swiss musicians, members of the Saassa group. They too find in their Swiss souls the inspiration "to transport you, in a devilish rhythm, into the world of Turkish, Greek, Macedonian, and Bosnian, even Lebanese and Egyptian Gypsies". That is what this group's promo claims on its web site ([www.ssassa.ch](http://www.ssassa.ch)). Besides its Swiss members, the group includes a Macedonian by the name of Marem Aliev. Not only does the "musical whirlwind" that Saassa produces when it plays have everything it needs to be Gypsy – and it also has "devilish rhythm" – but in it one can recognize specific elements of the culture of the countries from which Gypsy music on this group's repertoire comes. This is at least what the group's web site promises, and as a guaranty that it is so, the web site mentions that that "the musicians spent time cruising those parts". What I personally find the most interesting on this web site is the appearance therein of the term "intercultural", which innovates and enriches the repertoire of stereotypical images of the Gypsy music. "Thanks to its talented musicians", it says there, "Saassa will spellbind you by its intercultural fireworks of sounds produced by clarinet, saxophone, percussion, udo, and many more instruments."

In the online edition of Blic (August 5, 2003), I am reading an article on a Swedish group named Superstar orchestra, specializing in Romany music from the Balkans, from Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria." But there is not a single Romany in this group. The article was posted on the occasion of their Serbian tour. They performed at Belgrade Summer Festival, but also in the

Skadarlija restaurant, where, as it says in the article, they astonished the patrons and the crowd outside by their fire-breathing rendition of belly dance music, called Choček". Still, the most important to them is their participation at the festival in Guča (Goocha). "We adore Guča", Goran Christensen, a member of the group, says, "and this year is the first for us to appear there. We are the very first band from Sweden to be officially invited." For him, no doubt, Guča festival is one of Gypsy music, mixed, nevertheless, with other kinds of music. Very specific is the rhythm of the music that can be heard here", Christensen says. "Of course, you can hear various influences of Arab, Hindu, and Spanish music. It is all one big mix, and that is exactly what I like."

Is there anybody else who might like such a mix? And, generally speaking, what is it in Guča that people like so much that from year to year they flock there in ever-greater numbers, up to three hundred thousand? The moment has come for me to go there, to complete this tour of the world of ethno music by attending the Dragačevo trumpeters' gathering in Guča, that is, Internet locations, (web "sites", which could very well mean "places where things can be found"), where virtual images of Guča are constructed.

December 1, 2004

Guča festival has a web site ([www.guca.co.yu](http://www.guca.co.yu)) intended specifically for foreign visitors, as it offers texts only in English, German, and Italian. The motto for all three versions of the site is in English, and is actually a statement the great jazz trumpet player Myles Davis made

upon hearing the Guča trumpeters play: *I didn't know you can play the trumpet that way*, which, no doubt, has been understood by the authors of the web site as a compliment. I read the Italian version of the introductory text. It begins with a history of the trumpet in Serbia, i. e., with the beginnings of the alleged love the Serbs feel toward that instrument, love "born in 1831, when the prince Miloš Obrenović founded the first military brass band." The subsequent course of that history is depicted there as the growth of an affection. "From that moment on, the passion for its wondrous sound continued to live in the Dragačevo district; in its streets and saloons could always be heard the sublime and unique sound of the traditional Serbian trumpet. " Still, that tradition did not remain only a matter of streets and saloons, but according to the creators of this web site, it went on to become a part of the traditional family and social life of the Serbian people. "The sound of the trumpet has accompanied and still does the most important moments in the life of a Serbian person, whether rural or urban: birth, wedding, funeral, patron saints's feast day, departure for military service, religious holidays, state holidays, planting and harvesting the fields."

The trumpet players performing at Guča festival are introduced as untrained, God-given musicians, possessed of a "natural talent." They cannot do musical notation, but the notes of their music are written in their hearts." So, here too we are encountering the stereotype about people virtually physically at one with music, here too it pertains to Gypsy musicians, and here too its racist implications can be felt. For the music with which these God-given musicians are organically united is not theirs, but is actually alien to them – it is Serbian. The trumpet itself is just as Serbian.

"The names such as Boban Marković, Milan Mladenović, Ekrem Sejdić, Elvis Ajdinović, Feat Sejdić", as it is written at the end of the web site, "have carried the glory of the Serbian trumpet to the four corners of the world." The fact that every single one of these musicians carrying the glory of the Serbian trumpet the world over is a Romany is not even mentioned here, just as there is no mention of the Gypsies or their music, or anything Gypsy whatsoever. It is not a matter here of playing down the Romany identity to the advantage of the Serb identity, but rather of denying the very existence of that identity, denying that the ethnic group made up of the Romany has its own culture, its own "being". That absence of identity is represented as an advantage, at least as far as it regards the musicians, who, unfettered by their own musical tradition, can easily adopt an alien one, and become excellent interpreters of it, but a costly advantage, as the music they so brilliantly interpret remains, allegedly, distant to them and beyond their grasp<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mihailo Petrović, alias Mika Alas, advocated after WWI that Gypsy music in Serbia be accepted as a part of Serbian popular culture, since they perform "our songs". For Petrovic too the Gypsies are one-dimensional people, reduced to music: "Whatever one may think of Gypsy music, what ever it may be, it is undeniably an integral part of our popular culture. Endowed with the ability to memorize music, possessing excellent playing technique, acquired through unrelenting practice, having exclusive devotion to playing, and with the violin – an instrument high above simple folk instruments in perfection – as their instrument of choice, the Gypsies have always performed our songs and dances with more ease and more beautifully than amateur folk players, and have touched emotional strings in our people more deeply than any other players, professional or amateur. (Petrović, 15) Note added: June 2005.

Thinking of Gypsy music as a kind of music devoid of national authenticity is not altogether foreign to professional musicologists. A representative of that way of thinking is the ethnomusicologist Andrijana Gojković. In an interview published on July 2, 2000 in "Glas javnosti" (voice of the public), I am reading now in the online edition of that newspaper ([www.glasjavnosti.co.yu](http://www.glasjavnosti.co.yu)), she says: "In every country, Gypsy music is the music of the autochthonous population interpreted in the Gypsy manner." However, quite unlike what I read on the Guča festival web site, where the ability of Gypsy trumpeters to preserve the authenticity of the Serbian trumpet is never doubted, A. Gojković warns of negative effects of Gypsy interpretation of Serbian music: "Gypsy music has adopted Serbian music, but corrupted it by its interpretation." There is no doubt that this is intended to signify that playing music "the Gypsy way", brilliant though it may seem, in actuality betrays the original purity of the national being, residing in the sounds of autochthonous music, which can be genuinely expressed only by autochthonous Serbian musicians.

There are such musicians in Guča, among those competing at the festival. They are from Dragačevo and from other areas of Western and Eastern Serbia, while Gypsy bands come from Southern Serbia, from Vranje, Vladičin Han, and Surdulica. However, the latter are distinctly superior to the former, capturing more prizes, and getting more applause from the audience. Some of them have worked with Emir Kusturica and Goran Bregović. One of them, Boban Marković, having distinguished himself in Guča, became highly prized and sought after throughout the world. Why aren't the Serb trumpeters as good as the Gypsy ones? Perhaps because the trumpet is not a Serb



instrument. There are, Andrijana Gojković *dixit*, only four Serb instruments: "The frula (folk flute), dual flute, bag pipe, and gusle are the instruments of original Serbian music. From the Turks, we got zurla, drum, and the fiddle." The trumpet comes after all that, thanks to the Gypsies. "The Gypsies are good on wind instruments", A. Gojković continues, "instead of zurle they adopted the brass instruments and made brass orchestras." We do not know from whom they received it, so that here too the trumpet, just like the Gypsy musicians themselves, remains without true roots, without national identity, as ready to be used for performing somebody else's music, as are its master players - the Gypsies.

December 2, 2004

In Guča the Serbian trumpet players are called "white", and the Gypsy ones "black". I am learning this from Zoran Hristić, composer and the president of the jury for the selection of the "Golden Trumpet" in Guča in 2004. I am reading a conversation with him posted on the web site of the Russian language program of "Radio Free Europe" of August 17, 2004 (<http://euro.svoboda.org>). He did not fail either to point out that the Romany musicians participating in Guča "have special nerves, special soul. In reply to the question why the trumpet should be so popular in Serbia, while it is not even a Serbian folk instrument, Hristić says that on old gravestones in Guča one can see likenesses of soldiers, engraved in stone, with a bugle in their hands, which testifies to the fact that, in frequent wars they had to fight, the Serbian people had opportunities to get acquainted with the trumpet, and to play it even in time of

peace. "The trumpet", he says, "was born elsewhere, but in Guča it took on a unique kind of life."

In his own work as a composer, Hristić finds inspiration in "the sounds of Guča". "When I compose, the sounds of Guča are always present in my subconscious mind." However, those sounds localized in Guča, actually belong to a broader cultural, or more specifically, musical space, that of the entire Balkan peninsula. "I would not call it local sounds", the composer says, "they are the sounds of the Balkans." Hristić lends here a new definition to the identity of the Dragačevo trumpet. It is neither Gypsy nor Serbian, in other words, it can be both, but it is Balcan, above all. It links together Serbs Romany and all the other Balkan people by rhythms equally close to all of them. This solution to the problem of identity of the music they perform is accepted by many musicians seeking their place on the ethno music market. They had discovered – as I noticed it last year at the very beginning of this research, while meeting musicians like Sanja Ilić, or Slobodan Trkulja – the advantages of having a "brand name" that refers to the Balkans, especially for the musicians coming from a country whose national "brand" is compromised by war and nationalism.

A few days ago, I came across another group resorting to this same identity and marketing strategy. It is the acoustic guitar trio Balkan Strings. It is made up of Zoran Starčević and his two sons, Nikola and Željko. Last summer, the trio released an album of the same name, in two versions, one for the domestic (*Balkanske žice*, RGP RTS), and the other for foreign markets (*Balkan Strings*, Sunset – France – Playsound). The trio's web site ([www.starcevic.co.yu](http://www.starcevic.co.yu)) demonstrates that its author has mastered the promotional rhetoric peculiar to world music, whose basic

figures are "crossover", music "without borders", and "multicultural". The music of Balkan Strings is described on the web site as a "synthesis of Balkan elements: Serbian, Gypsy, Romanian, Bulgarian, Moldovan, Macedonian, Greek, Mid-Eastern."

However it is apparent that the author of the text knows that "crossovers", "over the borders" at that, can be a very handy means of emphasizing differences, of underscoring primordial and irreducible identities. First comes the stand on the multicultural character of the Balkans, whose inner borders are not easily drawn: "The Balkans is a multinational region where many cultures are mixed together , so that it is hard to tell where one ends and the next begins." Moreover, all the music of that region bears the same mark, it springs from the same well of collective memory: "For centuries, this music, influenced by the political instability of the region, has been colored by a nostalgia and a peculiar sadness imprinted in the collective memory." But these similarities yield the stage to differences, which are of an inner nature, while the similarities remain outward: "The music of different Balkan peoples has much in common; in appearance, they all play, listen and dance to the same music, but the interpretations clearly differ from nation to nation." The balkan music captivates the listener by its overall beauty, but the ultimate true beauty exists only in its particular expressions: "The Balkan music is like a hand woven rug, full of ornaments, whose beauty is in evidence , but it is only when you take a close look at it that you can appreciate the full beauty of color and artistry of every ornament and every thread woven in."

Whose are those particular expressions, whose are those ornaments? They, no doubt, come from the Balkan peoples, whose national musical expressions represent

something basic, something constant that can be combined with other, equally constant and basic musical and cultural facts. Yet, the Starčevićs, and other musicians, similar to them, who incorporate into their compositions elements of other Balkan peoples' traditional music, undermine by that very practice the idea that every type of traditional music is reducible to a single national code that every musician carries within him, and which constitutes the key to his inspiration. For, if the beauty of individual ornaments of the Balkan musical tapestry is to shine, and if all of them, Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian, can be made by a single musician, for instance, the Serb, Zoran Starčević, it means that the codes of different types of Balkan music and culture can be reduced to a single one, common to all of them, so that any Balkan musician can spontaneously, as it were, be a medium for the music of any other Balkan nation. It also implies that the codes in question are not really a matter of collective cultural heritage, but represent musical genres at which musicians of various ethnic backgrounds can take a stab with equal chances of success. With this in mind, it is quite imaginable that the best Balkan music be made by people who are not of Balkan origin, nor have ever been in that region.

December 6, 2004

What makes the Guča annual trumpet gathering so attractive to hundreds of thousands of people, among whom many come there from Western Europe, some even from America, Asia, even Australia? What is actually going on there? This question has been intriguing enough for the international media, who, for the last few years, have paid

much attention to Guča. Three years ago, the French newspaper *l'Humanité* sent there a special correspondent, Sabine Ganansia. I find her article, entitled "The Golden Trumpet for the Romany from Serbia", of August 31, 2001, in the archive of the paper's online edition (*www.humanite.presse.fr*). In its opening lines, the article goes straight to the heart of the matter, i. e. it offers one of the stock figures of the exotic narration about the Balkans, a scene of drunken dancing on table: "Play! A man teetering on top of a table, ordered, after sticking a banknote on the sweaty forehead of a trumpeter with a Hindu face". The authoress goes on to describe the music of "black", Gypsy, and "white", Serb orchestras, underscoring the fact that both cultivate music containing elements of trance, the Gypsies "čoček" (a type of belly dance), the Serbs "kolo" (a type of wheel dance). However, she promptly returns to depicting drunken dancing on tables: "Through the thick smoke of open barbecue pits, over which sukling pigs and lambs are turning on spits, one can discern bare-chested men who had climbed on tables. With money in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other, they are in a trance.

That same year, some of the same barbecue pit smoke ended up in the lungs of Neil Strauss, the reporter of New York Times. He described his impression in a piece entitled "Serbian Horns Blaring for Joy", which I am finding on this paper's online edition (*www.nytimes.com*) of September 5, 2001. Strauss discovered that the Trumpet meet in Guča was "one of the most frenzied and unrestrained festivals of folk music of this, or perhaps any kind. He, no less than his French colleague, was unable to resist the temptation of depicting drunken table dancing. "For four straight days", Neil writes, "the visitors imbibe enormous quantities of alcohol, eat roast lamb and pig

meat, and dance around and on tops of tables, while some two scores of deafening brass bands raise hell till early morning hours." He did not fail either to depict drunken guests slapping banknotes on musicians' wet, sweaty foreheads, or shoving them into the bells of their hungry trumpets."

On the basis of this empirical field data of his, as it were, Neil Strauss ventures some conclusions about the Serbian mentality. In his view, the drunken reveling with trumpeters in Guča is "only an extreme case of many Serbs' propensity for night life." "Testimonials to this same attitude toward unrestrained merrymaking are the very folk songs, blaring in saloons and restaurants all night long; companies of friends bellow out songs stirring up in them extreme emotions. The refrains of those songs speak of love until death, or of broken heart aches, which are to be comforted by intoxication, excessive eating, and breaking glass bottles, as though the sun were never to rise again." He does not make a distinction between the audience and the musicians, does not get involved with differences between "black" and "white" trumpet players. Everything he saw in Guča has lead him to the conclusion that one is dealing here with a chaotic and savage world. In that world gone mad, the drunken visitors of the festival are not the only ones climbing on tables; they are joined by musicians gone wild, one of them being none lesser than that year's "Golden Trumpet" winner, Boban Markovic. The New York Times correspondent describes his victory dance: "He jumped onto the table, torn off his shirt, and began blowing through his trumpet the wildest and the most extatic thing I have ever heard. The crowd around him continued to tear his shirt to shreads, waving them overhead."



Picture 32. The photograph on the Home page of [www.guca.co.yu](http://www.guca.co.yu)

It seems that the organizers of the Guča festival have thoroughly understood that such "tableaux", in which their event is depicted as a place of authentic chaos and madness, can have the effect of an irresistible advertisement, at least with the audience Kusturica's and other films about Gypsies have caused to phantasize about a world of likable, comical, but perfectly happy and free imbeciles. Guča is being marketed as a three-day program of "being off your rocker", and the powerful sound of the trumpet as a means which, if employed properly (i. e. if the instrument is placed as close as possible to a listener's ear), leads straight to the intended goal: freaking and knocking the listener out. Neil Strauss has established that that his observations about Guča

were completely in line with what the organizers had wished to accomplish. He quotes one of them, Vasilije Gavrilović: "This is pure madness, and in madness there are no rules". The choice of the photograph on the Home page of the festival's official web site is motivated by the marketing idea of Guča as a place of sheer madness.

