South East Europe

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https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.2274378
Published online: 13 January 2015

A meta region within Europe. Its geographical boundaries are imprecise, but the Balkan peninsula is usually regarded as core territory. Constituent nation states are Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and at least five of the six former republics of Yugoslavia, themselves now independent states: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

The term ‘South East Europe’, which is generally favoured in the region itself, suggests an accommodation to the new Europe, and implicitly recognizes that these nations are either members, or aspiring members, of the European Union. In contrast, an alternative term, ‘Balkans’, tends to signify the Ottoman past of the region, and has acquired a negative resonance in some quarters (as in the frequent pejorative use of ‘Balkanization’ to suggest a process of fragmentation or division). The historian Maria Todorova equates the term ‘Balkans’ with Ottoman presence and legacy, and accordingly some commentators include Turkey in the region, and exclude Slovenia. There appears to be a consensus that Hungary, despite the Ottoman presence there, has been too closely aligned to Central Europe, or East Central Europe (to use two labels that carry their own ideological burden), to be included in this region, whether labelled South East Europe or the Balkans. Likewise Moldova, despite its cultural and linguistic links with Romania, is conventionally excluded because of its history within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

1. Historical overview.

In their multi-volume *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*, Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer set out, among other things, to recover aspects of literary history that have been suppressed or distorted by an all-pervasive national perspective. In doing so they were not of course denying the role or importance of nationalism in the cultural histories of the region, but rather counteracting its retrospective influence, and in particular its tendency to reinvent the pre-national past in its own image, and then to freeze that past into ossified figures. There is a very strong argument for a similar approach to music history. Following the nationalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, culminating in independence from Ottoman rule (in some cases as late as 1919), the tendency has been to tell the story of music in South East Europe as a series of discrete national histories, thus demoting the commonalities that have resulted from shared cultural substrata, from common imperial legacies (both Habsburg and Ottoman), and, more recently, from the lure of modern Europe.

The present account will focus on such commonalities, beginning with an account of those traditional agrarian repertories that have engaged and addressed very broad segments of the (often non-literate) population. It is hard to track the history of such repertories, but we can at least claim that there were many common traits among the diverse idioms of traditional music spread across a very broad geographical area that stretches from North Africa across to the Middle East and into the Balkans. There are imponderables here concerning the relation of some of this traditional music to the cultural practices of antiquity, leaving aside the agenda of folklorists to establish narratives of continuity. There

is exiguous primary evidence for oral traditions prior to the phonograph, aside from iconographical details, inferences from ancient theory, and passing comments in histories and chronicles. It may be tempting, and reassuring, to imagine that this music somehow existed in much the same form for centuries, occupying a kind of ‘extended present’ of indeterminate origins, but this kind of crude survivalism is certainly delusional. On the other hand, emaciated traces of ancient practices may still linger. The fault lines between some present-day traditional cultures do seem oddly close to ancient divisions, for all the complexities of intervening migratory histories.

Beyond this premodern traditional music, the geopolitical perspective of empire allows us to divide (post-antiquity) South East Europe into two separate, very broad cultural traditions with distinctive properties. The first of these was shaped by a Byzantine legacy and by an Ottoman imperial culture, and accordingly remained at some remove from modern Europe. The East Roman or Byzantine Empire vied with a succession of medieval ‘barbarian’ kingdoms for political hegemony in South East Europe up to and through the era of the Crusades. The Christian orientation of the Balkan heartlands was consolidated during the era of Byzantine rule, embedding and consolidating an ethos and *mentalité* that would come to be defining of later national identities. Musically this was expressed through a continuous tradition of Christian Orthodox liturgical repertory that crossed political boundaries, and was cultivated especially among Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Romanians. This tradition was able to continue through the Ottoman era, since Christian Orthodoxy constituted one of the Ottoman *millet*s (confessional communities with some self-governing rights). The Latin rite, in contrast, was proscribed under the Ottomans, and was cultivated only in those parts of the western Balkans, notably Croatia and parts of Albania, that were less directly, or more fleetingly, under Ottoman jurisdiction.

From the mid-14th century until the early 16th there was a steady expansion of the Ottoman Empire into South East Europe (the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 represented a defining stage in the process), culminating in the era of Süleyman I in the 16th century. By the time of Süleyman’s death in 1566 the empire embraced a solid block of European territory with a northern border that enclosed most of Hungary, much of modern-day Croatia, and (as vassal clients) the Romanian principalities. Then, for some two centuries there was a steady contraction of Ottoman territory as the Habsburgs reclaimed Hungary, Transylvania, and Croatia, prior to the national independence movements of the 19th century. In other words, there was a core area of Ottoman-controlled land in the Balkans for more than five centuries, while around the edges of this core there were territories that either came under Ottoman rule for relatively short periods, or (in a few cases) alternated between Habsburg and Ottoman rule. Accordingly, in addition to the music of Christian Orthodoxy, this first ‘culture area’ was heavily influenced by idioms from Ottoman classical and semi-classical repertories, and by various species of Islamic sacred music, all of which again crossed political boundaries.

