

Applied Ethnomusicology

Applied Ethnomusicology:
Historical and Contemporary Approaches

Edited by

Klisala Harrison, Elizabeth Mackinlay
and Svanibor Pettan

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P U B L I S H I N G

Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches,
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This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-2425-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2425-5

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

STEPHEN WILD,
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TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Study groups are the lifeblood of the ICTM; they sustain the discourse of members between biennial world conferences. Most ICTM members actively participate in at least one study group, often more than one. Over the last thirty years, the number of study groups has steadily grown from six listed in the April 1980 *Bulletin of the ICTM* to nineteen listed in the April 2010 *Bulletin*. Study groups may be either topically based, for example Folk Musical Instruments, Ethnochoreology, and Music and Gender, or regionally based, for example Music and Dance of Oceania, Music of East Asia, and Music of the Arab World. Study groups meet between world conferences, often in the alternate years between them. The groups may be large, for example the Study Group on Ethnochoreology has several sub-groups that meet independently in addition to meetings of the whole group, or small, for example the Study Group on the Music and Dance of Oceania, whose meetings usually involve only twenty to thirty members. Study groups provide a forum for intensive discourse on narrower subjects than that the whole ICTM represents. They also publish results of those discourses while the ICTM provides limited opportunity for members to publish papers in the *Yearbook for traditional music*. An annual review of study groups by the Executive Board of the ICTM ensures that those continuing to be recognised by ICTM remain active.

The Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, under the collaborative leadership of Svanibor Pettan (Chairperson), Klisala Harrison (Vice-chairperson) and Eric Martin Usner (Secretary), had its genesis in a preliminary symposium associated with an ICTM Executive Board meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2006, and a panel at the ICTM World Conference in Vienna in 2007. Its first symposium since official recognition by the Executive Board was held in Ljubljana in 2008. The present volume is the first published outcome of its deliberations. A cursory examination of the contents reveals the global spread of its participants' research interests: South Africa, the USA, Australia, Slovenia,

Serbia, Austria, Indonesia and Germany. It has close links with the research interests of another recently formed study group on Music and Minorities, as acknowledged by the latter's Chair, Ursula Hemetek, in her article in this volume. The two study groups will meet jointly in Vietnam in 2010.

A full discussion of this volume belongs to the Introduction, but allow me to touch on some highlights. After a thorough consideration by Ana Hofman of the deep sources and ethical dilemmas of applied ethnomusicology, particularly in Europe, several articles acknowledge the influence of Daniel Sheehy's 1992 seminal paper published in our sister journal *Ethnomusicology* in the USA. Perhaps Sheehy's article can be considered as the formal starting point of applied ethnomusicology. However, as Ursula Hemetek points out, much of ethnomusicology is inherently "applied" research (as per the study group's definition of the topic; see Introduction) because of the discipline's representation of the music of ignored or oppressed peoples. This point comes through loud and clear throughout the volume. Another prominent theme of the book is the potential of music and the contribution of ethnomusicology to affect tolerance and reconciliation between otherwise hostile peoples. This is strongly expressed in Bernhard Bleibinger's essay "Applied ethnomusicology at the Music Department of the University of Fort Hare, South Africa" and Britta Sweers' article on combating extreme nationalism in a northern German town through a multicultural music recording project. A final theme of the volume that I wish to highlight is the use of music and ethnomusicology in a therapeutic role, both in clinical practice and on the ground: Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg on the therapeutic value of choral singing in a northern Australian Aboriginal community, and Margaret Kartomi's account of the healing effect of music in tsunami and civil war affected Aceh, Indonesia.

This volume repositions applied ethnomusicology in the characterisation of the discipline. I suspect that no ethnomusicologist will be able to ignore it in their own understanding of who they are and what they do professionally. Every paper in this volume makes a significant contribution to this still-emerging and dynamic field. I congratulate the authors and the editors on producing such a powerful contribution to ethnomusicology as a whole and a worthy addition to the publications of the study groups of ICTM.