In the online edition of the French newspaper *Liberation* ([www.libe.fr](http://www.libe.fr)), of Aug 17, 2004, I am reading an article by Christophe Dabic, entitled "In Serbian Guča, Trumpets and Tradition". "We have entered the kingdom of the trumpet and of bare-chested giants", the opening sentence states. The author, then, observes that the organizers of the festival are trying to give it the character of a review of traditional Serbian music. Even though both Serbian and Romany musicians perform there, "all are dressed, during the competition, in Serbian traditional costumes, and are obligated to perform Serbian folk songs." He quotes a member of the "Golden Trumpet" jury, the musicologist Mirjana Zakić: "We wish to preserve the authenticity of traditional melodies. We appreciate virtuosity, musicality, skillful arranging, but also the respect for tradition. The most important thing is that performances be imbued with the folk spirit." Dabic believes that even some visitors experience the festival as a "manifestation of Serbian culture and Serbian identity, observing that one can hear there some nationalist songs, and see chetnik busbies with Serbian royal cockades. Nevertheless, all this gets watered down and gets lost in the general drunken gayety, and the symbols of the bellicose Serbian nationalism become mere props of the carnival-like reveling. One "young Serb" explained to Dabic that Serbs "buy the WWI soldier caps, another national symbol, just to be hip, and for fun." Dabic agrees



with him, because many foreign visitors behave likewise. He even saw an American musician "decorated with Serbian nationalist amblems and insignia."

The mentality manifested in this drunken reveling in Guča is recognized by Dabic as Balkan. Foreigners come here in search of a breath of Balkan madness. Altogether, he too likes Guča. "Permeated with the aroma of grilled veal and pork, in a sea of alcohol, surrounded by a crowd of young giants and their dancing females, stands a Gypsy band playing to its last breath. And, it is moments of happiness such as this that render Guča beautiful". Similarly to other journalists writing about Guča, Dabic concentrates his attention on music performed off stage, outside the official program of the festival, in saloons, under tents, in the streets. He notices a bizarre manner in which the inebriated guests listen to the trumpet music, demanding that the players bring their instruments as close to their ears as possible, as if the subtle violin sound were coming out of the trumpet bells. This unbelievable consumption of music was also described by Jan Möller in the newspaper *Die Zeit* ([www.zeus.zeit.de](http://www.zeus.zeit.de)) of September 4, 2003: "At that point begins a real thunderstorm, at forty centimeters from the left ear a tuba lets itself be heard, at thirty from the right one, it is a trumpet, while the bass drum is thundering from behind." It occurs at times, Möller says, that the guests are entertained in that fashion by six or seven orchestras simultaneously, under the same tent, in a space no larger than an indoor soccer court. He adds: "Nerves? Eardrums? Who cares, you live only once."

PART TWO

**ETHNO SOUND SYSTEM**

**The Results of Research**



# I

## INTERNETHNOLOGY

*Of these worlds, largely fictitious themselves, one could say that they are essentially worlds of recognition. It is a defining attribute of symbolic universes that for the people to whom they are handed down they constitute a means of recognition rather than cognition: they are closed worlds within which everything is a sign of something else, clusters of codes for which only some have appropriate keys, and know what to do with them, but whose existence all acknowledge, totalities partly fictitious, but wholly effective, cosmologies that could be viewed as conceived of for the sake of making ethnologists happy.*

Marc Augé, *Non – lieux*,  
Seuil, Paris, 1992

As the reader of my journal may have noticed, I was using the Internet primarily as an archive of various materials, including documents on world music. Similarly to many other users of that archive, I like to think of it as an ocean one navigates or "surfs". However, my months-long moving about the Internet in search of portals, web sites, and web pages on world music gradually became less of a navigation and more of an excavation from an immense heap of easily accessible but hopelessly disorganized material. I was faced with something the cybernauts had long ago identified as the main problem in using the Internet: the information glut. I had at my disposal data, commentaries, illustrations, and links about

everything that interested me, but there was too much of any of it. Out of the entire offer, I could only take a small portion while not being able to decide easily what it would be. It is the problem of filtering and sorting out the endless quantity of information we find on the Internet and in today's information society at large, the problem that tortures Thomas Hylland Eriksen, the author of the book entitled *Tyranny of the moment*. "How can I be sound asleep at night, if every day I have to filter out 99, 99% of all the information I could take in", Eriksen complains. "How can I be sure enough that this tenth of a thousandth I actually used is the most relevant for me, if I had not even sniffed at the rest" (Eriksen, pp. 32).

### **Cybernaut with a pencil in hand**

My "cruising" the Internet, or rather digging my way through it in search of world music consisted of a series of relatively brief *online* periods punctuated by long pauses. I used the pauses to reflect in peace, that is, *offline*, on what I had found on the web, and to decide quickly which parts of it to save and copy. By analyzing the "excavated objects," I was able to set aside that which was useful to me, as well as to determine on what I should focus during next *online* period. When I would determine that I had arrived at sufficiently useable material, it was time for printing it out. It was then, when I had everything on paper, that true work would begin, the one with pencil in hand, consisting of underlining, writing notes on margins, or on any other piece of paper. Nevertheless, the role of pencil and paper amounted to no more than that. The final text, including my research

journal, I wrote on my computer. I too am one of those who have "forgotten" how to write any other way.

An ethnologist-anthropologist can exercise on the Internet what many consider to be the specific difference of his discipline: participatory observation. He can partake of the life of certain virtual communities, some of which call themselves "virtual villages", which is something that would additionally motivate an ethnologist to take interest in them<sup>1</sup> (1), and he has at his disposal groups organized by cybernauts for the purpose of discussing matters that interest them. Among such groups are those of world music lovers or fans of particular musicians, or people interested in specific types of ethno music, or musical instruments. They are mostly young people, exchanging information about concerts and compact discs. After a few visits to such groups, I saw no reason for any further "hanging out" with them. As for the sites of ethno musicians, their producers, and publishers, as well as online music stores and media specializing in this genre of music, even if they do not offer to a cybernaut ethnologist access to the inner sanctum of the ethno music world, they at least make it possible for him or her to establish contact – by means of electronic mail – with its denizens. Nevertheless, I did not consider this sort of contact important for the present

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<sup>1</sup> One of them is Christophe Hebrard, who explores Franco-phone virtual communities. His first work on that topic is "Virtual Village 3D, Introduction to Ethnology of Virtual Communities (Hebrard). Another example of ethnographic study of virtual communities is the work of Nessim Watson "Why do we argue about a virtual community: history of the case phish.net" in Jones, 1997.

work, which concerned itself primarily with discourse and narratives about world music. Not that I was not interested in what they had to say – quite the contrary: I was all ears – but I had come to the conclusion that I should not expect to hear from my "heroes" in person anything different from what I had read, heard, and seen on their websites.

In fact, in all of the *online* talk about ethno music, the most interesting to me seemed to be that which was intended for the cybernaut community, for the global virtual village, those messages whose comprehension implies the existence of a global "cultural grammar", of a core of "implicit knowledge", evenly distributed throughout the planet, in other words, the existence of a trans-cultural space, best described by Marc Augé's term "non-lieu" (non place). Working in that type of a "field", placing himself in the position of a student of the global virtual village, the cybernaut ethnologist is headed for loneliness. However, as Augé remarks, "it is in the anonymity of the non place that one experiences, as a lone individual, the communality of human destiny" (Augé, 199).

This description of my way of using the Internet for the benefit of my ethnological research was first meant to be a confession of sorts. I felt I should admit that I was fully aware of the fact that I had relied on the Internet only up to a point, and that I thought I could truly grasp the essence of all that I had discovered as a cybernaut only after I was back on *terra firma*. In addition to that, I felt that it would be better that I personally state something the reader would easily notice anyway: the fact that I had not attempted to apply a non linear, mosaic or dictionary-like method of exposition, corresponding to "choppy" itineraries commonly followed by cybernauts.

My quest for world music on the Web was temporally and spatially discontinuous as well. I too had experienced dizziness that can be caused, after one has logged onto the Web, by the impression one has then of having remained without a geographic or temporal strongpoint, of being everywhere and nowhere. However, instead of seeking a narrative which would itself be dizzying, I preferred to make my exposé coherent by reading randomly scooped up material, interpreting and ordering it geographically, chronologically, and thematically. Thus, the stages of my actual cyber-nautical cruise alternated with the stages of a parallel journey through material mined from the Web, as it were, during which I endeavored to reintegrate the diverse elements of that material into another web, that of a measured and coherent presentation of it. Thanks to that, I was able to offer my readers a marked out and to a considerable degree paved road through the world music landscape, with various over and underpasses, bridges, tunnels – that is – with elements I built into it in order to assure unimpeded traffic on it.

Thus, I first thought it good for me to admit humbly that my use of a computer and the Internet – even though it enabled me to experience some of that new perception of time and space, reported by many a research cybernaut, still could not shake loose my ties to the intellectual tradition of pre-computer era. Let my readers hear from me personally that I belong to the "old school", after all – something to be expected of a man my age – and that I do not hide it. However, T. H. Eriksen has convinced me that faithfulness to the "old school" is not only typical of those having a hard time kicking their old pre-computer era intellectual habits, and who have been irrevocably left



behind by the passage of time, but that it can be of a polemical nature, even a part of a critical perspective on the information society. Speaking of his own *Tyranny of the Moment*, Eriksen emphasizes the fact that this "cellulose based product is faithful to the endangered cultural style." This means that his book is linear and cumulative, that it follows a certain sequence, and that its chapters are organically linked together. "The book strikes one as having been written in a certain pre-established order", Eriksen says, "It mimics the era before word-processing. Time is its topic, but its form – the essay of intellectual reflection – is not in sync with this time, and may be viewed as old-fashioned by the next generation. Nevertheless, I take the license to doubt it" (Eriksen, 15). His words give me hope that this book of mine, written by a cybernaut ethnologist, who nevertheless imitated the style of *The Argonauts of Western Pacific*, will also, precisely due to its retro-style, have something substantial to say to its readers of a time yet to come.

However, I do not count myself among those who think that new technology can be harnessed to tug the wagon of old ideas, even if those have not won me over either who believe that new technology inevitably triggers revolutions in our heads, causes radical mental changes in us, called by theologians and political revolutionaries "the birth of new man" To my understanding, the relationship between new technology and old thoughts is somewhat more complex. New technology has a way of infusing new life into old ideas, a way of rendering them as contemporary and needed as never before. For instance, as Eriksen has demonstrated, the high speed of communication in today's information society has not caused the culture of leisurely pace to become a relic of the past, but has prompted us

instead to look at it with different eyes, to view it as a legacy of vital significance, in this day and age, for the very survival of the humanistic culture. Leisureliness had no true admirers – at least not in the West – until the emergence of speedy cybernauts. "Give us Leisurely Pace Now!" is the title of the final chapter of *Tyranny of the Moment*.

My decision to devote myself to exploring narratives about world music meant from the very beginning that I would be doing it on the Internet. The abundance of material therein on musicians hailing from the four corners of the world and the speed with which I could access it were neither the only nor the most important reason why my research was "internethnological". With a little extra effort I could have as well put together a satisfactory body of material from printed sources. Besides, I often used, as my readers have certainly noticed, examples from *online* editions of certain newspapers. The more important reason why I dealt with narratives on world music predominantly as a cybernaut lies in the fact that this kind of narration – not unlike any other, after all – takes on, when it is on the Web, some traits it either lacks or does not show very distinctly in other media. One of those traits is perpetuity. Internet narration does not lead to an epilogue, dénouement, ending, but rather branches itself endlessly out, from link to link, and from digression to digression. You can begin reading it at any place, as well as finish reading it when you feel that you have had enough of it, for want of a more valid reason to do so. Further, narration on the internet is wholly multi-media; its text in the narrower linguistic sense of the word is complemented there by audio and video documents, which is particularly

important when one investigates cultural creations such as ethno music, quite multi-media itself.

Even closer to the nature of world music is the hybrid character of narration on the Web. Just as mixing together of different musical genres and traditions is peculiar to this music, cross-breeding different languages and narrative genres is a hallmark of texts on the Internet. Most websites I have visited are at least bilingual, and in many cases even multi-lingual. The closeness between different languages may even be greater here than on websites devoted to other topics, first because many of their texts appear in two languages side by side on the same page, but also because narration hops from one language to the other with ease. For example, Face Music label from Germany provides information about music it publishes in English as well (how important to that enterprise is the English-speaking market is reflected in its very name), but those interested in reading more than what is offered by English ought to move on to the German version, which means that German does not function here as an alternative to English, but rather as its extension.

In sync with the predominantly hybrid character of world music is also a medley of narrative genre characteristics, fully present on the Internet, where – in the narratives about world music – one can observe switching codes with utter ease, moving from the register of scientific discourse on folklore, ethnicity and similar topics to that of political discourse on liberty and repression in certain cultures, from the language of theology, resorted to in discussions of certain kinds of spiritual music, to the style of tourist guidebooks in promotional texts extolling the virtues of a particular disk,

concert, or festival, from the sparse language of an encyclopedic entry to the style of a folktale...

As factors of instability of structure and semantic divergence of texts, uninterruptedness, multi-media and multi-lingual character, as well as the heterogeneity of the Internet narration, including narratives on world music, are counter-balanced in a way by the existence of a number of parallelisms, homologies, or ordinary coincidences. These are points of convergence which enable the cybernaut to recognize things he encounters for the first time, to recognize himself in that which is spoken by people far removed from him linguistically and culturally. Those points of convergence make up a middle ground of sorts – a space in between languages, genres, and texts – where intercultural communication takes place. It is possible, not only because its participants know foreign languages and specific codes of cultures other than theirs, and are able to translate from one language to another, from one culture to another, but even more so because they are prepared to step out and into those linguistic and cultural gaps, filling them up with the experience of their encounters, understandings, misunderstandings and conflicts<sup>2</sup>, in other words, with that which represents the stuff intercultural communication is made of. Internet offers unheard of opportunities for stepping off one's own "turf" and having encounters on "no man's land."

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<sup>2</sup> On the role of conflict and misunderstanding in intercultural communication see: Giordano (2001), particularly in the work "Encounter without Understanding?", pp. 5-54. That text was published in German under the title "Begegnung ohne Verständigung?" in: Reimann, Horst (ed.), *Transkulturelle Kommunikation und Welt Gesellschaft*, Opladen, 1992, pp. 192-223.

### Is there a story to this?

That which prompted me to undertake this voyage in the virtual realm of world music was the desire to hear what was being said there about it rather than the desire to hear what was being played and sung as world music. The first examples of narration about that music, or in any connection with it, that I had come across a few years ago in newspaper articles on ethno music stars in Serbia suggested to me that in that area I could uncover narrative patterns dominating public speech in today's Serbia, which I was finally able to do thanks to the Internet. I soon realized that the result of the analysis of that narration would be much more interesting if I also turned myself toward ethno music outside Serbia, which, again, I was able to do thanks to the Internet. That broadening of the scope of my research made it possible for me to perceive an international, global, as it were, presence of certain *topoi* in world music narrative, as well as a great deal of similarity between various narratives on traditional culture, identity, politics, power and other topics which, as a rule, follow closely the discourse on world music itself.

I use the term *narrative*, keeping in mind the significance of that term in postmodern philosophy and theory, especially in the work of Lyotard, for whom the end of the modern era is reflected in the fact that the great narratives (*les grands récits*) – among them the greatest ones: "the stories of progress" – have lost their credibility. Is there anything in what is narrated on the Internet about world music that has the configuration, if not the credibility, of the stories from Lyotard's category of great narratives? Are not the stories of encounters with

the other, of cross-cultural communication without borders that abound in the talk on ethno music on the Internet, a continuation of the great narratives of universal progress and emancipation? Or should one rather see, in this narration, examples of a different category of stories, myths, which Lyotard distinguishes from the "great narratives", defining them as exclusive stories of origin and legitimacy of the ruling order of a community, i. e. of a particular "we"? Truly, perhaps nothing kept repeating itself more persistently, during my journey from web page to web page on world music, than narratives about roots and sources of peoples, about ancestors and preservation of heritage, about cultures and their music being at one with nature.