The second tradition was aligned to conventional narratives of a wider European music history, with shaping influences from Venetian, Habsburg, and in some areas Russian or British, imperial cultures. The Habsburg monarchy in particular steadily filled the spaces vacated by the Ottomans from the mid-16th century onwards, claiming or reclaiming Transylvania, the Banat of Temeşvar, and Vojvodina. In addition, Vienna controlled most of the territories of the old Croatian kingdom, including Slavonia, which had been returned to the monarchy following the Ottoman defeat in 1718, and Dalmatia, which was administered directly from Austria with the defeat of Napoleon. Then there was Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was occupied by the Habsburgs following the Berlin Treaty of 1878 and formally annexed by the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1908 in the wake of the Young Turk revolution. All these territories, recovered from the Ottomans at various times between the mid-16th century and the early

20th, were in a position to develop the kinds of bourgeois social structures and accompanying cultures that were already familiar in other parts of the Habsburg Empire. And this in turn ensured certain uniformities in cultural practices.

Even the ascendancy of a nationalist ideology in the 19th century could not obscure these commonalities across the wider region, though it had a major influence on how the history of art music in particular would be told and understood. Emergent nationhood was a less crucial determinant of musical style in this respect than were more general processes of modernization and westernization. The structures of musical life, whether of the court or the city, and the compositional praxes that emerged from those structures, were increasingly common to the region as a whole, however competitively would-be nations might assert their uniqueness, notably with reference to medieval kingdoms. And in this sense so-called ‘national styles’ really amounted to local varieties of a single bourgeois culture. Even within Ottoman-ruled territories in South East Europe there was an increasing colonization of culture by the fashions and ideas associated with an increasingly dominant ‘Western Europe’, so that the first of my two cultural traditions increasingly aspired towards the condition of the second. This Europeanization of culture culminated in a somewhat belated expression of a modernist aesthetic in the 20th century, and from this point onwards the claims of the nation and the claims of ‘the new’ proved even harder to reconcile. This tension emerged especially clearly in music criticism right across the region during the inter-war period.

Following World War II, most of the independent states of South East Europe became client states of the USSR (note that in the cases of Bulgaria and Serbia there were long-standing affinities with Russia). The exception was Greece, which, along with Turkey, joined NATO in 1952, and was thus closely aligned to North American and West European political agendas. The subsequent battle of ideologies dominated global politics for more than 40 years, and although that battle was directed – and largely funded – by the superpowers themselves, much of it was outsourced to a divided Europe, with the Slavonic Balkans part of communist ‘Eastern Europe’ and Greece part of ‘the West’. Accordingly, cultural policies in the bloc were shaped – with varying degrees of rigour, depending on the proximity of client states to Moscow—by the Soviet Union, and with all the generic code switching that implies. Thus, classical music, including opera, was transformed from a bourgeois product into a culture ‘of the people’, while modernist music and commercial popular music formed an implausible alliance as repertories that were jointly condemned as anti-humanist and decadent. Traditional music, meanwhile, was subject to folklorization, and translated from the village square to the concert platform. Conversely, in Greece the politics of subsidy, involving the USA and West Germany in particular, ensured that modernism became a badge of allegiance to the West.

The break-up of the communist world, and the wars of Yugoslav succession in the early 1990s, inaugurated a new era in South East Europe, and one in which art music has struggled to thrive in the absence of the generous subsidies that came with the territory in communist times. Classical music had always been an elite culture, and for most people in the region today it cuts very little ice. They have, and always have had, their own music, sacred and secular. However, in the late 20th century there were significant changes in the character of that music, as traditional music was comprehensively sidelined by commercial music. That shift had been inaugurated back in the 1950s, but it reached a determinate stage in the late-communist and post-communist years. The youth culture of the 1980s and beyond was of its nature global in character, culminating in international rock styles, and eventually in hip-hop and other underground scenes right across the Balkans.

Yet in parallel with this global movement, there were genres of ethno-pop that looked inward to the region itself. This kind of ethno-pop has many names, depending on its location: *turbo-folk*, *sevdah-rock*, *chalga*, *manele*, *laïka*, and *muzika popullore*. But the affinities between the genres are obvious enough, so much so indeed that one of Jane Sugarman's informants remarked: 'A common Balkan music is emerging, where you can't tell whether it is Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian, or Turkish' (see Buchanan 2007, 300). One of the common elements is a neo-orientalism that looks both to the urban popular music of the late Ottoman period, thus rooting the music in the region, and to the global chic associated with the divas of American MTV. One might draw a parallel, however implausible, between ethno-pop and those 19th-century nationalisms in art music discussed earlier. Like 19th-century national styles, the general practice in ethno-pop is to allow a repertory of generalized idioms to serve as all-purpose musical signifiers, while the aesthetic centre remains intact and common to all. The musical materials, in other words, flow like liquid across the political boundaries.

At the time of writing, the EU describes an extended arc enclosing Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece (as well as Cyprus). Only Albania and the remaining successor states of former Yugoslavia are now left on the outside, and all are in the queue, as indeed is Turkey. A glance at the map exposes the anomalous political geography. There can be no doubt that the slow-burning project of European integration has worked further to blur the borders separating nation states, creating uniformities in culture as well as in politics and trade. Like premodern societies and like multicultural empires, modern Europe of its nature tends towards supra-national structures. This is evident on different levels of cultural articulation. The effects on everyday culture of the ubiquitous multinationals corporations need hardly be spelt out; they are everywhere to be seen. Likewise the popular cultural forms associated with today's youth are largely Europe-wide, if not worldwide. And equally the products of an elite culture, including what remains of an avant-garde, are untrammelled in the main by national traditions. In this respect even those nations in the queue for Europe are partly there already.