CHAPTER NINE

QUESTIONING THE POSSIBILITY OF REVITALISING TRADITIONAL RURAL SONGS IN TOPOLA, SERBIA

JELENA JOVANOVIĆ

Introduction

This chapter will explore the possibility of reviving the Serbian musical tradition in the city of Topola in Šumadija, Serbia's central region. I will draw upon a singing workshop that I gave to, and that informed a field study that I conducted on, a small vocal group from the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association (in Serbian: *Kulturno-umetničko društvo* or *KUD*). The research focused on three themes: 1) the societal milieu of the community and its positive attitude towards traditional music; 2) the ability of young singers not only to *imitate*, but also to *interpret* traditional songs from their native region (Kisliuk and Gross 2004, 253); and 3) the family context, which provides a link with previous heirs to the musical tradition. As will be shown in this article, during my research in Topola, emic and etic approaches partly were brought together in addressing these themes.

Over the six-year study, I formulated nine significant goals that are relevant to ethnomusicology, for young singers in the workshop. These goals corresponded to those already developed by Averill (2004, 107-8), Bohlman (2004, 267-71), Pettan (1995, 220) and Steszewski (1991, 379). They included the abilities:

1. To expose singers to the terminology, theory, technique and ethos of a music culture;
2. To remove a potential perception of the music as inferior and to demonstrate, instead, its merits;

3. To create a bridge between the Oplenac association and the community;
4. To help individuals to develop and retain a sense of identity in the midst of change;
5. To help introduce singers to artists who are from within and outside their community, and with whom they may wish to continue working;
6. To bring together singers for the purposes of making music and developing friendships;
7. To enable members of the community to become music activists through broadening their cross-cultural learning skills (see Averill 2004, 107-108).

Further, to make space for students in ethnomusicology, I proposed the goals:

8. To encourage singers to ask useful ethnographic questions; and
9. To train graduate students to lead ensembles in ways that are informed by their academic training.

Although the Serbs are the dominant ethnic group in Serbia, preserving their traditional music is much more challenging than one might expect, for several reasons. Firstly, prior to the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, and during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991-1995, the Serbian folklore tradition was heavily politicised and exploited. An “integrationist” approach to tradition, which did not originate in the sphere of politics, nor is endemic to Serbia, was supplanted by an opposing “instrumentalist” approach whereby the use of tradition took precedence over the idea of restoring it (Naumović 1997, 109-111). As a result, the discourse on Serbian traditional music became increasingly problematised internationally. Secondly, a long-lasting series of internal crises in Serbia—which includes crises of Yugoslav identity, political events, changing of borders and constant economic turmoil from the late 1980s until today (including the current period of transition from a socialist to a capitalist system), as well as crises of social changes before and after the wars—has led to an erosion of social, cultural and moral values, and put into question the identity of social communities while the economic problems continue. Thirdly, young people continue to be influenced by the commercial music genre of turbo-folk (Gordy 1999, Kronja 2001, Rasmussen 2002; see also Đurković 2009, 200). Traditional music and other music genres comparatively are far less present in media, and thus, their cultural influence is minimised.

The context

Topola is situated on an important transport route in the Šumadija region of Central Serbia. It has a population of 6,000 that is served by a primary school and a high school. Dating to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Topola is a town of historical and national importance. Tourism has become an important aspect of the local economy, especially over the past several years. The only cultural venues in town with regular programming are a cinema, and a library that hosts lectures, book promotions and literary events. Migration from Topola to larger towns is prevalent, but there is an influx of migration from nearby villages to Topola. This has made Topola a stronghold of social and familial traditions that are meaningful to both youths and adults.

Serbia's long-term social crises have hit small communities hard. In small communities, one can more easily detect signs of the erosion of traditional value systems than in large cities. Topola is facing problems that are generated by a lack of employment, and cultural and social opportunity. These factors have motivated young people to move to larger cities soon after completing their schooling. One of the gravest problems that Topola has been dealing with is drug abuse among youth. The name of the music genre that saturates the media, "turbo-folk,"¹ also refers to a dominant local sub-culture imposed by media (Митровић 2008, 130) that I believe advances the erosion of personal and social norms, moral disorientation and anxiety (see also Đurković 2004, 282). Turbo-folk creates a superficial version of reality, which stands in sharp contrast to the harsh reality of life in Serbia (Gordy 1999, Kronja 2001, 10, 120-122). As Jasmina Milojević (2007) explains, it has been declared "substantive kitsch," in other words, culture that produces a feeling of happiness realised through escape from reality. Another effect of the complex social changes and upheavals in Serbia is a disorder in relations between the young and the old, which informs the fact that the intergenerational transfer of traditional musical idioms has become extremely rare.