My *story* remains linked to the context of an earlier discussion about structure and functioning of a story, to which the crucial contribution was made by Roland Barthes. I believe that Barthes' semiological analyses of rhetoric and ideology of various stories, images, and sounds, of which contemporary media culture is made up, can serve as a valid point of departure in interpreting today's narratives, including those about ethno music. His critical description – we would call it deconstruction today – of myths of the French society toward the end of the decade of the fifties of the last century seems to me exceptionally inspiring even today. It seems to me that the possibilities offered by his interpretation of contemporary myths, consisting of taking those myths apart as a form of speech (*parole*), has not been exhausted yet, and it is demonstrated by some newer approaches to the study of society, which emphasize its discursive dimension. Following various kinds, plots and implications of world music narration, I would pay particular attention to

seemingly insignificant details because in this research project – as in some I had undertaken earlier<sup>3</sup> – I kept in mind the example of Barthes' subtle analyses of things such as Italian spaghetti advertisements, articles on Tour de France, or a new model of Citroën. He demonstrated that the so-called "great narratives" are made up of a vast multitude of small stories, which, in this day and age, have a way of transforming themselves into the seemingly innocent every day small talk about anything and everything. For example, about music.

In my use of the term *story*, I am also trying to encompass certain meanings that the term *discourse* has in the constructionist theory. My *story* comes close to constructionist *discourse* when the later means the practice of production of extra-linguistic meanings, in other words, "an assembly of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, etc., which somehow produce together a certain version of events" (Burr, 83). My *story* is in agreement with the *discourse* of the constructionists even when the later is not intended to be a manifestation of an opinion formed outside it and before its use, but rather, as Michel Foucault said somewhere, a practice of creating its object while speaking about it" (quoted from Burr, 83). It goes without saying that my *story* is in complete agreement with the constructionist *discourse* as that term is used by some ethno musicologists, and here I primarily have in mind

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<sup>3</sup> Story is one of the key-terms of my books *Literature Growing Wild*, particularly in the chapter entitled "The Soccer Story" (Čolović, 2000), and *The Politics of Symbols*, a god portion of which is devoted to an analysis of Serbian nationalism as a mythic narrative (Čolović, 2000a)

Steven Feld, the author of a number of respected texts on world music (Feld, 2002, 2004).

However, the term *story*, as I am using it here, is not prepared to comply with the broadening of the meaning of *discourse* forcing that term to include that for which terms *structure*, *genre*, or *code* are better suited; for example, when Vivien Burr states that "discourse can be understood as a frame of reference, conceptual backdrop against which our statements can be interpreted" (Burr, 86). Clearly, in that case not much is left, in *discourse*, of the version of events, of praxis, which is why Vivien Burr brings in the term *text*, as reinforcement to fill a breach in a vast semantic front *discourse* is attempting to hold. "In actuality", she says, "all that can be 'read' in the sense of meaning can be understood as a manifestation of one or several discourses, and can be designated as 'text' ." Is this not a return to earlier established binary oppositions such as *structure/text*, *code/message*, or *genre/text*? The return forced upon the constructionists – or at least this author – by the untenable notion that *discourse* could cover the meanings of both of each opposition's terms.

The theoretician of new media, Lev Manovich opposes *narrative*, a form which "has traditionally dominated human culture" to *database*, which he describes as a form peculiar to digital media, and as a "new symbolic form of a computer age." Manovich emphatically points out the fact that database does not boil down to a "simple aggregate of elements", but represents various ways of organizing data. In his opinion, narrative and database "present different models of what a world is like". Moreover, they are "natural enemies", so that the websites, dominated, as they are, by "anti-narrative logic," are not likely to leave any room for narration (Manovich,



104 – 106). Manovich does notice, to his surprise<sup>4</sup>, that narrative somehow subsists in the new media as well, and in order to explain this unexpected vitality, he employs the opposition syntagm/paradigm, which had been worked out semiologically by Barthes. In the "old media", such as literary or film stories, "the base of choices out of which narratives are constructed (the paradigm) is implicit, while the actual narrative (the syntagm) is explicit. New media reverses this relationship. Data base (the paradigm) is given material existence, while the narrative (the syntagm) is de-materialized. Paradigm is privileged, syntagm is downplayed. Paradigm is real, syntagm is virtual" (Manovich, 118).

However, when the relation in question is presented to me it this way, I no longer see enmity between database and the narrative, but rather an opposition, one of those constitutive oppositions essential for the functioning of every text. True, the two sides of the opposition, one paradigmatic, "grammatical", the other syntagmatic, "syntactic", can be differently emphasized, depending on the kind of text at hand. Writers had, long before computers, used dictionary form (De Sade in *120 Days of Sodom*, and Flaubert in *The Dictionary of Received Ideas*), which, as Manovich would put it, "de-materialized" but not completely blocked their narration. In oral literature, epic poetry in particular, the emphasis is on paradigm, that is, on structure, on the repertoire of themes, topoi, and formulae, which, as it was demonstrated by Millman Perry

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<sup>4</sup> "It is not surprising, then, that data bases occupy a significant, if not the largest territory of the new media landscape. What is more surprising is why on the other end of the spectrum – narratives – still exist in new media" (Manovich, 115).

and Alfred Lord (Lord 1960), enable the "story singer" to sing practically without interruption and, while doing so, to introduce into his story new material, to update it, as it were, daily, as editors of websites do. If he had kept this narrative technique in mind, Manovich would, probably, not have ruled out the possibility of narrative's survival under the conditions of continuous flux of material: "If new elements are being added over time, the result is a collection, not a story. Indeed how can one keep a coherent narrative or any other development trajectory through the material if it keeps changing?" (Manovich, 106).

This discussion with Lev Manovich is important to me, because – having taken the license to disagree somewhat with "one of the leading theorists of the new media", as Manovich was introduced by his Belgrade publisher – I have tested through it the theoretical soundness of my approach to the Internet, specifically my apprehension that I may have been doing something contrary to the nature of the communication on the Internet, by seeking and finding in its *database* a kind of stories, the ones about world music, and then reconstituting – for the purpose of analyzing them – topoi, common themes, a repertoire of rhetorical devices and discursive shaping of those stories, eventually ending up composing a more or less narrative report about all of it.

The examples of world music narration on the Internet which drew my attention are basically written texts, newspaper articles, newspaper interviews, promotional texts, musicians' biographies or autobiographies, historical, geographic and ethnographic explanations, song lyrics. Some of those texts, mainly the interviews, were available in audio version. One of the particularities of these texts lies in the fact that they contain visual and musical

elements, which, nevertheless, cannot be reduced to the status of mere illustration, for they are an integral part of the texts in question, which is why the later are usually referred to as multi-media. At the same time, the proportion in which different media are represented is not fixed, because the quantity of words, images, and music to be activated and consumed is left up to the reader. In that regard, as well as regarding the itinerary he will follow from one point to the next, he will, besides focusing on what interests him, pay attention to the time he has at his disposal.

The stories on world music are replete with philosophical and scientific vocabulary. It also goes for the way this topic is talked about in newspaper interviews and promotional texts. The reason for it is not hard to find: many performers, composers, and producers of this type of music – that is, those who talk about it the most frequently – are schooled musicians, and not too infrequently are they also ethnologists, folklorists, and ethno musicologists. Also, their audience is made up of people with education above average, which is why world music could be described as the folk music created and listened to by the elite. The "learned" talk in promotional texts is destined to an audience willing to hear the sound of folk music only insofar as it is possessed of a deeper meaning. That is why, when addressing themselves to such an audience, Ssassa group will offer the "intercultural fireworks", Teofilovic Bros. - the "voice of the archetype", Bora Dugić - "collective unconscious heritage", "genetic code" and Yung himself, Bapi Das Baul – "philosophical lessons", and Kirchuk – "the essence of the ritual."

## II

# SETTING UP THE SYSTEM OF ETHNO SOUND

Central to ethno music stories is the rediscovery and the revival of the traditional folk music sound. This sound is called *ethno*, which is one of the names given to the music that rediscovers it and gives it a new life, while its other name is *world music*, that is, the music of the world at large. Composers, performers, and producers of this music are striving to find contemporary pitch for ethno sound, making thereby its comeback possible. In the stories about it, the starting point is the conviction that the ethno sound carries within itself a precious message about the authentic man, the one who lives in harmony with his natural environment, with the culture of the community to which he belongs, and thus with himself. It is also believed, that this sound is tied neither to a particular time nor to a particular type of society, regardless of the fact that it is most often encountered in musical forms peculiar to predominantly rural societies. It is presumed to be a timeless musical identity, a phonic code of an ethnic community, which thusly, through the identification of that code as well, is discursively

constituted as a primordial spiritual entity. The narrative goes on to say that it would be desirable, even necessary, that the message carried by that sound reach somehow the contemporary humanity, for it can help it begin to sound authentic itself, become aligned with itself, with its true identity, but that it is difficult to achieve, because we live in an age of deafening noise, a part of which is the hubbub of the ubiquitous western pop injected with certain varieties of worthless folk music, in which we can barely hear ourselves. The next thing in order – order, of course, in the logical sense, in which I am "re-telling" world music stories, rather than the actual succession of their installments – is a description of methods and procedures by which musicians and their producers manage, against all odds, to bring the ethno sound closer to the ear and soul of the contemporary man.

### **"The Living Tradition"**

Some of the operations undertaken for the purpose of reviving the ethno sound are geared these days toward translating it, from the material made up of its older forms and manifestations, into modern musical expression, so that there can be talk of actualization and renewal of tradition, of putting on it new "attire", new "packaging", of giving it a "facelift", of arranging traditional motifs in a modern way, using for it new technology, of broadening the repertoire, of opening up new venues, of gaining new audiences, of joining the modern society, of tradition capable of development, progress, and change. The point of spinning yarn about all this is the belief that ethno sound can be given a new life, that its system can

be set up only if it is not equated with musical genres, techniques, and instruments which once shaped its character. It is with this in mind, that are rejected as unfounded the objections made by "purists" among musicians and music critics, who in the world music stories play the part of conservative petty bourgeois, lovers of museum folklore, who, according to Philip Krümm – a participant in that gathering in London (I mentioned him in the Journal) at which a group of music producers selected the term *world music* as the most appropriate name for this new music with ethnic characteristics – live "out of touch with reality", for they cultivate "dead music." Moreover, it is being said that one of the reasons why we seldom hear, today, that which is important in folk music lies precisely the fact that many musicians are making an effort to reproduce it as faithfully as they can in the same form in which it existed in earlier ages; by so doing, they keep away from the modern man the experience of authenticity contained within folk music. They keep it imprisoned in the past and in a kind of rural setting which no longer exists. Traditional music thus canned and deadened is called folklore at times.

That "necrophile" attitude toward musical tradition is opposed by an emphatic claim that the latter should live. The rural way of life is no longer, but it has left a legacy which can be infused with a new life. The title of one of Ivan Kirchuk's albums refers precisely to that: *The Heritage of Dead Villages*. Resuscitating rural musical heritage implies the possibility of extracting out of the material, made up of remembered or in any other way preserved samples of old folk music, a musical substratum, an ethnic musical pattern – because, as Svetlana Spajic put it, every nationality has its "laws and

patterns" – which updates itself in different ages and circumstances, by different means and techniques, and can do it today just as well. However, that pattern is not only a distinctive combination of tones and rhythms, a musical structure distinct from others by some formal characteristics, making it recognizable as "ours", but it also possesses its own spiritual configuration, it is a musical matrix, or – as is most often said in these stories – a musical "root" or "source" of the very being of a people, something that has been known for quite some time as "folksgeist". It is by the latter that we recognize it that much more, hence in a positive manner, as ours.

As they undertake the updating of ethno sound in this day and age, the ethno musicians and their producers have before them, as a warning against their own possible failures, many examples of dubious attempts to satisfy the public's need for a living, up to date folk music, by performers and composers of popular music with folkloric traits. This is how, in the opinion of the "authentic folk music" lovers, to which category belong the creators of ethno music as well, cheap entertainment music is born, in which the precious ethno sound can no longer be heard, as it is "smothered" by an onslaught of all manner of rhythms and tunes from all over the world, as well as by the racket of contemporary electronic musical helping devices. The fact that precisely this pop-folk music is recognized and accepted by broad audiences in all countries – where it exists – as authentically people's music (as is the case with "turbo-folk" in Serbia, "chalga" in Bulgaria, "manele" in Romania, gamelan music in Indonesia, and griois in western Africa) does not seem to discourage the creators and the ideologues of world music. They view it only as a dramatic warning and a

proof that their endeavor to save ethno sound is actually the fateful struggle for the survival of the endangered authenticity of man and culture. In their view, the world music is a rescue operation to free ethno sound from the museum folklore's death grip, but also a salutary alternative to the worse-than-death ways in which the worthless pop-folk music revives its sound<sup>1</sup>.

It is rather curious that the role of a world music star making an important contribution to a supposedly genuine renewal of ethno sound is sometimes played by performers of pop-folk, a genre which in the world of ethno music is considered trash. The story about this category of world music stars speaks of rescuing a precious gift from the performer himself, who, unaware

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<sup>1</sup> A significant testimony to the fact that condemnation of turbo-folk is a part of political power discourse in today's Serbia, at all levels of government including the police, is an action taken by Miloš Janković, Director of Prison Administration of the Ministry of Justice of Serbia. He made a decision, at one point, to banish turbo-folk from the prison system, because, as he explained it, "the new turbo-folk music exerts damaging influence on the psycho-physical state of the inmates, because it stirs up in them emotions which are not suited to the conditions of life in prison". Janković set a goal for himself to rid at least the prisons of the plague, if there was nobody to do the same in the society at large. "Aware of the powerlessness of the intellectual elite to settle the score with pink rhinestones", he states, "... the prison administration has decided to banish kitsch from prisons as completely as possible. The rhinestone turbo, as a symbol of degenerate values, will gradually yield its place in prisons to authentic folk, classical, and rock music, in view of re-socialization and spiritual rehabilitation of the inmates." (Quoted from: Dušan Telešković: "The Prison Blues at the State Penitentiary in Sremska Mitrovica, Politika, January 18, 2005)



of its value, is often inclined to waste it on trifles. This demonstrates how deep can be the gap between the idea of an authentic sound, held by a world music producer, and that which the musicians with whom he is collaborating have to do for their usual audiences of folk-pop aficionados in their own countries. A version of that 14story is a testimony Frank London, the producer of an album by Esma Redžepova, recorded in Skopje, gave about his own preparation for this project: "Regardless of the popularity they gained in the Balkans during the past two decades, synthesizers, rhythm machines and reverbs (especially for the vocals) belong to an esthetics that interests neither me nor World Connection, the publishing house which hired me as a producer. All that I can do is explain – and I hope that Esma and her group will accept it – that this CD, while possibly not being custom made for her fans at home, will certainly elicit interest in her music throughout the rest of the world. My secret fear is that due to my insufficient use of reverb I might be marked as persona non grata in Skopje, and that a fatwa may ultimately befall me." (Quoted from: Tomic, 323). London's last sentence, intended to be humorous, reveals, in fact, that he hadn't made an effort to learn anything about the city in which he was going to spend time working with Redžepova, for he imagines that it is located in some Muslim country, under the Sharia law. This is an example of that ignorant, disparaging attitude towards milieus, in which traditional musicians live, of which critics of world music have rightly accused some of its producers and publishers. However in London's remembrance of his collaboration with Redžepova the most important yet is his ambition to free Esma, the spontaneous and uneducated medium of the traditional

sound, and her equally ignorant audience, from any worry about that sound's preservation and authentic modernization. Using an expression coined by Ibrahim Sylla, Đorđe Tomić calls that pretentiousness "production fundamentalism" (Tomić, 324).