2. Traditional music.

There is a musical culture in South East Europe that remains rooted to the spot, a cluster of repertories welded to their local settings. These repertories – the traditional agrarian and ritual musics associated with premodern rural societies – tap into cultural layers that are buried deep and would once have covered vast spaces. Yet if the relevant musics have remained in their places, at least within relatively recent history, those places have become increasingly isolated. They have been left high and dry, islands of local culture marooned by the tides of modernity. Soon they will be all but washed away. But where they remain, they bear eloquent witness to a cultural life that crossed the shifting borders separating not just the modern nations but also the older empires. Premodern musics give an underlying cultural unity to those regions in which they have survived, connecting disparate parts of the Balkans to each other, as also to Anatolia and parts of North Africa: witness an instrumentarium that is found under various names all over the wider Balkan-Anatolian region (indeed far beyond it). Aside from instruments associated mainly with rural settings (notably the *gajda*, *floyera*, and *kaval*), these include the long-necked lute (*tanbür*, *tamburica*), zither (*kanûn*, *kanonaki*), *kemânçe* (later replaced by violin in the Balkans), the flute known as *ney*, the *darbuka*, and the *zurna-tapan* ensemble.

The geography of premodern musics includes zones of traditional polyphony. The polyphony of Epirus, embracing northwestern Greece and southern Albania, is characteristic, and it suggests affinities with certain island polyphonies (Corsica, for example) and also with polyphonic practices in the Caucasus. The labelling of this repertory by UNESCO as ‘Albanian iso-polyphony’ neatly demonstrates the tendency of folklorization to nationalize premodern cultures, and it is entirely characteristic that both Greek and Albanian folklorists have constructed validating historical narratives that extend back to Hellenic and Illyrian pasts, respectively. That the music is also performed by Vlachs in Epirus (in Aromanian, an eastern Romance language) reinforces the distorting effects of the ideology here. Several scholars are of the view that such traditional polyphonies once covered much wider geographical areas, and there is some evidence of this in the case of Epirotic polyphony; the structure of some melodies in the neighbouring monophonic traditions of western (Greek) Macedonia, for example, suggests that they were once part of a polyphonic tradition.

If we travel northwards from Epirus into the Dinaric Alps, which run in parallel to the Adriatic coastline and then stretch eastwards into Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and part of Serbia, we encounter another ancient layer of vocal music, of which *ganga* – associated with several traditional mountain communities, including the people once known as Morlachs in Western Hersegovina, Central Bosnia, and Imotska Krajina – is probably the most familiar genre. These ancient Dinaric songs are closely linked to pastoral communities and their associated occupations in the mountain regions right across the Slavonic Balkans, and they embodied a ritual life that survived well into the post-World War II years. Characteristically they are performed in a heterophonic idiom in which one voice functions as a drone, while the lead voice has a narrow ambitus, using no more than four or five unequally tempered scalar pitches, often cadencing on a ‘consonant’ major second. They are usually designed for outdoor singing, and projection across the distance informs the voice production (chest register with falsetto ornamentation). Depending on the occasion they were sung by either men or women but usually separately, and they invariably related to communal activities, including the familiar calendrical cycles of work (e.g. haymaking, herding, shearing, gathering, weaving), and of religious rituals, including saints’ days.

In some parts of former Yugoslavia, singing ‘*na glas*’ [literally ‘on the voice’ or ‘to the voice’] is the term used to describe this older layer of song, distinguishing it from a newer type of European-influenced singing *na bas* [on or to the bass], where the norm of consonance is the third and the cadence is on a fifth, or alternatively from epic song, which was typically accompanied by *gusle*, and related the famous deeds of legendary figures such as Marko Kraljević of Prilep. But more crucially it refers to melodic patterns (‘voices’) created within a given tonal structure and strictly determined by the conventions of the rite or occupation, as also (secondarily) by the place of performance, the specific ritual or occupational function, and the status of the performer. Thus, we have ‘wedding voice’, ‘bee-keeper’s voice’, ‘traveller’s voice’, ‘*kolede* voice’ (from the round dance or *kolo*), and so on.

Although related genres of ritual and occupational group singing were once to be found in traditional cultures over much of South East Europe, they were divided by certain cultural boundaries that may well have had an ancient provenance. Thus, there have been suggestions by some specialists of links with ancient cultures, referring to the Hellenic traditions of north Pindus, to the Illyrian idioms of northern Albania and the Dinaric Alps, and to a separate Thracian tradition in Bulgaria, eastern Macedonia, and northeastern Greece. One might even extend these ‘families’ by proposing correspondences between Dinaric idioms and Alpine traditions further north, notably those of the Austrian *Juchzer*. This is the more striking in that all these repertories stand in sharp contrast to those

found in the neighbouring Transylvanian and Carpathian mountains. In other words, the Carpathians are separated from the northeastern Serbian and Dinaric Alps by a cultural as well as a physical fault line (the Danube is the physical border, with the most dramatic point of separation the gorge known as the ‘Iron Gates’).