In such a context, the social role of the Oplenac association in Topola is not negligible. The same can be said for other such associations across the country (Marković and Hofman 2006). The Oplenac association, established in 2000, brings together children and youth from preschool to high school graduation age—respectively from ages six and seven to ages eighteen and nineteen. Thereby it has served as an important gathering point for young people. As the results of an inquiry have shown, the parents and directors of the association consider its activities to have had a positive impact on participants' upbringings and maturing processes. It is

important to stress that among the residents of Topola, there is a perception, based on criteria of traditional family values and social patterns, that those child members of the association are “the best children” in town. The association seeks out youth who are exemplary school students. Many of its members are counted among the most gifted students and excel in various fields of study. The primary activity of the association, as is the case with other associations across Serbia and the former Yugoslavia, is rehearsals and performances by its dance ensemble. In Topola’s case, this usually involves high-quality performances in which their choreographers take great pride. With regards to governing ideologies of the association, it should be noted that an emphasis has been put on the uniform stylisation of folklore, after models that were inherited from the socialist era and are employed in other countries in the Eastern Bloc. According to Steszewski (1991, 375), the models’ origins are in the Romanticist ideal of nation building through nationalizing music and dance styles (see also Noll 1993 and Maners 2001).

Although conceived as a continuation of tradition, the life of such an association revolves, to a great extent, around a relatively firm set of conventions. For example, concerts represent important events in a small community. It might be said that they provide a substitute for *sabor*, a word of Slavonic origin meaning gathering or meeting. These have been assemblies organised mostly in the past, but also today, on particular days of the church calendar. Concerts are considered to be solemn community activities during which dancing and wearing traditional folk costumes embody a system of values that is still maintained by the community.

Nowadays, community conventions manifest themselves to a great extent through traditional dances, and less so in vocal traditions (see also Herndon 1991, 56). For decades, traditional songs in the associations were kept, not in their original form, but in strictly stylised forms that derived from the socialist models (Maners 2002, 86). As noted by historian Predrag Marković, such an approach usually catered to the socialist or petit bourgeois, which had little tolerance for any spontaneity in musical expression or any trace of “peasant” sensibilities (see also Maners 2002, 90).

Cultural-artistic associations in Serbia depend upon the enthusiasm of their members, to whom they offer specialised seminars in traditional song and dance. Sometimes the associations’ directors are professional dancers or choreographers. Work of the dance ensembles rarely is based on field research. The role of ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists generally has not yet been part of Serbia’s artistic associations. Ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists cooperate only sporadically with the associations,

in ways that are dependent on the circumstances and motives of associations' directors.

The interest in the historical forms of rural songs was first generated among the members of Oplenac Assembly at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At this time, young singers inspired by societies of successful singers in the capital, Belgrade, followed an *a cappella* pattern of rural singing (see Jovanović 2005, 136-37). My cooperation with the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association began in 2002, and was initiated by the association. I have to stress that our cooperation was not initiated by ethnomusicologists or political structures, but was a result of the enthusiasm of young singers and the wish of their directors to develop fully their potential. The reason that they chose to contact me was that previously, I had conducted field research in about twenty villages in the area. In addition to having published papers on the topic, this also resulted in my having rapport and many personal friendships with the villagers. Also, I already had extensive experience in performing village songs with the acclaimed women's vocal ensemble Moba from Belgrade. At the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association, I am working with a group of singers between thirteen and eighteen years of age as well as with a generation of former Oplenac youth singers (currently ages twenty-one to twenty-four). The workshops happen in more or less regular time intervals, often once every two weeks. They occur more frequently during preparations for public appearances, competitions or concerts. The duration of each rehearsal is rarely longer than two hours.