Separating ethno from a body in which it once lived, and distancing oneself from attempts at its fake revival through worthless pop-folk, make up the first stage of the operation of its transfer, the first installment in the story of its resurrection. The succeeding installments prepare the ground for setting up the system anew, for its second coming, its reincarnation. That purpose will be well served by certain kinds of contemporary music, such as jazz, rock and roll, funk, techno, or hip hop, as well as by some devices emblematic of contemporary musical production, such as samples, synthesizers, and rhythm machines, through their reduction to universally acceptable and adaptable forms and techniques, well suited to re-creating the ethno pattern/spirit. Or, to put it more exactly, in the stories of the second coming of ethno, jazz, rock, or techno music, and the technology that goes hand in hand with them, all serve here primarily as signs of musical modernity; the compositions in which the ethno sound is intoned are sufficiently marked by them for the contemporary listener to hear and accept those compositions as relevant music. When, on the basis of these signs, he concludes that the thing is modern, he will – it is at least so believed – perk up his ears, and then the tradition will ring out in his soul.

However, in this sort of a symbolic usage of new instruments and technology, one is careful not to neglect, while talking about them, to make it plain that they are being used in setting up a sound system different from all

music in which they are ordinarily used: the system of ethno music. In one case, it is accomplished by obligatorily singling out, 15 in words and pictures, among modern musical instruments, one emblematic traditional instrument to lord over the modern ones. Featured in that role are, for example, kora, djembe, jerukelen, gembri, kaval, bagpipe, duduk, kantele, morin-khur, ektara, Alpine horn, Celtic harp. Another solution consists of modernizing a traditional instrument. Thus, Alan Stivell made an electrical Celtic harp, and some musicians from Mali, whom Laurant Aubert met in Paris (Aubert, 119), played an electrically amplified ngoni.

The most salient – in representing world music in the visual arts idiom, in the graphic design of compact discs containing it, and websites speaking of it, and above all, in creating costumes and stage sets for its concerts, promotional photography, and video spots – is the effort to avoid using folk costumes and rural look in the sets, as they could be too strong a reminder of a link with folklore, and yet, still communicate somehow that one is dealing here with a kind of music, intoning the sound code of an ethnic community, and containing that precious quality, which in the past lived on in the form of village music. By and large, costume design solutions arrived at by those who dress the ethno musicians and arrange the stages on which we see them, are not terribly diversified. Given the fact that their task is to avoid using visual symbols of folklore in their immediately recognizable form, they stylize them, as far as costumes are concerned, often arriving at a finite number of virtually identical cuts, styles, and color and ornament combinations. Biljana Krstić, Urna. Yungchen Lhamo, Marie Boine, and the three female singers from the group Vartina, but also the Teofilović Brothers, Louis, Okna Tsahan Zam,

Paban das Baul, Mikhail Alperin, Ivan Kirchuk, Youssou N'Dour, and many more musicians whose photographs I had a chance to see, look as though they shop for clothes at the same boutique. Similarly, the sets on which they appear are devoid of ethnographic particulars.

## **Music for the other**

Ethno sound is sometimes updated and presented only for "us", for the thirsty souls of an ethnic community, enjoying an exclusive sort of ownership over this kind of resource, which it inherited from its ancestors. Musical sources are that type of an exclusive commonplace in certain pronouncements by Pavle Aksentijević, Mari Boine, or Femi Kuti. However, in the stories of opening new roads toward musical wellsprings predominate commonplaces, talking of opening those wellsprings to others, to foreigners, to outsiders, to all those who, in their quest for the 16authentic ethno sound and for the natural man thereby heralded, are prepared to journey far away from home. That magic sound, able to render everyone happy, to lead everyone to "self- discovery" is the core of the world music narrative. When this refreshing and revitalizing sound is offered to Western audiences, it is made plain to them that they do not 16have such a remedy at home. This is a way of seting up a level of expectations, characteristic of the way in which this kind of music is received in the West.

Adapting world music to audiences outside the regions whose traditional sound resources are exploited by it represents, in the eyes of some musicians, a trait that defines it best, its "true purpose" and "true dimension", as

Louis put it, for they feel called upon to take some important messages to all the people; they are possessed of a "global message and a global theme", in the words of Simon Emerson. When „our" music is well received in the world, when it is featured in the catalogs of prominent publishers, it happens so that, thanks to its international success, it gets more respect at home, and wins over as well audiences usually repulsed by music with folkloric motifs. Steff Jansen has noticed that some Serbs, who view themselves as cultured people with refined musical taste, and who, consequently, gag at the very mention of contemporary Serbian folk music, nevertheless do accept music with folkloric sound if it came to them by a detour, ethno-processed and carrying the label of a foreign publisher (Jansen, 20). This could be called enjoying one's own music with somebody else's ears. Conversely, many Africans, living in Paris, renounce that sort of enjoyment. According to Aubert, they „do not identify with that music and, generally, dislike the conception of 'ethnic' discs, regarding it as a form of cultural neocolonialism. The lovers of this 'more authentic' music are almost exclusively white" (Aubert,119). "Somebody else's ears," reached by ethno sound, are occasionally the ears of the musicians themselves, those, and their groups, that have in their repertoire compositions inspired by the musical tradition of a people to which they do not belong, or come from a region in which they do not live. In spite of that, they recognize themselves in that tradition, and claim to be at home in it, no matter how far away from them lie its origins. Some of those musicians and groups attach themselves only to a single tradition, alien to them. For example, there are a number of musicians throughout the world today who have dedicated themselves to throat singing, following

the example of the traditional masters of that way of singing from Central Asia. One of them – as the reader surely remembers from my research journal – was the American jazzman Paul Pena, who mastered this way of singing at one of its home areas, in Tuva, and went on to participate successfully in throat singing contests, regularly held in that country.

Toward the end of the decade of the eighties of the past century. There were in the U. S. A., Canada, Japan, and a few European countries over eighty *gamelan*, orchestras that perform traditional Indonesian music, whose members were anything but Indonesians, which was no obstacle to their performing at world music concerts, at even at *gamelan* festivals in the homeland, in Java and Bali (Gründ, 174). Mirjana Laušević mentions the fact that in 2002, in the United States, there were over two hundred ensembles "consisting of Americans of non Balkan origin, performing mainly music from various parts of this region" (Laušević, 392). In recent years more and more trumpeters from America, Australia, Sweden, and 17 other West-European, or non-European countries have been coming to Guča to take part in the Serbian trumpet festival. Belgrade's own "Orthodox Celts" ensemble, specializing in traditional Irish music, saw to it that this musical exchange between the Balkans and the West go in both directions as much as possible, while the example of a Japanese salsa band, which at one point held the first place on the top list of Latin music in the United States, goes to show that, in some cases, the virtue of authenticity can belong as well to music whose sources, performers, and listeners are from three different continents.



### III

## ETHNOMANIA

Among the names for this music with folkloric traits, which were considered, but ultimately not adopted, by the participants of a gathering at the "Russian Tsarina" pub in 1987, besides *world beat* and *roots*, there was *ethnic*. Ian Anderson, one of the participants, has reported that, during the debate, this last name was deemed "too academic" by most participants. However, just about at the same time, the term *ethnic* began to leave with an ever increasing frequency the academic vocabulary, sneaking into the language of politics, as well as into various areas of everyday speech. Thus, *ethnic* became, in its somewhat modified version *ethno*, an alternate name for *world music*, primarily in some Slavic and East-European countries. This is what encouraged me to nickname "Ethnoland" the portions of cyberspace made up of world music websites. During my journey through that space, I came across great many examples showing that the word *ethno*, besides serving as *world music*'s alias, has found its way, these days, into the names of many things other than music – from tea brands, T-shirts, tattooing styles, and bars, to tourist destinations and genres of film and literature.



An American firm, founded in 1992, and dealing in art objects imported from Mexico, South America and Africa, named itself Ethno Imports, and its Web presentation – Ethno Gallery. Lausanne is home to a company offering *online* ethno earrings and related jewelry (*ethno piercing*), ethno T-shirts, and its principal activity – ethno tattooing, something its very name, Ethno Tattoo, leaves no doubt about. Well then, tattooed in ethno style, wearing a T-shirt and earring(s) in the same style, you can sit down in an ethno café, and order a cup of ethno tea (ex., *Swiss ethno tea*), from an assortment of teas, offered by the cyber tea shop *www.london-tea.ch*. An aficionado of drinks, objects and music, carrying the *ethno* label, will feel the best in a Prague café, open in 1994 at 10 Hus 19 St. The name of the café is *Café bar ethno*. Among its first guests was a reporter from the French magazine *Elle*, who described the café (issue 7/94) as a corner of Heaven, lost in the heart of a metropolis: "ETHNO is a tiny corner of paradise, which wandered into the heart of a big city. ETHNO brings to Prague small things that speak of unfamiliar ways of 20life, of far away countries and their traditions. It is a fountain of ideas on how to build a personal image, or even more so, how to improve, in unconventional ways, the very essence of one's personal life. Inside ETHNO, you will forget stress and hurry, because its interior strikes you as a marvelous, cozy, and warm gallery." And, should, at one point, a fan of ethno objects and music wish to eat something in a setting in tune with his penchant for ethno, and if at that point he happened to be in Novosibirsk, he could walk into the local DJ-bar Ethno, whose founders' starting point was an "ethno conception," which is how they can now offer their "ethno cuisine" in combination with "ethno ambience" and an "ethno gallery" (*www.tbno-djbar.ru*), the cuisine itself

being made up of Japanese and Chinese dishes "tactfully adjusted to European taste."

*Ethno* can also serve as a convenient term for describing and promoting certain types of popular science and literature. There exists a branch of science fiction, which is called *ethno fiction*. "It can be defined", an author of an article on that sort of literature explains, "as a sub-genre of science fiction, a literary counterpart to scientific disciplines such as ethnology, ethnolinguistics, primate-logy, and archeology... thus, ethno fiction is fictional anthropology of human groups and humanoids presented in narrative form." (Hébert). The Norwegian based *online* publication Ethno Magazine ([www.cristalweb.com](http://www.cristalweb.com)) publishes English language texts devoted to mysterious phenomena encountered by explorers of ancient cultures throughout the world. The accent, therein, is on connecting traditional knowledge with modern science, on creating some sort of pop science fusion. "Our starting point", the founders of this magazine explain, "is the belief that millennia-old traditions, experiences, and cultures should be merged with the scientific environment in which we live today. Many times have we been faced with the fact that the empirical proofs of science reinforce ancient half-conscious knowledge arrived at by primitive cultures." Among the topics about which the authors of Ethno Magazine often write is that of Samian shamans and their singing (joik), whose best known version we owe today to Mari Boine.

### **An excursion to an ethno village**

After pop music, it is the marketing in tourism that exploits *ethno* label the most. Offers of agro-tourism,

proliferating lately in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, often include a visit to an "ethno village" or a vacation in it. However, an ethno village is not an actual village with well preserved ethnic characteristics. In reality, no village is, or has ever been, sufficiently ethnic in itself. He who wishes to have one on the ground and in a text must "ethnify" a chosen locality after the fact, that is, build it and designate it as ethnic. The characteristics of villages that so come into being remain generic, and with a minimum of historical and geographical determinants, because those who inscribe them into a landscape or a text promise the visitor or the reader a spontaneous experience of primordial ancestral way of life in harmony with nature, with which acquaintance with an actual rural settlement and peasant life could only interfere. Thus, it is the same operation we were able to observe in the setting up of the system of ethno sound, which consisted of taking that sound out of the reality of rural music itself, whereby the later was reduced to the status of a "lower" form, in which the ethno sound, for historical and social reasons, had been coerced to dwell, as it were. For instance, the visitors of the ethno village Stanišić, near Bijeljina (Bosnia), are offered the experience of a stay in a locale outside here and now, where they are taken back in time, closer to nature and to their ancestors, and made to admire the simple rural life of old. In this piece of advertising prose, the ancestors are pushed back in time far enough to be shareable by both domestic and foreign tourists, and the same goes for "rural life of the past." After all, this website does have an English version of all that: "Ethno village Stanišić takes us back in time making us closer to nature and our ancestors, and making us admire the simplicity of rural life of the past." This may

lead a visitor to assume that communication with ancient denizens of Stanišić could be done in that language too. Nevertheless, neither contact to be made with them, nor wisdom to be derived from it require knowledge of foreign languages, or any kind of intellectual effort. One need only let oneself go to the sounds of nature: "Here a man rests his eyes and soul, he becomes kinder, while the babbling of the brook and the sound of watermill make him wiser" to boot.

In tourist marketing, *ethno* appears sometimes in combination with the term *eco*, included in that kind of marketing somewhat earlier. I found such a combination in the offer of a tourist package in a region of Ecuador (Saraguro), containing something referred to as *ethno-eco-turismo*, or, as it is further explained in the ad, "tourism that means beholding cultural monuments and the natural beauty of this region." There would be nothing new in this if the cultural monuments were not defined – by the use of the term *ethno* – as a heritage of an ethnic community, and if that community were not linked – by the use of the term *eco* – to its natural environment, which suggests the notion that its cultural monuments are an expression of that environment. That is how the amalgamation of soil and culture – which, at the end of the Nineteenth, and during a good portion of the Twentieth Century, was throughout Europe, and still is in parts of it, an important element of the ideology of nationalist movements – re-emerges as a coupling of *ethno* and *eco*, offering no appearance of "impropriety", but rather suggesting that the interested customers should understand it as a politically correct concept in the context of the ideology of globalization, in which important part is to be played by universal human care for

the conservation of natural environment and cultural diversity of mankind.

Coupling *ethno* with *eco* has been adopted as a sound foundation for the development of tourism in certain parts of the Balkans, where the offer of ethno villages is more and more frequently underscored by adding *eco* to the verbiage. So – as I read on the official web page of the city of Dubrovnik – the village Pičete (Pichete) "is being restored as a part of the eco-ethno village project which includes the renovation of old huts and threshing floors for the purpose of bringing them into tourist trade." For the same purpose, and within the framework of the development of Croatian tourism, the villages Mihanovići and Lolići near Split are being revamped. Thus, the restoration going on in those villages is not any kind of ethnographic or archeological re-construction of real life in any of them (who would care to be faced with misery and wretchedness it would put in plain view?), but it is rather a renewal of the spirit of an ideally harmonious eco community, already resonating in the very words "huts" and "threshing floors", not unlike the fact that reviving tradition by world music is a matter, not of reconstructing rural folklore but only of capturing that ethno sound that, while dwelling in the folklore, can be separated from it.

Interestingly enough, ethno villages were made out of Kumrovec, the birthplace of J. B. Tito, and Koštunići, a locality where the current prime minister of Serbia, Vojislav Koštunica, has his family roots. In the first case, we are dealing with the change of function of an earlier established *lieu de mémoire* in that it is no longer in the service of a personality cult, but rather of a cult of village and plain folk. What a visitor of the ethno village Kumrovec will find there is described on the website

*www.zagreb-convention.br* , in its English version, as the "charm of peasant life." There is no doubt that for the inhabitants of Kumrovec, or to be exact, for the tourism of the entire region where the village is located the most important thing is the continued flow of tourists. There was a time when they were coming out of respect for comrade Old Man, a nick name of endearment Tito was given by his followers, today, it is the charm of the Old Village, as the ethno-restored part of Kumrovec is called, that brings them to the same place. The kind of symbolic function, which once belonged to Kumrovec as a living proof of humble, grass roots, origins of a political leader, is exercised today by Koštunići. The media promotion of that village in Serbia, very few people had heard of before Koštunica's rise to power, aims at creating an impression that this politician with urban demeanor keeps, nevertheless, strong ties with his village roots, so that, even if he does not look it, he is indeed a "genuine Serbian head of (rural) household"<sup>1</sup>.

An ethno village in western Serbia (Mokra Gora) was designed and built by the film director Emir Kusturica.