Some of the singular traditions associated with Maramureş in Transylvania, for example, have affinities with music from the northern Carpathians, in present-day Slovakia and southern Poland. Thus, the singular music of Ţara Oaşului (‘Oaş Country’) in Maramureş finds an echo in the heterophonic violins, the ‘blue’ notes, and the three-string bass accompaniment found in the music of the Polish Tatras, and we have to ask how meaningful it is to categorize it as part of ‘Romanian folk music’. What this suggests is that even the most region-specific repertories belong to wider musical families, and that these have nothing to do with modern nation states. A comparable example would be the meta-regional poles of attraction acting on the traditional music of Greece. There is Asia Minor, influencing the eastern mainland, the northern Aegean islands (Lesbos in particular), and also parts of (Greek) Macedonia and Thrace. There is the western Mediterranean, drawing the music of the Ionian Islands and the littoral Peloponnese in particular towards an Italian sphere of influence. And finally, this time looking north, there is the Slavonic Balkans, creating musical continuities between northern Greece and Bulgaria, as also between the Pindus mountain range and the Albanian and Dinaric Alps. Again, the message is clear: traditional music and dance are shaped by broad regional and social factors. They are seldom congruent with modern nation states.

In the post-World War II era, traditional music throughout the region has been subject to a process of folklorization, though this was already present in embryonic form all over the Balkans in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The folk ensembles characteristic of this movement in the post-war era represented a meeting point between traditional music in its natural setting and the ethos of the classical orchestra. On one hand this was a mode of conservation, keeping alive endangered traditions. But on the other hand it was a construction, a synthesis of characteristic elements of the local style in question, presented with an eye to professional performance standards, and often orchestrated for an array of folk instruments that would never have been found together in a single village. The movement became all-important within communist cultural programmes, harnessing processes of urbanization and modernization to a larger enterprise of investment in – but at the same time refashioning of – the ‘folk’. Folk music was thus institutionalized, and the whole enterprise, riddled with contradictions, was very quickly adopted by the satellite states. Folk festivals, radio, and eventually recording companies were the chief means of dissemination for this new folk culture, and it was thanks to radio and the recording industry that it was in due course commercialized and transformed into a popular music genre widely known as ‘newly composed folk music’ or ‘neo-folk’.

3. Sacred music.

By 1453, when Constantinople finally fell to the Ottomans, there existed a rich and varied tradition of sacred chant that might be related to a parent Byzantine tradition. Aside from the Greek-speaking world (which incorporated communities in Asia Minor and North Africa, as well as present-day Greece), this tradition embraced much of the Christian Middle East, including Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian practices, as well as Coptic and Ethiopian rites. It was also a long-established presence in Romania and in much of the Slavonic world, including Russia. The tradition of Orthodox music

maintained its main defining characteristics during the *Tourkokratia* in Europe, with the monasteries in particular preserving the Byzantine heritage both in liturgical practice and through manuscript conservation.

After the Fall of Constantinople there was a discernible decline in the written corpus of Byzantine chant, placing greater weight on oral transmission and depriving later chant scholars of information on an evolving musical practice for a good century and a half. But towards the end of the 16th century a new and highly elaborate repertory of kalophonic (ornate, melismatic) and composer-centred chant began to take shape, culminating in a large production of manuscripts from the second half of the 17th century onwards. Later still, and partly under the influence of European Enlightenment thought, a system of Chrysanthine notation was introduced (based on the Great Theoretic of Chrysanthos of Madytos of 1832). The effect of this widely accepted system was to simplify and rationalize the chant, lifting it clear of the closed circles of private teaching, and giving it both wider accessibility and greater uniformity.

From this point onwards, Orthodox liturgical music was increasingly appropriated by the nations. In the aftermath of the War of Independence, an autonomous Greek church sponsored ambitious and proselytizing political and cultural programmes. The church became in practice a state church. Accordingly, debates about the chant, common in the press of the late 19th century and the early 20th, were embedded within debates about the nation, and in particular about its historical continuity. For the Greeks, nationalizing the chant found its ideological grounding in the influential *megali idea* (‘great idea’), effectively programming a reconstituted Byzantine Empire, and promising a synthesis of two distinct brands of Greek nationalism, the Byzantinism of the *Romaioi*, nostalgic for the Empire and distrustful of the West, and the Hellenism of the Greek Enlightenment, embracing modernity and celebrating the legacy and continuing influence of the Ancient Greeks. The chant was now ‘Greek’, and it should be preserved from corrupting influences from both the vocal practices of the East and the harmonization of the West. Links with Greek traditional music were also stressed, not least through the practice of transcribing folk collections in neumatic notation.

Harmonized chant took root more easily in Slavonic traditions than in Greek, initially in Russia, but later in the Serbian practice established by the ‘border Serbs’ of Habsburg Vojvodina and formalized by Stevan Mokranjac (1856–1914) into what became in effect the national church music of Serbia. There were parallels in Bulgaria, where Dobri Hristov (1874–1941) and others claimed an independent tradition evidenced by the ‘discovery’ of *Bolgarski rospev* (‘Bulgarian chant’) in Russian manuscripts of the 17th and 18th centuries (their significance has been contested), and where harmonization similar to that of Mokranjac was cultivated. The latest twist in the story of the chant is in some ways the most remarkable of all: a nostalgic, ‘back to (pre-reform) roots’ movement in both Slavonic and Byzantine traditions. This takes the form of a return to a pre-Chrysanthine practice in some quarters in Greece, and to a pre-Mokranjac monophonic tradition in Serbia. This ‘new nostalgia’ has of course encountered opposition, especially in Serbia, where the whole issue of church music has become a hotly contested one.