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<sup>1</sup> The author of the project of turning of Koštunići into an ethno village is a retired General by the name of Jovan Čeković, who is also the founder (2002) and the president of the Society of Serbian Heads of Household. In 2004 Čeković was indicted, and in July of 2006, found guilty of abuse of official position while he had been the CEO of Yugoimport SDRP, a government-owned company dealing in arms and military equipment. After the Čeković indictment, Kostunići did lose its role as a place of ritual ascertainment of the prime minister's humble folk roots, yielding it to another Serbian village, Belanovica, among whose heads of household he likes to spend his summer vacations. - Note: July, 2006

This comes as no surprise to those who have discerned in his motion pictures the theme of rediscovery of the natural, primal man, "the noble savage." One of the admirers and interpreters of this director's work discovers in his cinematic "poetics" an ethnic dimension, in addition to his "new primitivism", classifying him, for that reason, as one of the authors of a genre he calls ethno-film. A successful author in that genre, such as Kusturica – the author of this monograph states – "must acquaint himself with the codes of expression of the West (especially if his medium is film), without destroying, by so doing, bridges between him and his 'native' art." (Gocić, 293). I recognize in there a variation on the theme of "old wine in new wineskins", one of the key plots in the world music story, or more precisely in its installments, devoted to setting up the system of ethno sound.

Kusturica has also received accolades for his creative work in ethno urbanism, if that is what one can call designing and erecting ethno villages. "He built here a genuine little wonder" – as it is written in an article, published in the online edition of the Association of Agricultural Journalists of Serbia ([www.agropress.org.yu](http://www.agropress.org.yu)) – "an ethno-eco village with twenty-two structures, including a pastry shop, a library, a movie theater, a day care center, a unique complex, made entirely out of wood, just as villages were made in the past, narrow streets and a square with a church in the middle, devoted to St. Sava, and all paved in wood from railroad ties." Curiously enough, Kusturica gave his ethno village in western Serbia a center square with a church, something one would rather expect to see as a part of the renovation of a coastal fishermen's village. Nevertheless, it is precisely those traits, separating Mokra Gora from

architectural or any other tradition, that make it a model ethno village, a projection of a dream about a place where man and nature are in perfect harmony, a dream not disturbed in the least by the ease with which one slips into narrow Mediterranean streets from the lush green pastures of western Serbia.

This broadening of the narrative about ethno, taking on the proportions of a real ethno mania can be viewed as a large-scale restoration of what Adorno called "authenticity jargon". With this expression, somewhat forgotten today, Adorno had labeled the rhetoric of certain German philosophers of the first half of the Twentieth century, indicating that its goal was to offer – in contrast to the language of learned academic philosophy, allegedly alienated from the people – the "authentic" speech of the German peasant, as a source of true thought. A quest for that sort of authenticity, Adorno discovered in Heidegger, whom he includes among the philosophers feeling a need to "overcome a suspicion that the philosopher may even be an intellectual". He quotes Heidegger's words about "inner belonging" of his work to the Black Forrest, about its being the fruit of a "centuries-old, irreplaceable Allemanno – Schwabian autochthony", about authentic philosophical work as "work of a peasant", about the advantages of a "peasant surrounded by hills" over a city dweller, for only the peasant lives "close to the essence of all things". Adorno dwells particularly and with obvious pleasure on a place where Heidegger, using the authenticity jargon in order to justify before the Nazi authorities his refusal of their offer that he take over the Berlin University philosophy department, says: "I recently received", he explains, "a second invitation to join the Berlin University. In the middle of



that circumstance, I am retreating from the city into a country cabin. I am listening to what hills, forests, and farms are telling me. Then I drop in on an old friend, a seventy-five years old farmer. He has read about the invitation to Berlin in a newspaper. What will he say about it? He slowly and deliberately directs his bright eyes toward mine, and with his lips tightly closed, he barely visibly shakes his head. It means: inexorably no!"(Adorno, 101-102)

Thanks to this type of authenticity glorification – and above all, to the idea that authenticity is something all autochthonous "workers" possess, not only the peasants living off the land, but also philosophers who remain faithful to that way of life in spirit, and who are amply capable of representing the former when they begin disappearing – Heidegger could be viewed today as an ethno philosopher, or at least as a forerunner of that kind of philosophy.

## **Ethno and the exotic**

In the ongoing invasion of everyday speech in general, and speech about culture in particular, by the term *ethnic*, and related terms, some authors see a strategy used by the cultural elite of the West, whose real goal, hidden behind a mask of recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, is to devalue non-western culture. The Italian anthropologist Annamaria Rivera observes that today's growing infiltration of "ethny" and "ethnic" into the vocabulary of the media is concurrent with popularization and "common sense acceptance of the idea that a multitude of cultures do exist (if not, however, of

the idea that cultures different from ours deserve equal treatment and respect) on which is based a "laudable effort" to recognize them by calling them ethnies, ethnic cultures, ethnic minorities, etc." (Rivera, 43 – 44). According to David Byrne, the author of an article on world music, published in 1999 in New York Times, what serves well in this surreptitious devaluation of non-western culture, specifically, the music of the Third world, is also the term *world music* and that is why he declares, in the title and in the first sentence of his article, that he loathes that term and goes on to explain that using it is nothing but a convenient "way of dismissing some artists and their music as irrelevant"..., of "relegating this 'thing' into the realm of something exotic and therefore cute, weird but safe, because exotica is beautiful but irrelevant... It's a none too subtle a way of reasserting the hegemony of Western pop culture. It ghettoizes most of the world's music" (Byrne, 309).

Examples of world music speech I found on the Internet demonstrate that world music is primarily represented as being different from anything those visiting its websites are presumed to be thinking of as the dominant type of music in the environment in which they live. Also, the difference is emphasized, as a rule, to the point of the unusual and strange, and its depictions go all the way to the unseen and outright baffling. Narratives with the differences in question so emphasized could be called exotic themselves, as long as that adjective refers, not only to stories about different, unusual, wondrous, and geographically very distant music, but also to music from which, for some other reason (historical, ideological, social), we have been mentally so separated, even though it expresses the specific spirit of our culture, that we now

have to relate to it as foreigners, delighting in its being so different. This inner exoticism of ethno sound, if I may say so, often shows up in stories about world music intended for audiences in non-western countries, from which come the musical material and the musicians included in the production of this type of music. However, the unusual, actually exotic, musical encounters have more and more often been taking place in narratives about western musicians discovering traces of authentic traditional sound in their own countries. Besides the musical tradition of some minority populations, such as the Bretons, or Sámi, on the world music stage are emerging, with ever-increasing frequency, representatives of some majority musical traditions in Europe.

On the other hand, I never noticed, in the material before me, any relativization of the value of world music, any attempt to evaluate it by some specific, less strict standards, to recognize it only in the name of multicultural tolerance, while in fact ranking it as second-rate music. On the contrary, I would rather say that here we have the opposite tendency to ascribe to world music a value greater than that of other types of popular music in the West, or even of any other type of music. It is different from most music in that it, allegedly, offers authentic and universally valid experiences of human soul and natural world, including some rather shocking facets of both. If there is any "exoticism" to it at all, it surely cannot be reduced to charming insignificance, for musical ethno discourse deals with things very relevant and serious in this day and age, and is, one would surmise, itself taken seriously.

Laurent Aubert, an ethnomusicologist who has placed particular emphasis on studying the ways in which today's

western audiences relate to traditional music, says that those audiences expect this music to "personify purity and authenticity", and are directed toward it by their "desire for the return to the sources, which sometimes is a part of a broader dissatisfaction with one's own value system". "A lover of this kind of music", Aubert says, "is rarely present at a performance of it as passive listener, because what brings him there is his desire to participate in that which is being offered to him, to identify with it...In music 'from afar', to which his inclinations lead him, he hears an echo of his innermost striving; that music represents for him an ideal which is usually beyond his reach. He seeks in it a confirmation of his own forebodings" (Aubert, 63). Mirjana Laušević came to the same conclusion, after examining reasons for which some Americans, having no roots in the Balkans whatsoever, become passionately attached to the traditional music of the Balkans, so much so, that they call themselves Balkanians. Many of them, she says, "have perceived their own ethnic origins as colorless... and the American culture as new, shallow, all too industrialized and alienated from nature and humaneness. On the other hand, the Balkans appear rustic; appear to be a region where communities are tightly knit and closer to nature and genuine spirituality – in short, as the antithesis of the American culture" (Laušević, 393).

The results of this research by Mirjana Laušević show that ethno music pleases the "Western ears" for the same reason for which it could also be unpleasant but still interesting to them: because the ethnic component has disappeared from Western culture. In this instance, that disappearance is considered as a deplorable lack, a void to be filled with something found in far away places.

Producers and publishers of world music are good at using this sentiment to their advantage. Nevertheless, in other instances it can very well be a source of pride in people perceiving themselves as belonging to a culture which has risen above a primitive, ethnic level of articulation. Both motives, the desire to experience something modern civilization has allegedly lost, and the hostility toward the obscure object of that desire have ways of appearing simultaneously, blended together in some kind of ambiguous, pornographic fascination with certain forms of world music – or, to be exact, ways of its performance and consumption – when it is featured at some music festival designed to be frolicking and carnival-like, such as the Gucha Trumpet Convention. However, in instances, as well, where a manifestation of ethno sound is depicted as an irruption of "insanity", as something in sharp contrast with everything the western man is accustomed to seeing and hearing, that depiction is offered precisely as a testimony to something important and relevant to the reflection on the world in which we live, as an experience worth having.

## IV

### ETHNOPHANY

The experience of an encounter with ethno sound is often described as a precious, sometimes crucial, experience of contact with the beyond, which can transform the whole person. In some cases, it is a matter of linking the heritage of traditional folk music with church music. This is a topic of a number of texts devoted to certain musicians and musical groups in Serbia (Teofilović Bros., Pavle Aksentijevic, Teodulia), which - instead of "translating, as it is done by so many others, motifs of old folk music into the idioms of jazz, rock, and other kinds of contemporary western music – are making an effort to transpose those motifs into a new musical idiom, some sort of folkloric church music. In this kind of fusion, the motifs of folk music are expressed by means supposedly peculiar to Serbian Orthodox church chanting, which is always linked to Byzantine sources. The story of the transfer of ethno sound from country to new Orthodox pop music is accompanied by a remake of the Serbian village, which, in the words of the story telling musicians and the interpreters of their work, turns out to be an environment imbued with Orthodox spirit. The village the Teofilović brothers remember is "bordered by monasteries", just as those three icons hang on the wall of

the country home bedroom in which the little Bora Dugić slept. Bora Dugić has placed his instrument, the Serbian folk flute, into the context of Serbian Orthodox faith, by informing to the reader that Nikolaj Velimirović – currently the most revered Serbian theologian – also played that instrument.

However, in these evocations of close ties existing between the Serbian village with its folk music and the Orthodox faith, the later is represented rather as a religion whose spiritual content is the "folksgeist" than as Christian faith whose spirituality inspires and informs people's lives in villages. Also, the registers and the canons of church music fulfill here the same function, which in other episodes of the world music narrative is assigned to contemporary pop music, that is, they serve as a form, a medium through which a new life of ethno sound can begin, for here too one strives toward the spiritual content heralded by that sound, to which it is given to bear the precious Good News, irreducible to the message of religion alone, but is rather understood and offered here as an echo of a deep, hidden mystery of the being of an ethnic community, it establishes a link with an *extra ecclesiam* form of the sacred. The actual aim of the episodes of musicians' biographies in which there is talk about their early contact with the church, or those speaking of folk instruments represented on church fresco paintings, or of Byzantine liturgical "chanting", is seen the clearest when those episodes are considered together with other props used to evoke spiritual content of ethno music, as they are dominated by scenes, plots, metaphors and formulae belonging to a globally spread out pop-theological discourse. Among the props of that discourse, the most important is , perhaps, a sort of

mysterious force named "energy", which, as it frequently happens to such forces, is torn between its dark (negative), and bright (positive) sides. It is imagined as a cosmic force, but depictions of this energy as a collective force, a folk or national *élan vital*, are not infrequent. Ethno sound is often described (thank God!) as a positive energy, rooted in a particular place, and in a particular ethnic community, but possessed of universal validity.

True, my material includes some rare examples of representing the relationship between the ethno sound and a particular religion in which the former is "emptied out" of its own spiritual content, and transformed into a means of spreading religious messages. That is how the Senegalese Lo and Jusu N'Dur – the later in recent times – make use of old African rhythms in their writing of spiritual songs glorifying Islam. Something similar was attempted by a Zairian, Papa Vemba, in his album *Numéro d'écrou* (a police file number, 2003), in which he places his art of singing, handed down to him by his mother, a professional mourner, at the service of the Roman Catholic church, by evoking in it a conversation with Jesus, visiting him in a prison, in which, at one point, he had found himself due to his own stupidity. Certain compositions by Richard Bone, another Christian believer among African musicians, can also elicit discussion on treating ethno music as a matter of glorifying religion.

### Initiation, trance

These are, nevertheless, just exceptions. What prevails is the narration of an autochthonous spiritual content of ethno sound as a mystical energy, which inspires the



world music, its musicians, and its audiences. The religious structure of this narrative is given away by the fact that it contains the distinction – characteristic of religious discourse – between two kinds of time. One of them is the secular time of everyday life in modern society, where the human being is alienated from its real, deep human nature, and consequently, from the authentic sound, hidden in traditional music. That is the time in which the story of world music begins in order to conjure up for us another time, different from this one, to take us to a point of discontinuity, placing us in front of the gates of another, sacred time, in which we will get in touch with our authentic being, or at least with its sound code. Religious temporality is attested to – among other things – by the fact that stepping out of the groove of secular 30 time is represented in these stories as going back to musical roots, sources, and tradition, as recognizing a sound that has always been in our hearts, but we were not capable of hearing it, for our ears were deafened by inauthentic music, just as God has always been with people without their knowledge, as they worshipped false idols until he miraculously revealed himself.

In keeping with the religious structure of the world music narrative, the parts of it, devoted to biographies of its stars contain, as a rule, the characteristic moment of initiation. The initiation is described here as a sudden, crucial encounter with some melody, or a musical instrument, after which the protagonist of the story begins his quest for the key to the mystery thereby intimated. As far as the initiatory role of an instrument goes, it can be assigned to traditional folk flutes – as gembri has that role for Amazigh Kateb – but also to modern instruments, guitar

in particular, as, for example, in the case of Ali Farka Touré. Kateb, as a young musician living in the West, experiences a miraculous encounter with the traditional sound, while the young Farka, who was ritually initiated into the traditional music of Mali, the country in which he lives, experiences a fateful encounter with the modern guitar. Still, both, starting from opposite directions, discover the same mission: devoting themselves to intoning ethno sound in our time.

Often, the initiation of musicians comes under the guise of remembrance of one's childhood, a radiant return to a time of innocence, recognition and acknowledgment of a long repressed but rediscovered sound. Musicians readily talk about their childhood, but while at it, they do not remember their childhood friends and play, nor do they dwell on their parents too much, but, in turn, they have plenty to say about their grandmothers, grandfathers, and other venerable seniors, needed so that the evocation of a childhood can reach a point where the biography of a musician becomes the history of an initiation. The elders from a musician's childhood mediate between him and a world of purity and harmony, which is situated in the past, but in a past vaguely "distant", usually called time immemorial, ancient past, or antiquity. Thanks to the elders from his childhood, the musician has absorbed an ancient sound, a melody of his native locale, the voice of his ancestors. For quite some time, he has been unaware of it, because other sounds and other melodies had smothered that ancestral call in his memory, but there shall come a day when his recall shall begin, shall be "awakened", that is, an then his return to "roots" and "sources" shall begin and he shall rekindle that first moment of initiation, transform it into a 29calling , setting up a goal for himself

to bear witness about it to his own, but also to the world at large, *urbi et orbi*.

In their evocations of their childhood memories, some musicians do not even speak of the past, but rather bring up some other, parallel world, inhabited by ghosts, a place governed by a "spiritual energy", which they had entered for the first time in their youth, and since then, they have occasionally been re-entering it, intoning the "Sesame, open" sound system of that world. But, in both cases, whether his singing and playing transport him back to his ancestors, or to some ghosts, the musician does not experience those encounters only mentally, but physically as well. He begins to lose control over his body, and if he is a singer, his throat becomes miraculously transformed, independently of his will, into an instrument out of which come sounds, strange and familiar to him at the same time. A description of these physical manifestations of an encounter with the ancient or hidden world of authenticity serves as the most convincing proof that the musician has really accomplished that encounter, and has become qualified for the role of a medium which shall make the authentic ethno sound carry very far.

Likewise, in some other episodes of the world music narrative, in which its reception by the audience is described, its miraculous physical effects are emphasized, as a living proof that the performers have really succeeded in transmitting to the audience that irresistible energy of ethno sound whose mediums they purport to be. On the wave crest of that energy our ancestors also return among us listeners of world music, and, as we surrender to them, they accept to be masters of our minds and of our bodies as well. This narrative commonplace in the stories about ethno sound has its roots in the depictions in popular

literature and movies of ritual trance, of rhythms and dances by which one arrives at a state of spirit-possession, of hypnotic dervish whirling, or lil, shaman, and voodoo dancing. Popular awareness of these traditional techniques of making contact with the beyond with the help of music has, in recent times, also been enhanced by their folklorization, by their inclusion in music festivals and other programs, made mainly for tourists.

The spirit heralded and brought to life in moments of ethnophany, as depicted in stories of world music, is the spirit of the people living in harmony with nature, and able to "converse" with it. Evoking this harmony is done through detailed descriptions of the numbers, from the repertoire of certain musicians and musical groups, in which are utilized sounds imitating, in a manner peculiar to traditional music, those of nature, such as the whistling of the wind, rippling of the creek, roar of the sea, bird voices, thud of horses' hooves, or howling of wolves. Those descriptions usually include information on animistic beliefs and shamanistic rituals, which represents a context in which the imitation of the sounds of nature takes place in traditional music. Noticeable here is also an effort to bring these beliefs and rituals closer to the reader, not only in order to teach him about far away sources of these imitations in compositions performed these days by representatives of *world* music, but also to make him experience the connectedness with the world of nature those compositions convey. The narrator makes an effort to communicate this experience to the reader before the latter even hears the music, even regardless of whether he will ever hear it or not. In fact, in such passages the story takes on a life of its own, and listening to the music itself becomes some sort of optional addition to it.

The world music takes the idea, borrowed from traditional music, of imitating nature by human voice or some musical instrument, one step further: it includes in its compositions sounds recorded in nature, and that introduces into the narration about such music a new, virtually inexhaustible repertoire of sounds and actions by which they are produced. Sometimes, the producers and the composers make the extra effort of putting into the music, not only particular sounds from nature but a complete sound landscape of some place, whose identity, regardless of high fidelity of the sound recording, exists only when it is named in the story. One hears a wind whistle, the ice crackle, thunder, but we know that we are hearing sounds from the Grand Canyon, from a cliff in Brittany, from the shores of the Amazon, or from an Arctic iceberg, simply because it says so in the title of the composition, or at least in the accompanying text. The harmony between man and nature, embodied in world music, is discussed in the episodes of the narrative about that music that deal with its instruments. Discussed also are modern electrical instruments, but in the foreground are – as could well have been expected – instruments of traditional folk music. They are all "magic flutes". A magic power is attributed to their ancient sound. It is some kind of inarticulate language animals understand, and people do only under certain conditions. It soothes animals, physically strengthens and spiritually regenerates people, revealing to them the sound code of their authentic, perennial identity, as happened, for instance, to Vladimir Simić, in his encounter with kaval, or to Amazigh Kateb when he heard gembri for the first time. The miraculous power of these instruments stems from the natural materials they are made of, and this claim is supported by

numerous photographs, diagrams, descriptions of the process of their making, inventories of their parts, and in many cases, by their very names. The world music stories often contain long, homeric, inventories of old instruments, used by certain musicians and musical groups, citing their more or less exotic original names. Those names – and the accompanying explanations – tell the reader that the instruments are made of natural material, such as wood, reed, or fruit of some plant, or skin, hair, guts, bones, or horns of some animal. In view of the metaphorical meaning of the materials these instruments are made of, as well as of their names, playing them becomes a metaphor too.

### **Promised Land**

The realm from which the energy of ethno sound, the spiritual strength it passes onto us, comes forth is represented as an ancestral world, existing simultaneously with ours, but in world music stories appear places with actual geographic coordinates, which are, nevertheless assigned a role of a sacred or promised land of the authentic ethno sound. It can be said that a network of such places makes up what I have named Ethnoland. Episodes speaking of people visiting and venerating these 32 places, or just dreaming of them, often sound like accounts of pilgrimages, of a quest for places of spiritual rebirth, for places where a devout ethnophile will see the light and find spiritual salvation. The map of this sacred geography of world music includes an entire continent – Africa, but highlighted can also be individual countries and particular geographic regions, such as Cuba,

Mongolia, Pakistan, India, the Antilles, the Balkans, "Celtic lands", Carrelia, or icy expanses of northern Canada and Lapland. These are only a few sacred places of ethno sound that drew my attention, and which I managed to reach, trying, as a conscientious anthropologist that I am, to identify with the mind set of a pilgrim. There are many more out there, and their number is rising, thanks to the relentless search, by musicians and producers, for new, untapped resources within the realm of world music. I should, perhaps, add to the places already mentioned a magic castle: Real World Records, a recording studio of Peter Gabriel in England.

The musicians and the producers of world music make it a point to emphasize as clearly as possible the connection between their work and one of the already established homelands of the genuine, or, as Peter Gabriel says, *real* sound of the tradition. They gladly offer themselves under its name. As Bob White remarked in a text published in 2002 (White, 7-8), "in the African world music produced over the past ten years there is a surprisingly large number of songs devoted to Africa, or those whose title or lyrics contain the word Africa... and in many of them, names of African cities and countries just keep piling up." Among such songs he cites N'Dur's "New Africa", "African Dream" by Vasis Diop, "Africa" by Salif Keita, and "Africa by Night" by the group Bissa na Bisso, and he also mentions a Senegalese group that put Africa into its own name: Africando. White says that invoking Africa, bringing up and using its name, can be related to a set of political ideas about all-African unity, but still agrees with Denis Constant Martin, who sees in it, not a dream of African unity but rather one of an exotic dark continent, very much in demand in the world music

market. And in that dream, Africa is a land whose people have music "in their blood", the land from Keita's song: "In here, everything makes you dream, hop, and dance, oh Africa, Working hard, eating a lot, dancing a lot, oh Africa." White too cites examples of stereotypical discourse on African music in some African media: "In Africa, music is everywhere", "In Africa, music accompanies 32 all the important moments in man's life, from cradle to grave", "In Africa, music is a form of resistance."

The makers and the producers of world music in Serbia most often call its homeland the Balkans, and they offer their creations under the same name in one way or another, which is demonstrated by the names of some of the best known groups of Serbian ethno music: *Balkanika* (*Balkanica*), *Balkanopolis*, *Balkan Salsa Bend* (*Balkan Salsa Band*), *Balkanske žice* (*Balkan Strings*), as well as by the titles of a series of compact discs and compositions by those and other groups of musicians belonging to this category of music. Even when some musicians, such as Bora Dugić, speak of "Serbian sound", that sound is interpreted as being a 33variety – naturally, the best one – of Balkan music, as the music of the "Serbian Balkans", that is, the Serbian part of the musical "Balkan mix". It can be viewed as an identity strategy of the Serbian musicians, who may be using the Balkan name in order to avoid being associated with some unpleasant overtones of the very word "Serbian", audible for some time now, due to the role of Serbian forces in crimes committed during the wars in former Yugoslavia. However, the Balkans also got a bad name during these wars, or, to be exact, all the old prejudices about it got reactivated then – and the Balkans to this day has not gotten rid of that bad echo of its name.



That is why a more important motive for the Serbian ethno musicians to pass themselves as Balkans should be sought in the fact that in the eyes of foreign audiences, especially those in the West, the Balkans has existed, from earlier times, as an imaginary realm with more-or-less clearly given characteristics, as a region on the map of promised lands of authenticity, thus of authentic ethno sound, which could not be said of Serbia itself. The problem with the name Serbia, as far as the world music market is concerned, is not that it may connote something bad, but rather that it does not connote much of anything. But when you say you are from the Balkans, you can count on being instantly identified as a messenger from an imaginary region, known as the home of tough, only partly cultured, (oh yes, and somewhat blood-thirsty) people, but whose humanity is as genuine, profound and exciting as in very few places elsewhere, which is all, allegedly, apparent in the traditional culture of the peoples living there.

Unlike the Balkans "Celtia" exists only on the map of symbolic geography. True, one hears about "Celtic lands" which include Brittany, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and Galicia. To quote the promotional write-up of the organization Le College du Graal), gathering around itself aficionados of Celtic tradition, in fact, of a more or less feely formed idea of that tradition, "Celtia does not represent a geographically circumscribed area, but it is rather a space that flickers in the hearts of some beings." Inside that space is safeguarded the living memory of the deepest sources of culture, not only of some west-European peoples but of all Westerners. Today, at the start of the Twenty-first century, as it is stated in this text, they are "going through a difficult period, after centuries of oblivion of their deepest roots", while the College will

help them to recall the roots, and, by following the "path of the Oak tree", to renew "the old alliance" 33 which once upon the time "united humans, animals, plants, and minerals in mutual recognition and respect."

The said College and a series of other associations, clubs, and groups are rekindling the Nineteenth century enthusiasm for the ancient Celts, nicknamed already then "la celtomanie", which culminated in the founding of the Celtic Academy (*Academie celtique*) in Paris, in 1850. In some cases, attempts to revive the Celtic myth had political aims, so that, in Brittany under German occupation, the excellence and the autochthony of the "Celtic race" could be opposed to the degenerate French race in a "Jewish dominated France" (Morvan, 269), while today the Celtic identity claim legitimates the Breton independence movement. However, in the revival of the narration about Celtia, the same as in the evocations of Africa and its mere name in songs of some African world music stars, there is less politics today, and more catering to a market of dreams, that is, of narratives offering and promising the experience of authenticity. That applies to Celtia as an ancient, mythical home of an authentic musical tradition that is being revived, today, by some musicians and musical groups, trying to reconstitute by modern means peculiar to world music the "Celtic sound" muffled long time ago. They gather at the International Meet of the Celtic Harp in Dinan, at the Celtic Spring Festival in Paris, and at the Inter-Celtic Festival in Lorient. Druidics, my guide through these imaginary landscapes, calls them "the living forces of Celtia".

One can only speculate as to whether these "living forces" will get another shot at political involvement, as in the Nazi days, and whether it would again be participation

in the realization of a political program similar to the one which, almost seventy years ago, called upon the Celtic Brittany to throw off the yoke of the alien Judeo-French domination.

## V

### CROSS – BREEDING ROOTS

The experience of the beyond – spoken of in episodes of the world music narrative devoted to describing the initiation of musicians into the role of a medium of the ethno sound, of the ecstatic experience of this sound, or of the quest for places filled with its miraculous presence – has a politico-religious dimension, in other words, it can be viewed as a manifestation of a political religion of sorts, based upon an ethnic community cult. The function of the above-described ethnophany is reviving the faith in the community of ethnic "roots" and "sources" as the only authentic, natural form of solidarity among people, as the only solid spiritual foundation of politics. It is sometimes depicted as deep empathy with the experience of other, remote cultures – which indeed is most often the case in stories of world music – but faith thus found can be professed anywhere, even in one's own home. On its wings, people can feel as bearers of salvation in a desert of faithlessness, just like those Americans of whom Ljiljana Laušević (Laooshevich) speaks, who treat their malaise of lost ethnic roots with the spiritual remedy they found in the traditional music of the Balkans.

In most cases, the stories of ethnophany are far removed from direct preaching of ethno-national

fanaticism, but the latter is still their mental horizon line. They cannot be understood outside that frame of mind. Their dependence on that horizon line, on the faith in gods of ethnos, is, perhaps, most apparent, even if somewhat unexpectedly, in the discourse on musical cross-breeding, a topic that dominates world music stories. Indeed – as the reader may have noticed in my research journal – those stories most often speak of crossing borders that divide musical traditions, relativizing differences among those traditions, connecting and mixing them together, while some critics of *world* music see in it unacceptable leveling of differences between cultures and identities, artificial cross-breeding of "everything with anything". Those critics would be surprised, if they got a wind of my own interpretation, according to which, stories about that kind of music, in spite of the fact that they advocate breaking out of ethnic confines and hybridization of sound, are, in reality, reviving and propagating the belief that any given ethnic community is endowed with an autochthonous spirit.

### **Hybridity, an erroneous notion**

Indeed, the stories of world music do not confine themselves to describing only modern reconstruction and international expansion of an ethno sound taken individually as a revived musical tradition of a particular people brought closer to modern man, but instead they concern themselves more often and with more emphasis with the subject of intermixing, blending together different musical traditions. Even though evoking ethno sound by means of modern pop music, translating it into the idioms

of jazz and rock and roll, is sometimes spoken of as crossing, this term, along with other related words and expressions, such as "fusion", "hybridization", "creolization", "métissage" (Fr.), "boundary-crossing", "crossover", "musical amalgamation", "symbiosis of traditions", relates primarily to bringing closer together, fusing together, intertwining the traditional music of different peoples.

In the process, that which in some versions of the story becomes a theme of making traditional contemporary, of modernizing it, in others is portrayed as ethnic hybridization, so that utilization of jazz and rock as universally comprehensible musical idioms for the purpose of bringing traditional music up to date becomes "ethnified" by being thought of as crossing some non-Western culture with the Western, primarily American culture, with jazz, rock, and other related genres presumed to be the latter's indigenous musical expression. Two most common plots follow from all of the above. One of them appears in stories about transferring the traditional African music into contemporary musical idioms evolved in the West, and it has a happy ending, because it always plays up the African origin of those idioms, especially of jazz, thanks to which fusing together elements of African and American music turns out to be an elective affinity, a discovery of an African substratum, African component of the American musical and larger cultural identity. The other plot, implying, precisely, a particular, specifically American character of jazz and other genres of popular music currently spread all over the world, leads toward a rather disheartening dénouement, because what is represented elsewhere as a handy instrument of reconstructing all ethno sound in modern circumstances becomes here a means of expansion of a particular sound, the American

one, which has exceptionally powerful technological, financial and ideological support.

The existence of different approaches to musical hybridization, with the resulting branching out of its narrative into often-divergent directions, does not in and of itself make following and recognizing the main direction of the narrative more difficult. It is one that begins by saying how imperative it is for ethno sound – in order to get closer to the ears of 36 the modern man – to undergo yet another liberating metamorphosis, i.e. to free itself – just as it has thrown off the yoke of the museum brand of village folklore and of the humiliating reduction of itself to mere saloon entertainment – from an obligation imposed upon it by the ideologues of nationalism: the duty of ethnic purity, i. e. of homogeneity and autonomy, which, indeed, is totally foreign to its true nature. If it wants to be outgoing again, to mingle with people - a code word for peace-loving anti-nationalists in these parts – it is called upon to re-discover and display – under new circumstances and with the aid of a new cultural policy usually identified as multiculturalism – its authentic hybridity. The musicians and the producers of world music will lend it a helping hand by giving it an opportunity to demonstrate its multiculturalism in musical numbers created by mixing ethnically heterogeneous musical material, or at concerts and on recordings of music performed jointly by representatives of different musical traditions. (I will later return to the contradiction between thusly laid out a general agenda and particular points to which we are lead by the episodes of the narrative describing examples of carrying out that agenda).

When they speak of cultural and artistic pre-suppositions of inter-ethnic musical hybridization – most

often in response to the accusation that the mixtures they offer represent a misuse of the authentic traditional music – these musicians and producers, along with their public promoters, are always ready to assert emphatically that there is no such a thing as homogeneous folk music, made up exclusively of autochthonous elements, without a trace of influence from without, that hybridity is the natural state of all such music, which is what various purists, philistines, and nationalists hate to admit. They strengthen their position on that score by often invoking the authority of ethno musicologists and other scholars who have written about the hybrid nature of traditional folk music, or about consubstantial hybridism of all culture, even though talk of hybridity of music as well as of culture in general has good chances of being accepted as true, regardless of what the scholars say, because it expresses a belief wide spread today, which, therefore, need not be supported by arguments. The popularity of that belief, outside scholarly circles as well, was enhanced by the interest the media has shown in postcolonial studies, in which hybridity is one of the key elements, as well as by the influence of the founder of that discipline, Edward Said, who wrote on hybridity of culture in many of his widely read texts. "Every culture is hybrid", he said, none can be matched to a racially pure population, none is homogeneous" (Said, 53).