There was a second major tradition of sacred music in South East Europe. With the Ottoman advances came the music of Islam, especially prominent in those parts of the Balkans that were comprehensively Islamized, notably Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and the Sandžak. Islamic religious authorities have traditionally been nervous of music; indeed the admissibility, let alone the definition, of ‘music’ was as much at stake in the mosque as in the synagogue (to invoke a third tradition that had a major

presence in the region, notably in towns such as Salonika [Thessaloniki] and Sarajevo). Thus Qur'anic chanting followed specific rules, but strictly speaking it could not itself be music; it was rather a form of heightened 'learning' of prayers that was generally arhythmic in presentation. And similar definitional issues arise with the *ezân* (the call to prayer). What is for certain is that these practices, music or not, again crossed political boundaries, as indeed did the *ilâhî*s (simple Dervish hymns), commonly sung in domestic contexts as well as in the mosque, and the various forms of religious music designed to accompany the ceremonial and festive occasions associated with Holy Days such as *bayram*s, and with *sünnet*s (ceremonies of circumcision).

Beyond the mosque, music-making was cultivated extensively among the Sufi confraternities, notably at the Mevlevî and Bektaşi *tekke*s (lodges), but also associated with the Kadiri and Nakşibendi orders. Sufi lodges were significant in cementing the Ottoman presence in the Balkans, not least because they met the social as well as the spiritual needs of local populations, and proselytized to people of all faiths and ethnicities. They were established in tandem with the Ottoman advances, and usually with official sanction, either in existing Christian buildings, in private houses, or in newly built foundations; and they undoubtedly helped Islam to penetrate local cultures, while at the same time preserving its voice in adaptation to local languages. Music and dance played a key role in Sufi rituals, and once again this was a culture that transcended national boundaries. It is worth noting too that it survived in parts of South East Europe after the abolition of the lodges in Kemalist Turkey in 1925. Music was especially important in the case of the *semâ* ritual, part of the *mukaabele* ceremony associated with the Mevlevî order, with the 'whirling' characteristically accompanied by reed-flute (*ney*), *küdüm* ('kettle drums') and *zil* ('cymbals') right across the Middle East. In general the Mevlevîs were from the higher social classes and the urban intelligentsia; they were 'men of the pen'. They often had wealthy backing, and their educational programmes in music and literature carried prestige. Indeed many of the larger *mevlevihâne*s in the Ottoman world functioned virtually as schools of music and poetry. Accordingly, the Mevlevî order was closely associated with the tradition of Ottoman art music, to which we now turn.

4. Art music.

Ottoman art music was associated initially with the royal court, but it soon established institutionalized performance traditions not only in the *tekke*s but also in the wealthy homes of Istanbul, and in major Ottoman cities such as Bursa, Edirne, Izmir, and Salonika. In technical terms it belonged to a much wider *makam* tradition that embraced much of the Arab Middle East and North Africa. In South East Europe the most prestigious venues were the courts of the viziers and pashas, as well as the Phanariot-ruled courts of the Romanian Principalities in Iaşi and Bucharest. It was usual for these courts to employ a *mehter* band, which would perform on ceremonial occasions (the *mehter* music of the Janissary Corps became familiar through stylizations by European composers in the familiar *alla turca* idiom). Ottoman music also traditionally accompanied the elaborate entertainments (including 'shadow' plays) arranged for private parties given by the social elites of the eastern Balkans. The geographical point is important, for it was only really in the eastern Balkans that the more sophisticated traditions of Ottoman classical music were practised extensively within the confines of a patronal culture. These traditions were the preserve of educated Muslims.

On the other hand, the boundaries between this repertory and more widespread styles of music-making in cafés, nightclubs, and popular entertainment venues were not always sharply drawn, and in the later stages of the empire musicians seemed to move rather freely between classical and popular (or ‘semi-classical’) styles. These more popular urban musics will be discussed in due course, but it should be noted here that although they were inflected by local styles they were an empire-wide tradition. Within Ottoman discourses, this was a crucial point, for the important distinction was between music that was empire-wide (including classical and semi-classical) and music that was regional (so-called folk music). Musical entertainments were in the hands of professionals, but if the performers were Muslim they would usually come from the lower social orders. The Orthodox Islamic view of music, and even more of dancing, was at best circumspect and at worst censorious. So although for many Muslims the roles of listener and spectator were deemed acceptable, that of practitioner was largely off limits. Professional music-making was a low-status occupation, as it was within the aristocratic cultures of Western Europe, at least until the late 18th century. Typically, professional musicians were Jewish or Christian (Greek or Armenian), or alternatively Roman, renowned for their capacity to move with insouciant ease from style to style, and from genre to genre.

Even with the emergence of newly independent Balkan nations in the 19th century this oriental music was not immediately deposed, and for a time it still found a role in official ceremonies. Serbia is a case in point. When Prince Miloš Obrenović became ruler of the (semi-) autonomous province in 1829–30, a Turkish military band from the old regime remained in place. And even when Miloš’s westernizing policies were instigated in 1831, they did not immediately oust the influential band leader Mustafa, as several travellers to Serbia at the time testified. Even so, the replacement of Ottoman regimes with Habsburg administrations inevitably led to the westernization and modernization of musical cultures in South East Europe. Indeed in some parts of the region a western culture was already in place well before the 19th century. This was especially the case in territories that were either directly or indirectly subject to Venetian jurisdiction, including the Dalmatian coast of present-day Croatia and the Heptanesian (Ionian) islands.

For much of its history this coastal region was subject to the Venetian Republic, and for several centuries there was an extended war of attrition fought along the whole of the littoral, as the Ottomans pushed forward and harassed the Venetians in all their Adriatic and Aegean territories. It was a relationship of mutual dependency (mercantile and cultural exchanges between them began at an early stage), but on the coastal strip it was Venice that held the upper hand in cultural terms, and the legacy proved to be a lasting one, with Dubrovnik in particular hosting a rich literary and artistic culture.

As an independent City State, Dubrovnik maintained a *Capella* (a resident band) for ceremonial occasions. In addition, concerts were promoted by the Duke and the city fathers (organ music, madrigals, lute-songs), and a wealth of music was on offer at the Cathedral, the Dominican and Franciscan monasteries, and the Church of St Blaise. Opera appeared surprisingly early, with a performance of the first native opera, Junije Palmotić’s *Atalanta* with music by Lambert Courtoys the younger, given in 1629. There is also a corpus of extant music from the cities further north on the Dalmatian littoral and from the islands. It was common for Italian composers to take employment along the coast, as we can tell just by looking at the story of music at the Cathedral in Split, the second major cultural centre after Dubrovnik. The Cathedral Archive allows us to reconstruct a more or less continuous history of the *maestri di capella* from the early years of the 17th century. One of these was Ivan Lukačić (1574–1648) from Šibenik, who took up the post after an extended period in Italy. The only surviving music is a collection of *Sacrae cantiones*, published in Venice in 1620 and influenced by

Venetian concertante styles. Other leading composers on the littoral were Tomaso Cecchini (*c*1583–1644), who was born in Verona but spent most of his life in Dalmatia, initially at Split Cathedral but later at Lesina Cathedral in Hvar, and Vinko Jelić (1596–1636), who was born in Rijeka but spent his entire professional life in Graz and Zabern (Alsace).

Venetian Dalmatia, we might say, held the line for culture prior to the 19th century, and it established some of the musical infrastructures that would later be extended under the Habsburgs, at which point European art music really did begin to penetrate more deeply into the interior. Only in the Ionian Islands, and especially Corfu, could one find anything comparable, albeit chronologically later. Two institutions were of special importance in the musical life of Corfu. One was the San Giacomo theatre, which was established in the early 18th century, and functioned mainly as an opera house from the late 18th century onwards. Its repertory was largely Italian, but it was for this theatre that Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros (1795–1872), father of the so-called Ionian School of composers, wrote the arias and cantatas, some in the Greek language, that might be counted as among the first significant works of modern Greek art music. Mantzaros was also a major player in the history of the second major institution, the Corfu Philharmonic Society, founded in 1840 and associated not just with concert programmes but with an educational mission that laid the foundations for a tradition of Greek art music that would later spread to the mainland.

From the early 19th century onwards all those territories recovered from the Ottomans were in a position to develop the kinds of bourgeois social structures and accompanying cultures that were already familiar in other parts of the Habsburg empire. The transformation from a patronal to a bourgeois musical life—effectively from court to city institutions—took place more slowly on this southern frontier of the empire than in the capitals of central Europe, but in due course most of the court institutions became *de facto* public institutions. In this way, the shift to an urban-based musical culture was slowly effected. The role of aristocratic courts was steadily taken over by theatres and music societies, while music education was channelled into state-controlled schools and academies. Emblematic of these emergent bourgeois cultures were the music societies that sprang up all over the Habsburg empire, together with associated schools of music. The Zagreb *Musikverein*, founded in 1827, was characteristic. Its renaming later in the century as the *Hrvatski glazbeni zavod* [Croatian Music Institute] was symptomatic of a more widespread shift in the all-important battle of the languages in the region.

If we are to identify starting points in the struggle for national identity in South East Europe, we might well choose Serbia and Greece. In Serbia it was the influence of the émigré communities – the Habsburg Serbs – that transformed local, home-sponsored revolts into a wider nationalist movement led by Karađorđe, culminating in Serbia’s recognition as an autonomous Ottoman province governed by Miloš Obrenović in 1830. In Greece it was the rise of a large merchant class in the 18th century that strengthened a sense of common ethnicity among the elites, and this was converted into a modern national consciousness under the influence of western Philhellenes. Following the War of Independence, Greece then became an independent nation in 1832 at a fraction of its present size, though the reality of its independence is another question, given the controlling (‘protecting’) role of foreign powers. In both cases the key constituents of the *ethnos* were faith, language, and epic poetry; and music played a supporting role in channelling all three towards the nation. The folklore movement, an enterprise involving urban intellectual elites rather than local practitioners, was heavily involved in

defining national identities, and it was also indirectly prescriptive of compositional praxes, which were increasingly based on sanitized forms of traditional music. Here the key figures were Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856–1914) in Serbia and Manolis Kalomoiris (1883–1962) in Greece.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) marked the triumph of nations over dynasties, and in its wake South East Europe was effectively carved up into a series of nation states. The Romanian principalities had already been unified in the wake of the Crimean War, and Bulgaria had gained its independence following the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. It remained for Albania to follow suit on the eve of World War I, and for a new South Slav State, known initially as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, to be established after the war. With the latter, the first Yugoslavia was born, following more than half a century of polemic around the idea of Yugoslavism. Where music was concerned, the result was a belated flowering of romantic nationalism in this corner of Europe, with traditional music privileged as a putative expression of national identity. Kalomoiris spoke for many in his ‘manifesto’ of 1908 when he argued for a symbiosis of peasant music and sophisticated art music. An authentic national school, he claimed, should be ‘based on the music of our unspoiled, authentic folksongs […] embellished with all the technical means […] of the musically advanced peoples’.