Nevertheless, the hybridization discourse – i. e. the belief that hybridization is what gives the world music its actual authenticity, which is why musical crossovers are not only permitted but truly necessary if achieving authenticity is the goal – has been contested with increasing frequency in recent times. Some authors emphasize the essential difference that exists between the way hybridity is understood and practiced by performers



and producers of world music and the inherent hybridity of the traditional music, ruling out any notion of possible continuity between the two. On one hand, it is a matter of forcibly subjecting the material of diverse varieties of traditional music to intermixing in artificially created conditions, while, on the other hand, we might be dealing with long-term spontaneous exchange among traditional musicians. Throughout history, Laurent Aubert writes, "musicians met each other, exchanged experiences, techniques and instruments, contributed by their capacity of accepting and synthesizing to the propagation and renewal of their respective idioms. But, the generalization of the very process of cultural hybridization that we are witnessing throughout the planet is an unprecedented phenomenon. While the historical mixing and syncretism had been a result of 'natural' factors of sorts, related primarily to migrations, voluntary or forced, that brought about encounters of different cultures, the hybridization is experimental, voluntaristic, and utilitarian" (Aubert, 10-11). In a similar vein, the Italian musicologist, Francesco Giannatasio, opposes musical fusions that are "a result of a free exchange of musical expression among musicians of varied experiences and origins" to those of the world music projects, which have become "the product of a complex alchemy practiced in recording studios by wizards of sound editing." This second kind of hybridization, Giannatasio maintains, represents "a kind of musical genetic engineering" where synthetic mixing takes the place of human exchange, and borrowing becomes armed robbery" (Giannatasio, 2000)

The hybridization discourse is brought into question somewhat differently by authors pointing at weaknesses in the very concept of cultural hybridism, because, as

John Hutnyk says, "it implies an erroneous idea of something preexisting and pure – the idea of pre-hybrid cultures. Bringing up this argument, Hutnyk relies on the criticism of the concept of hybridity by Gayatri Spivak. "She argues", Hutnyk says, "that a negative word from sociobiology, hollowed out and reclaimed, is politically useful as a position from which to question the racism of the culturally dominant." But it is "troublesome since it assumes there would be something that was not hybrid" (Hutnyk, 347).

My own samples of world music narration confirm that it is considerably based on that "erroneous idea": the "troublesome assumption" that there exists something in the traditional folk music that is not hybrid. However, that idea is not only assumed here, as a logically necessary proposition underlying any talk of crossing music from different parts of the world. It is accepted and expounded here as discourse on a unified ethnic sound code, on autochthonous musical "roots" and "sources", thus, as something which not only is not troublesome, but is profoundly true, and for that very reason is the cornerstone of the discursive edifice of world music. The first stages of constructing that edifice, i. e. the first episodes of the narrative of setting up the ethno sound system, already discussed here, speak of that sound as being a sort of musical monad, it has no more "doors and windows" than any Leibnizian monad ever had, which is to say that it exists independently and apart from all the other ethno sounds, other musical monads. It must first be represented in that way, i. e., as independent of superannuated forms of musical folklore, but also made impervious to the practice of false modernization of the traditional sound churning out worthless products of pop-folk.

It is only when the narrative is enriched by the concept of such a pure, or as Hutnyk would say, "pre-hybrid" ethno sound, that its heroes will step forward and breath a new life into it, open its doors and windows, i. e. enable it to re-emerge in new modern forms, and to enter new connections and exchanges worthy of itself. In episodes speaking of it, the fate of ethno sound could be compared to that reserved by Leibniz for his monads. Just as they – in order to become mutually connected – need a third party, an intermediary, which in Leibniz's world is none lesser than God, "the monad of monads", so the separate and unconnected primary kinds of traditional music are assisted by composers and producers of world music, which assume the role of salutary mediators, demiurges, alchemists, and will demonstrate that disparate autochthonous instruments, rhythms and melodies still can yield harmonious chords.

Among more interesting places in this narrative of hybridity are the ones talking about representatives of traditional folk music selected to take part in the production of world music – i. e, in projects where crossings, mixings, and crossovers are in the foreground – but who in their own milieus enjoy the fame of stars of pop music, cherished by local audiences. They are asked, in view of what is required by the project in question, to disassociate themselves from inappropriate instruments and other musical implements, to rid their own music of bad habits they acquired trying to please their local audiences, which occasionally may have included foreign tourists to boot. Among bad habits, in addition to excessive use of synthesizers and rhythm machines, something from which Frank London tried to discourage Esma Redžepova (Regepova), belongs performing new

hybrid music of inferior quality, for it is, allegedly, a mishmash with no rhyme or reason of diverse genres of music and peoples. The producers and the lovers of world music view this hybridity "growing wild" as an antithesis of the kind of creatively meaningful hybridization they alone know how to plan and execute.

All of the above caught the attention of Martin D. Roberts as he was researching the transformations undergone by the gamelan, the traditional Indonesian musical ensemble, as well as the attitude of world music producers toward those transformations. Not only was the gamelan changed and modernized when it was adopted by musicians outside Indonesia, mainly in America, but the transformation occurred, under the influence of modern technology, western pop music, and tourism, in its homeland as well. Concurrently with its traditional form, Robert says, "there exist today forms of gamelan bearing conspicuous marks of modernization, hybridization and globalization." Catering to the tastes of the broadest possible listenership, that type of ensemble these days often appears on Indonesian television with additional "reinforcement" of drums and synthesizers. It is also a part of two main kinds of contemporary Indonesian folk-pop musical form, *jaipongan* and *dangdut*, created during the seventies of the Twentieth century, which could be written off as 39Indonesian versions of turbo-folk and similar Balkan genres. That is how gamelan, especially when used for musical accompaniment of *dangdut*, gets crossed, not only with rock and its usual instruments (electric guitar and keyboard), but also with rhythms and melodies of Melanesian, Arabic and Indian origin, which abound in this kind of music. However, Roberts concludes, "the *world music* sweeps under the

carpet (perhaps even denies) this kind of transformation of gamelan and its hybridization, focusing its attention exclusively on its traditional local forms – which represents a peculiar irony in view of the fact that *world music* is considered an example of globalization in action (Roberts)."

### **Hybridity – a broken promise**

Thus, in order to set up a stage for the show of trans-genre and intercultural hybridization "without borders", the story of world music must have at its disposal, (i. e. must construct) ethno sound paradigms bearing clear and unambiguous insignia of being rooted in tradition, each in its own. They must appear on the stage as symbols of cultural autonomy and diversity, so that subsequently they could participate in scenes of mutual amalgamation and hybridization, intended to show that ethno sound is inhabited by a force, an erotic impulse as it were, urging it to immolate its autonomy and particularity, in order to beget, in conjunction with other ethno sounds, music of an entirely new quality, a new synthesis, harmony in diversity. However, it does not happen, in other words, the ending of the story is anticlimactic due to the lack of final episodes showing the immolation of a particular ethno sound resulting in its resurrection as a plural, compound being. The protagonists of the story of hybridization are put on stage, but what happens between them is not going in the direction of their mutual fruitful synthesis, but the story takes a different turn. Actually, two different turns can be observed.

In the first case, it is not even a matter of straying of the narrative about crossing ethno sound, but rather of its coming to a stop, of its ending before the promised conclusion is reached. We were promised a show of happy intermixing of musical genres and traditions "across all borders", but all we get are scenes "at the border", we see musicians, who have set out to cross over, standing still smack at the borderline, as though it were only when they got there that they realized the full import of borders. Some of them, such as Doudu N'Diaye Rose, praise hybridization, but not its logical consequence - the change of identity, for such a change equals loss. In response to that, we often hear the cliché that mixing and crossing are a practice that does not threaten the precious identity of traditional types of music subjected to hybridization, but reinforces it instead, which may be true only if hybridization is reduced to that initial moment when the individual traits of what is being hybridized are still recognizable, while nothing is said about what follows, which would have to be that loss for which there appears to be no suitable place in the world music story after 40all. That motif is most graphically presented in comments made 40 by Gilbert Le Pennec, in a passage – the readers of my research journal probably remember it – where he says that he does not like musical mixtures whose ingredients have lost their individuality, just as he does not like a soup in which the parsley, the carrots, and the potatoes are no longer recognizable. I too dislike the latter, but I am of the opinion that, while the vegetables put in the pot should remain recognizable in each bowl of soup, the taste of a good soup cannot be reduced to that of parsley, carrot, or potato.

However, Le Pennec, as well as many others who speak of musical hybridization, of musical soups, leave an impression, not only of neglecting positive results of it, but they do not even seem to care about the taste of the soup obtained by transcending parsley and the rest of the ingredients, and may even be wary of such results. Thus, what the hybridization narrative heralds as a miracle, creation of new harmonies, obtained by integrating elements of two or more musical traditions, changes into a different kind of miracle, into wondrous survival of differences and identities, into a saga of trials and tribulations the ethno sound is put through when it is, as in a good suspense thriller, brought near death, so that its vitality may shine brighter. This is exactly what the leader of the group Tartan Amoebas says: "By including in our music what comes from others, we reinforce even more its identity, and that is something truly miraculous."

One of the backwaters of the ethnic fusion narrative leads us, nevertheless, to a moment when the elements of traditional music lose their identity with which they embarked upon the adventure of hybridization, and acquire a new one. However, it does not occur as a result of hybridization, but is rather a matter of a transfer, of crossing of those musical elements from one tradition over to another one, where they continue to live, in a new culture, and under a new ethnic name. Precisely that happened to a Breton incantation, as Jacky Molard has told us, when Kalinka Vulcheva had included it in her repertoire of Bulgarian folk songs. The temptation of directing the hybridization discourse toward this category of transfers, toward "immigration and naturalization" can even be broader in scope. One example of it is what is being said, these days, in France about the expansion of

world music. Apparently, the apprehension, caused in some musicians and music critics by the emergence of the world music in their country, that this kind of music might be a threat to the identity of French music and culture in general, has been replaced by an opinion, generally held by now, that any such fear is out of place, and that, correctly understood, the world music can even be an efficient means of protecting that identity. One of the signs of this change of strategy in the discursive construction of the image of world music in France is the transfer of Khaled's disks from the *world music* to the *chansons françaises* category, of which he speaks in an interview given to RFI. (Kafine Weinberger, "Khaled aux Etats-Unis", online edition RFI, March 6, 2002).

In recent times, critics and commentators in France readily cite examples which, supposedly, confirm that what is being played and sung by world music stars born in Francophone countries, many of whom now reside in France, is experienced by foreign audiences as music with a recognizable French sound. Thus, for example, the music critic Frank Tenaille makes the point that Salif Keïta, Khaled, Youssou N'Dour, Maury Cante, and Papa Wemba are received by audiences from all over the world as the "ambassadors of the famous *French touch*." He finds in their music some specific traits of the French identity, of the original French spirit. They came into their own, Tenaille explains, after the fall of the Berlin wall and the emergence of the "new market globalism... when France found itself on the frontline of the struggle for pluralism." Thanks to this country's policies aiming at creating, in the French version of world music, a music industry that would counterweigh the American dominated one, Tenaille maintains, "it was possible to



combine production principles resting, on one hand, upon a clearly defined tradition, and on the other hand, upon the criteria of *world music*." What is allegedly achieved by this combination is "the balance between meaning and entertainment, memory and momentary enjoyment, the local and the universal", which is to be understood as the fulfillment of a mission, assumed long time ago by France and her culture, for, Frank Tenaille tells us in the end, "this old country, closely tied to its politics, always reacts in this way, it is always lead by its positively "middle class" reflexes which, in the area of world music, ascertain its provocative and seductive originality"(Tenaille, 28)<sup>1</sup>.

The other backwater of world music's ethnic fusion discourse in which that discourse gets disassociated from what is normally meant by terms fusion, hybridity, mixing, crossing – terms most commonly used in any discussion of world music – is represented by episodes depicting unexpected recognition and realization of mutual kinship among traditions participating in fusion projects. In such places, the motif of boundary-crossing and fusion with the different, the musical other, yields its place to the motif of removing boundaries and relativizing differences, because

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<sup>1</sup> Jocelyne Guibault cites the opinion of Chris Stapleton that "many African world music groups were formed in Paris of the Eighties as a part of the strategy for opposing the Anglo-American dominance in the global popular music". An African artist told Stapleton: "The French government supports us, because it senses that the French language is loosing its significance in the world, and that French artists are not capable of taking it to other continents. The Africans are the people who can do just that, so, all of a sudden, we are in the foreground" (Guibaut, 3)

it turns out that the other with which we wished to be crossed is already related to us, is a version of ourselves, a part of our heritage, all in all, we are both a part of the same tradition and cultural identity. Occasionally, there is talk of traditional music kinship between peoples of whom it can hardly be said that they would have ever had any chance of coming into contact in the past, but searching for the sources of that odd musical kinship, the narrative will, nevertheless, find out that they hide in the deep insufficiently explored and known past of the peoples in question. The best example of such a story is the probe by Simon Emerson into the mystery of the kinship between Welch, Breton and Irish music and the music of some African nations, which lead him to the discovery of the alleged common ethnic origin of those African and the "Celtic" nations. His famous Afro Celt Sound System group, an example of across all borders hybridization, has thereby acquired an ethnic homogeneity beyond the wildest expectations. A like resolution is arrived at in the case of the mysterious similarity between what is sung by the Tuvins from the group Huun-Huur-Tu and by the members of the Bulgarian female choir Angelita, the similarity that puzzled Mikhail Alperin until he discovered that the Tuvins and the Bulgarians had lived, in very ancient past, in the same area, somewhere in central Asia. In other places, where profound affinities between musical traditions, crossed in world music projects, exist against a background of differences, beyond geographic remoteness and religious and cultural differences, the narrative rests on more reliable data about historical contacts among peoples and cultures, which, for instance, is the case with the kinship that exists between certain

kinds of contemporary American music and traditional African genres.

Mari Boine too likes to point at the deep connection that exists between Samian joik and the traditional music and culture of people living in Siberia. However, when she speaks of the foundations upon which rests the very possibility of crossing musical traditions of different peoples another motif emerges, that of the quest for the common root of all traditional cultures, which, according to Mari Boine, all come from the same wellspring, all bear the mark of a common "shamanic wisdom". Naturally, that source is situated in remote past, we can hardly make it out, only he who knows how to listen may hear the primeval ancestral whisperings. Her story leads thus to a primordial, Edenic ethnic community, and to its primordial musical *lingua franca*, of which in our time remain only mysterious sounds, hidden in the depths of the heritage of various kinds of authentic traditional music into which the musicians<sup>43</sup> and the producers of world music will breath new life. Thanks to that proto-sound, traditional musicians understand each other well, yet it is not a fruit of their cooperation and crossing over, but rather of their immersion in the depths of their respective musical traditions, which contain the sources nourishing all authentic traditional music. As long as they capture and keep that primordial tone, musicians can keep their music in harmony with that of their colleagues from anywhere in the world.

So, what is missing here is the "true" point of the hybridization story of ethno music which would be the annunciation of the coming into being of a new sound obtained by a synthesis of different ethnic sounds. Those who had received the annunciation with apprehension,

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and condemned it in advance, may now breathe a sigh of relief: the clone got miscarried, the "numerical Esperanto" of world music that Attali speaks of (Attali, 211), has not been created. Instead – i. e. if the story of hybridity is not a mere "dialectical" device for conjuring up a vision of homogeneity – we are at best offered a significantly more modest outcome of the meeting of diverse rhythms and melodies, a pretty belabored happy ending demonstrating (who could have suspected it?!) that those rhythms and melodies can work together smoothly and harmoniously, from which follows an illuminating message that, as Michel Sikiotakis put it, "people can get along, although it seems hard at first." The French musician, Robert Thebaut, also wishes to communicate the same message to us, a result of his ethnic fusion experience with the Pakistani Pastoral Baluchi Group, when he says that this way of making music "left everywhere an impression that geographic and cultural differences are easily reduced." Is that all there is to this entire story?!