The Kalomoiris agenda suggests that the claims of the nation and the new need not be irreconcilable. Yet in practice there was a polarization between them in early 20th-century South East Europe, epitomized in Yugoslavia by the contrasted positions adopted by the Croatian composer Anton Dobronić (1878–1955) and the Slovenian Slavko Osterc (1895–1941). In their extended polemic in the pages of the leading journal *Zvuk* (‘Sound’) during the 1930s, Osterc criticized Croatian composers for allowing their involvement with folk music to stand in the way of the new; they lacked, as he saw it, ‘the will to export’. This elicited a long response from Antun Dobronić, spread over two issues of the journal, in which he launched an attack on the cosmopolitan tendency in some contemporary Yugoslav music, and proposed that only Croatians were creating an authentically Yugoslav musical expression (so much for a unified Yugoslav view!). The music of these composers reflected these positions, with Osterc subscribing to a cosmopolitan modernism, and Dobronić to a relatively conservative nationalism, though again it needs to be stressed that ‘nationalism’ here was as much about rhetoric as musical style. The truth is that only a small handful of leading composers in the wider region really achieved the kind of symbiosis prescribed by Kalomoiris, among them the Yugoslav Josip Slavenski (1896–1955) and the Romanian George Enescu (1881–1955), the two composers from South East Europe who came closest to achieving real canonic status.

The polemic articulated by Dobronić and Osterc was formalized during the years of the Cold War, during which composers in the Soviet client states were subject to the strictures of a Socialist Realist aesthetic, relaxed somewhat in Yugoslavia when Josip Tito was expelled from the Cominform, and pushed to a radical extreme in Albania when Enver Hoxha left by choice. Within this sphere of influence a conservative idiom, affirmative in tone and grounded in traditional music, was the sanctioned ideal. In contrast, Greece during these years cultivated either an American-subsidized modernism or a unique form of *entechno laïko tragoudi* (literally, ‘artistic popular song’), associated especially with Mikis Theodorakis. Yet even the polarization between the conservatism of state socialism and the official modernism of the West failed to survive the more general processes of modernization in which the entire region (Albania excepted) was caught up from the late 1950s onwards. Symptomatic of this were two major festivals established on either side of the political divide in the 1960s: the Zagreb Biennale and the Hellenic Days of Contemporary Music in Athens, their agendas more or less identical. That the former thrived, while the latter foundered, speaks volumes

about the politics of subsidy in the later Cold War years. The USA withdrew funding from Greece when it was no longer politically expedient, and it proved all but impossible to gain local funding. In contrast, state subsidy for formal culture was remarkably generous across the entire eastern bloc.

The loss of that subsidy when communism fell was a hammer blow to musical life in the 1990s and beyond. Under communism composers had found themselves at the centre of things to an extent that was distinctly atypical for a wider late 20th-century culture. They were visible in the musical community, and whatever the constraints, they were prominent and largely respected. Since 1989 all that has changed. Classical music, it was quickly learned, does not thrive if left entirely to market forces. In cities such as Sarajevo and Belgrade, unhappily linked in the 1990s, there was a virtual disintegration of formal musical culture, with most existing institutions, including symphony orchestras, opera houses, festivals, and the whole music-educational establishment, affected (many musicians in any case moved abroad at this time). In this context, it is striking that narratives of emancipation, aligned to the cosmopolitan modernism of the postwar years in Western Europe, were increasingly replaced by narratives of homecoming, of roots, which aligned themselves more naturally to a postmodern aesthetic. Those who followed the minimalist trails blazed by the likes of Arvo Pärt in Estonia and Henryk Górecki in Poland could well achieve wide, and even mass, appeal. But modernists of the old school were relegated to the college-conservatory circle, to specialist festivals of contemporary music, and to concerts sponsored by the unions of composers. Right across this region new music struggled to be heard.

5. Urban and popular music.

Throughout South East Europe there was a cultural (and often an ethnic) dislocation between town and country, with a leaning towards hybridity in the towns and relative autonomy in the villages, and with limited space for cultural interactivity and mutual dependencies between the two. The larger Balkan towns were positioned at key points along trade and military routes, including their intersections. With traffic flowing in all directions, their populations were fluid, and they hosted multiethnic and multicultural communities that in most cases carried little sense of the national definition that would later attach to them. Openness and receptivity to difference are characteristics often associated with urban cultures. And given the ethnic and religious diversity of towns in the Balkans, it is not surprising that music – especially urban song – was susceptible to multiple influences.