## VI

### THE PRISONS OF AGE-OLD SINGING

When culture is said to be an expression of an autochthonous ethnic identity manifesting itself, in our stories of world music, as the sound of the traditional folk music, one is then entering a closed system of discourse, which does not allow its boundaries to be overstepped, i. e. it transforms any attempt to cross those boundaries into a story of their permanence. One may wish to get out, into the freedom of integration, coupling, crossing, mutual fertilization of different cultures, i. e. musical traditions, but one's loyalty to the idea of culture as an ethnic essence dooms in advance the fulfillment of any such wish. If one has understood this, all one can do is resign oneself to that fateful separateness of cultures and musical traditions, and accept, in the name of loyalty and devotion to one's own culture, one's own tradition, to remain imprisoned in it. While doing so, one will have to muster all of its strength, in order to be able to bare, as a prisoner of that culture, the wondrous experience of unbreakable connectedness to the primordial being of one's community, that is, in cases which interest us here, of its sound reverberation, the kind of fright the French historian Fernand Braudel has experienced as a prisoner in the "dungeon of age-old duration". "Personally," he

says, "I have always been convinced that distant sources weigh all too heavily, and I have been frightened by it" (Braudel, 237). Dungeons of age-old singing also fill those who sentence themselves to be incarcerated in them with admiring awe.

In a story whose starting point is the notion that there is such a thing as a collectively implanted cultural matrix to which can be reduced everything someone does, thinks, or dreams, and consequently, sings and plays, episodes devoted to something that purports to be interpenetration and crossing of creations originating from different matrices end up advocating that the existence of different cultures be recognized and tolerated, while the desire to cross boundaries between them, initially depicted as the Eros of fusion and fertilization with the Other, becomes the rational stance of respecting, as a basic principle, that which lies on the other side of the fence. Well, would this much not be enough? Is respect not preferable to impossible love? That question is, logically, posed by those convinced that in any culture real is only that which makes it different from other cultures, while all else is illusion. The majority among them are, assuredly, the ethnologists, and, as Alain Touraine says, the concept of culture as a closed system, "whose identity, particularity, and inner logic must be recognized" has been constructed by ethnologists, people "consumed by struggling against ethnocentrism, which so often made their own societies destroy, ignore, or mutilate cultures under their dominance." That is why Touraine is sympathetic to the "antihumanism" of Levy-Strauss, that is, to his well known thesis that "the defense of cultural diversity allows only very limited contacts between cultures, so as to spare them what endangers

them the most, i. e., the hegemony of a culture that purports to represent universal values." Likewise, he agrees in part with Pierre Hassner's opinion that in models of inter-cultural dialog "diversity is that which is truly real, while the point of convergence of particular experiences is so remote, so disassociated from specific circumstances and conditions, that it, most likely, amounts to no more than Kant's maxim that others should be treated as goals, not means. That shows, Touraine adds, "that it is not a matter of dialog, of communication, but rather of recognizing the other, which is really essential, for it protects the other, leaving or restituting to him his dignity" (Touraine, 217).

An echo of this anthropological "realism" is present in documents based on respect of cultures, identities, and differences, formulating UNESCO's and other international forums' agendas. In 2001, UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, in which culture is defined as a "set of spiritual, material intellectual, and emotional distinctive traits characterizing a given society or a social group", so that, besides art and literature, it "encompasses customs of everyday life, value systems, traditions and beliefs." In accordance with that, the Declaration makes a point that "respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialog and cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding provide one of the best guarantees of international peace and security." As of 2003, UNESCO celebrates May 21 as the World Day of Cultural Diversity for Dialog and Development. In a message the director of this organization sent on the occasion of May 21 celebration in 2004 there is also the following: "This day, May 21, encourages us to learn and appreciate better all that we owe to other cultures, to



acknowledge the full spectrum of their contributions, their uniqueness, their complementariness, and their solidarity. For, knowing and recognizing our differences, respecting them because our identity is based upon them, means giving a chance to the century, now beginning, to avert identity conflicts of all kinds. Thus, in the future we ought to progress toward cultural pluralism as a political project... for cultural diversity is one of fundamental human rights: fighting for its promotion is fighting against stereotypes of cultural fundamentalism."

However, Alain Touraine remarks that if one does not go beyond the mere recognition of differences, something even more important will not be achieved - "the integration of different experiences into a totality in which all will be able to recognize themselves." That is why he, in contrast to the model of a culture imprisoned within itself, 46incommensurable with any other culture, expounds a different conception according to which the greatest importance is to be placed upon the "twofold work characteristic of every culture: creation of a Subject and reunification of the elements of human experience and thought, divided and pitted against each other by the conquering and discriminatory might of western modernization. It has enlisted reason and progress in the service of its own system of social, cultural and psychological domination, and that has driven a wedge between the concept of the universal, created by the masters, and the particularity of the subjugated. Now, it is necessary to reconcile reason with cultures, equality with differences in every project of personal and collective living." If culture is viewed in that way, communication between cultures will become possible, and "the war about gods will be stopped" (Ibid. 222).

A policy of cultures recognizing each other, viewed as the only realistic and ethical way for them to relate to each other, must be criticized, first and foremost, because it is based on the belief that irreconcilable differences between cultures stem from their very nature, and we know today that those differences, at least when portrayed in such radical ways, are often a result of a policy of segregation, forcible separation by which every culture is constructed as a gravitational field for a number of elements held together by a centripetal force: ethno. Verena Stolcke views that segregation as the very basis of the ideology of "cultural fundamentalism", against which, as we have seen, UNESCO also raises its voice. However, in this organization's documents on the issue in question nothing suggests that their authors have noticed that this kind of fundamentalism speaks their language, the language of the right to be different and of respect for others being different from ourselves. Because, as Stolcke remarked, cultural fundamentalism is close to racism, but it differs from it in that it does not sort cultures out hierarchically, from the bottom up, but instead "carries out spatial segregation", invoking precisely the idea, UNESCO stands for, that one must defend the right of every culture to preserve its identity, to remain different from others, which is why "each culture should remain in its locale" (Stolcke, 250). Thus, cultural fundamentalism uses rhetoric which, unlike the open racism, does not provoke suspicion, but may even be accepted as a model of political correctness, at a time when the protection of the right to be different is a universally shared value. The problem lies, however, in the fact that such use of the rhetoric of cultural diversity is not devoid of logic, for it is implied as a latent possibility in the concept of cultures as autonomous universes, whose protection

and conservation require that they keep each other at arm's length, with – as the customary expression has it – all due respect.

Marc Augé too, speaking of the danger of yielding to the "temptation of culturalism", is referring to the fact that the insistence on cultural differences may degenerate into a belief in a pretendedly necessary and salutary segregation of overly mixed together cultures, that the language of the right to be different can turn into a means of constructing a "segregationist view of the world or complex societies", because "the respect for differences, the right to be different, the concept of multicultural society, can serve as an alibi to the ideology of ghettoization and exclusion, lending to its language false generosity" (Augé, 1994, 156 -157). Saying that, Augé surely has in mind the evolution of the political rhetoric of the extreme political right in France, which, according to Pierre-André Taguieff, "has for some time been translating racism into the acceptable idiom of difference and culture" (Taguieff, 92), which gives it an excuse to advocate deportation of immigrants from western countries to their countries of origin, as well as to oppose the process of European integration, pretendedly, in the name of the respect for differences and the defense of cultural identities. Sylvain Crépon, who, in 1999, did ethnographic research on the young followers of Le Pen's Front national, discovered, to his great surprise, in what they were telling him an "ideology whose basic vocabulary was borrowed from ethnology and anthropology." They told him that national identity is "a matter of belonging to a culture", that they stood "for the respect of people's cultural integrity", and that all racism is foreign to them,

while they feel close to "cultural relativism aiming at preserving the specificity of every nation" (Crépon, 2).

In spite of all the warnings of these and other authors who have pointed out perilous political implications of radical culturalism, the later seems – by all indications – to be thriving these days, and not only within the ranks of the extreme political right. As Jean-François Bayart remarks with resignation, claiming culture as the only reliable basis for explaining society "has, perhaps, never been as in vogue as it is today." Economic life, wars, social conflicts, gender and age-group relations, all that is easily and completely explained away as so many manifestations of the specificity of various cultures and the differences existing among them. For instance, when the reasons are sought for the rapid growth of the economy of Asian countries in the second half of the Twentieth century, the most frequently used argument is that the growth in question is based on a harmonious alignment of a development policy with the Confucian heritage, while the Asian model is recommended as an example of successful economic development, applicable in places other than Asia. A name – which will not catch my reader unprepared – has been coined for the strategy of economic development based on utilizing "cultural capital" – "ethno development" (ethnodéveloppement).

I have found a good example of the inveteracy of the myth of cultures as coherent and autonomous models of behavior and thought in the book *Murderous Identities*, by Amin Malouf, a brilliant essay on tragic consequences of the uncritical acceptance of the word identity, one of those words the author of this book calls "faux amis" (false friends). "We believe", he says, "that we know very well what that word means, and we continue to trust it even

when it treacherously begins to say the opposite of what we mean" (Malouf, 15). Nevertheless, his distrust of identity has not sheltered Malouf from some other "false friends" from the culture vocabulary, so that he has accepted without hesitation old metaphors such as "people's truth" and "the soul of (a) culture", whose meaning treacherously has – perhaps for over two centuries – turned against well-intended admirers of peoples and cultures. Speaking of today's Algeria, he says that "from there comes very inventive music, created by young people whose languages are Arabic, French, or Cabil; some have remained in their homeland, in spite of everything, while others have left, but still carrying with them, inside themselves, the truth about a people, the soul of a culture, in order to bear witness to it" (Malouf, 127). Therefore, at issue here is the very same structural, or, if I may say so, doctrinal necessity that does not allow the critics of cultural relativism, discussed by Stolcke, to free themselves completely from the essentialist concept of culture, just as it does not allow well-intended and "progressive" creators and promoters of world music to cross, for good, boundaries separating different musical traditions, for any such attempt at their liberation is blocked by their belief in reality and importance of those boundaries.

### **The escape**

In the stories about world music, the infamous culture clashes are missing, but one can find there a conflict of two story lines, two narrative streams which, according to Lyotard's terminology, can be represented, on one hand,

as "grand stories", or "meta-narratives" about a rebellion against romantic fallacies, in which the ghosts of the ancestors – through their representatives among contemporary musicians, equipped with new electronic instruments, new production technology, and armed with the idea of tolerance and peace – rise up to embrace and fertilize each other, and on the other hand, renewed romantic "mythical stories" in which those same ghosts invoke and revive each other in order to help today's musicians intone the incomparable musical code of their own people: the ethno sound. Some episodes of these stories are devoted to the depiction of attempts to reconcile those two narrative currents, to ensure that their heroes be, at the same time, symbols of freedom and necessity, of boundary crossing and deep-rootedness, to bring into them the motif of impossible love, but the kind that does not lead to tragedy, because what awaits the heroes, in lieu of an impossible passion, is the possible domestic, family bliss. In the multicultural and transcultural erotic dance of the ancestors, that is, of their representatives, all remain faithful to their one and only love: to whatever they happen to be. After the dance, that is, when the story ends, the ancestors can again rest in peace, each in their own cultural identity.

However, voices of dissent can be heard here, voices of those seeking for their song an exit out of the dungeon of age-old singing, and refusing to settle down for mere rituals of venerating and reaffirming boundaries between musical traditions to which the story of hybridization generally boils down. Among those voices I hear the singing of Geoffrey Oryema, who, instead of singing – in the name of the right to be different - 49 some old Senegalese tune accompanied by *likem*, is sitting in a café

on the bank of the Seine river, trying to capture a melody that would best fit what he is seeing at the moment: the Eiffel Tower, and while doing so, he is relying more on Leonard Coen than on what his grandmother used to sing to him in Uganda. Here is also Purna Das Baul, of whom no more is expected than to let the Bengali antiquity speak out of him, but no, he prefers to glorify placid streets of Bob Dylan's native town in ornate sentences of the Nineteenth century English prose style. They are a variety of inside rebels, because they always carry out their assignments as world music stars, i. e. as fashion models of ethno sound.

Another kind of resistance is offered by musicians who cultivate a kind of traditional music, known as pop folk, which is officially unrecognized artistically and socially, so they remain mostly outside the *ethno sound system*, outside the dungeon of age-old singing. Some of them will, occasionally, allow themselves to be lured into the dungeon: Šaban Bajramović and Esmā Redžepova, for instance. Nevertheless, the bulk of their production continues to "grow wild", i. e., to be a part of what a Bulgarian anthropologist. Alexandar Kiossev calls "the Balkan pop (counter)culture", which emerged during the nineties, "with the advent of renewed public appreciation of the old-fashioned belly dancing , and with the proliferation of brand new old little pubs and other dives", so that "a new type of the arrogant Balkan intimacy began to dominate the atmosphere." Among the genres of popular culture included in this counter-cultural strategy, Kiossev cites in the first place the new musical folklore, called *turbo folk* in Serbia, *chalga* in Bulgaria, and *manele* in Romania. "Contrary to the traditional dark image of the Balkans", Kiossev says, "this culture defiantly

glorifies the Balkan region as it is: backward and Middle Eastern, sensuous and semi-rural, crude, ridiculous, but warm and cosy... This is some sort of a wayward regression into the large, infamous, Balkan "neighborhood", away from Europe, but also from its own gloomy official home-lands" (Kiossev, 184). Kiossev distinguishes from these counter-cultural musical genres, presumptuously glorifying the Balkans, the evocation of the idillic, picturesque, or passionate in the kind of music offered, for example, by Goran Bregovic and the choir *Les mystères des voix bulgares*. These are versions of a positive Balkan image, "packaged for the highbrow culture", he says. Similar preferences by the Balkan audiences have been observed by Đorđe Tomić (George Tomich): "While the Balkan *world music* stars are building their international careers, the domestic audience, at least the greater part of it, consumes with pleasure newly made electrified versions of local music (for example, *manele* in Romania and *chalga* in Bulgaria., happy and content to be allowed – after decades of the use of music in nation-building projects of constructing and asserting national identities – to freely abandon itself to the appeal of popular culture without borders" (Tomić, 324).

The dissenting voices from within as well as from outside the prison of *ethno sound system* corroborate the stand of certain students of culture demanding that culture not be treated as a circumscribed space, free of all 50 inner contradictions, but rather that the observer bring into the foreground that which makes culture a place of tension, resistance, problems, that is, that he unveil culture's "intrinsically problematic character" (Augé, 1992, 50). Those voices add credence to the opinion of Terry Eagleton that it is "characteristic of the particular animal



species that we are to be indifferent to their own cultural determinants." In this connection, he insists that "it is not a matter of something that would be beyond our cultural determination, but rather of something that it is an integral part of its action." He also takes a stand against culture as a prison, that is, against the image of such a culture, for it is – Eagleton uses here an expression of Wittgenstein's – this image that keeps us incarcerated, that "latent metaphor of culture as some kind of prison." If this author is to be believed, an escape from the dungeon of culture, and thus from the dungeon of age-old singing, has favorable odds to succeed, because these dungeons are full of cracks, holes, and ungarded exits, or, in Eagleton's own words, "cultures 'work' precisely because they are porous, rough-edged, substantially inconsistent, never quite self-identical, and their borders are being continuously transformed into horizon lines."

The point of this view of culture, which Eagleton has borrowed from Slavoj Žižek, is not in showing that an individual can escape from its own culture, i. e. that he or she can get rid of the image representing it as a dungeon, but in a conclusion, following from it, that this possibility of being free, "out of joint with oneself", of not being reduced to the context of one's own culture gives a human individual an opportunity to get to know the other, to truly communicate with people of different cultural backgrounds. If there is anything universal in a culture, it is not its "universal language", nor is it its primary hybridity, but it is the fact that it contains a possibility of finding "a gap or a fissure in my identity which opens it from within toward the the other, preventing me from fully identifying with any one context" (Eagleton, 117 – 118). Therefore, escapes from

prisons of culture, including the ones constructed in world music stories as dungeons of age-old singing, can be projected not only as a counterculture strategy, but also as discourse of an alternate culture that opens the door to a new humanism, a new "great narrative" about brotherhood and understanding among people, based, however, not on compatibility and mutual translatability of cultures, but rather on their essential incompleteness, openendedness, and porousness, which we all sense to be the common human destiny. However, until that project begins in earnest (the sponsors are still somewhat hesitant), the status of the sole credible discourse on culture will continue to be enjoyed by stories about cultures as closed systems, including those about the world music I found on the Internet, whose main character is an unusually adaptable and peace-loving entity that feels at home in dungeons of age-old singing: ethno. The hero of our time?



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