One class of urban music in the region included school songs, love songs, and patriotic or revolutionary songs. It flourished in the second half of the 19th century, as the towns gradually established an independent economic and cultural life, and became the foci of so-called national revivals. A second class emanated more directly from the Ottoman presence, and was associated with entertainments particular to different town guilds and their saints, as well as with weddings, fairs, dances, and cafés, including so-called music cafés. Broadly this was based on the Ottoman *fasil* ensemble, consisting mainly of instruments such as *tanbûr*, *kanûn*, or *santûr*, tambourine, *tarabuka* [*darbuka*], violin (or *kemânçe*), and *klarnet*. In Macedonia, Thrace, and Bulgaria these ensembles were known as *čalgija*, from the Turkish *çalgi*, meaning simply instrumental group. The Macedonian *čalgija*, linked especially with Roma and Jews, took on its own character, but similar styles were heard in all the major towns of the Ottoman Balkans, albeit not always under this name. In Albanian towns, for example, the ensembles were known as *saze*, while the equivalent tradition in Romania, admittedly distinctive in many respects, was known as *muzica lăutărească*. Labels were numerous and often did little to

distinguish musical styles. Thus the term *sevdalinka* came to describe characteristically oriental love songs in Bosnia, whereas similar songs in Albania were known as *ashiki* songs, and in Greece as *amanes*. There are obvious affinities in all three cases with the Ottoman *gazel*.

Following the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923, a distinctive syncretic genre known as *rebetiko* developed in Greece. The term connoted the anarchistic lifestyle and philosophy of the *rebetes* or *manges*, socially disadvantaged characters who existed on the margins of the law, wore distinctive outfits, and lived life with a certain swagger. Markos Vamvakaris's Piraeus Quartet, in which the bouzouki and its offspring the baglama came centre stage, was the key ensemble, and it entered its classic era in the early 1930s. It avoided the oriental style of the *kafe aman* (Ottoman music café) traditions, cultivating a vocal manner that was rough, earthy, and immediate; it was analogous to American Blues in its direct expression of hardship and in the priority it assigned to emotional authenticity. *Rebetiko* gave a distinctive tone to Greek popular music, leaving its trace on both the 'art song' of Theodorakis and the *laïko* (popular music) of the postwar years. Yet although its inheritance really did separate Greek *laïko* from the popular music of its neighbours, the neo-oriental elements of *laïko* also linked it not just with Turkish popular music, but with the turbo-folk (and related genres) associated with the former Yugoslavia, as well as with the *manele* of Romania, and the *svatbarski orkestri* ('wedding orchestras') and later *chalga* of Bulgaria.

All of these were forms of ethno-pop, and as noted earlier they constituted something of a 'common Balkan music'. In the case of the former Yugoslavia in particular this kind of music had a particular political resonance. The starting point was 'newly composed folk music', or 'neo-folk', briefly referenced earlier. This emerged in Yugoslavia in the 1960s in a context both of urbanization and of '(r)urbanization' (the 'ruralizing' of urban culture by those who moved to the towns but found themselves unable to adapt). These (r)urbanites were widely known as *primitivci* ('primitives'), and along with returning *gastarbajteri* ('guest workers'), they made up much of the audience for neo-folk. The contrary pole of attraction within Yugoslav popular culture was a thriving rock scene, linked to the West, and implicitly or explicitly critical of state socialism. The taste publics for the two traditions were defined more by social background than by nationality, and the 'New Wave' of the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in significant interpenetration.

One aim of the 'New Wave' was to transfer to neo-folk, typically perceived as culturally regressive, something of the prestige associated with a more internationalist rock and popular music scene. The most famous band associated with this modernized neo-folk was Goran Bregović's *Bijelo dugme* ('White Button'), established in 1974 in Sarajevo, and soon immensely popular all over Yugoslavia. Yet even as one branch of neo-folk was modernized, another was commercialized, culminating in turbo-folk. This was characterized by escapist narratives, 'star' singers, kitsch lyrics, and above all oriental idioms, that could be read as both local (Ottoman legacy), and as global (MTV exotic). It was turbo-folk that became closely associated with the xenophobic policies of the Milošević regime. It was endlessly promoted by state-controlled media as part of a propaganda machine that entered remorselessly into private and leisure space during a period of increasingly polarized politics in Yugoslavia, with the independent radio station B-92 engaging in a now legendary rear-guard action against turbo-folk by promoting both western and indigenous rock.

If we look more closely we see other strands. In the early 1990s, for example, rap and hip-hop subcultures found their way to the local discos, with the potential to foster feelings of social and political disadvantage but also to carry the sense of a faddish interest in the most recent western

trends. Homemade varieties of these movements were then established, and at the same time a self-consciously sophisticated countercultural avant-garde emerged, often incorporating elements of classical music. This latter was best represented by the Slovenian group *Laibach*, whose subversive political satire has proved to be notoriously open to misreading. If neo-folk, and its progeny turbo-folk, represented the most inward-looking tendencies of Yugoslav popular culture, then *Laibach* was the most outward-looking. This was a blatantly cosmopolitan Balkan critique that came from within but as though from without.

The duality between ethno-pop and western rock styles (blues-based, hard rock, heavy metal) has continued into the new millennium, and it is notable that selected forms of ethno-pop are now paraded before a much wider public in the form of explicitly ‘ethnic’ presentations at the Eurovision Song Contest. If anything might seem to reinscribe Yugoslavia it is the music (to say nothing of the voting patterns) of Eurovision, which has become a kind of mass-cultural model for the negotiation of national identities within Europe. Moreover, this duality in popular music is expressive of a much wider duality in the culture of South East Europe. As noted earlier, there is a narrative of emancipation, but there is also a narrative of homecoming, of roots. There is a strong current drawing this region inexorably westwards, but there are eddies, undertows that pull it back constantly to the East.

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