Goals

The potential of the singers, which was my primary motivation for involvement with the project, emerged from a rare combination of several qualities: their extraordinary talent for music and singing; their individual and collective needs for traditional Serbian music expressions; the pleasure that the singers found in *a cappella* singing; and their spontaneity, which ensembles of this kind often lack. Especially, the youths had a strong sense of expression that is unique to village singers. This quality of musical performance cannot be learned using only methods of classical music pedagogy, but can best be learned by spending some time with peasant singers. Based on these observations, my initial estimation was that this freedom and spontaneity may have derived from social relations with peasants. This provided a healthy starting point for developing the singers in a way that was not "alien" or artificial to the larger community. This also suggests that such singing derives from broad social

environments that include parents and grandparents of the singers (some of whom used to be my informants during fieldwork) as well as many members of the community who are devoted to traditional sound. Such singing still represents a musical discourse that is implicated in the social and cultural constitution, and is an example of living “*langue* in music” (according to Shepherd and Wicke 1997, 148).

My initial task with the youth ensemble was to rehearse wedding songs from the vicinity of Topola, and the Gornja Jasenica region (see Jovanović 2002). Wedding songs in this part of central Serbia still existed in the field at the end of the twentieth century. They could be found in three basic types of performance:

1. an archaic representation of an old vocal tradition that consisted of a heterophonic two-part singing style with narrow, non-tempered tone rows and characteristic second chords (Golemović 1996, Petrović 1989, 138);
2. a more recent, or “newer” tradition known as *na bas* or “to the bass” that has a homophonic texture, and voices that move more or less consistently in thirds, with final cadences voiced in perfect fifths (Golemović 1997, Petrović 1989, 138); and
3. a so-called “hybrid form,” in which elements of the older and recent vocal practices are merged (Dević 1995, Jovanović 2002).

Performance of each of these types demands compliance with specific melodic and metro-rhythmic patterns. Through doing this, the physiognomy of each style can become successfully revitalised.

The young singers approached the repertoires with curiosity, willingness to experiment, and enthusiasm regarding a newly acquired knowledge of rudimentary tunes and of singing in intervals of seconds. This gave impetus to my primary research question: Is it possible to activate “local knowledge” (Bastos 1991, 234) among youth, considering the previously stated facts, and to “enable the return of the musical patterns to the community which created them but later on lost them”? In other words, can a program of musical education “acknowledge value in the students’ ancestral heritage” (Pettan 1995, 220; Trimillos 2004, 25)? I would suggest that the answer to these questions is yes.

Work methods: Showing the value of rural music

The repertoire that I chose for the youth choir was based on field recordings made by myself and other researchers, while the general direction of rehearsals derived from my personal singing experience, and the individual and collective musicianship of the choir's members. I chose songs based on my estimation of which sounds and musical sensibilities would work best for individual singers. The most important criteria were the musical features of Serbian rural traditional songs that are described in brief above. I do not endorse performers' complete freedom from conventions, which would presuppose relinquishing fundamental rules. Moreover, I think of rules as essential for defining criteria for a successful performance. Rules, when understood in this way, can be used as a creative point of departure.

In ongoing workshops, I employ the knowledge and experience that I gained from my academic and music education. In addition to teaching conventions of musical texture, I use traditional musical language when discussing performance needs, which also include melodic, harmonic and structural parameters (discussed more below). The approach of language provides the young singers with a much wider cultural view of performance than would the elements of a given music tradition itself. Whenever possible, I insist on perfection in performance, based on traditional Serbian performance norms. I help the singers to adopt these criteria gradually, but also to develop feelings of empathy and community. I believe that, more important than performance quality, is maintaining the individual, authentic impulse of each young singer as well as striving towards common sounds and expressions of the ensemble.

From the point of view of practical performance purposes, scholars have identified structural elements of Serbian vocal and rural traditions, on involved levels of the tone row, chord, timbre, agogic, rhythm, tempo and ornamentation (Ranković 2008, 19-28). Another significant didactic approach derived from Ranković's practical experience as a professor and department head for ethnomusicology at Mokranjac Music School in Belgrade. The rest of my article concentrates on three parameters only: tone rows, chord properties, and improvisation, which is understood here as inserting slight melodic variations within melodic patterns that otherwise are consistent throughout a song.

Tone rows, composed of non-tempered, narrow intervals (see Miljković 1998), until now have been preserved in the living practice of the oldest carriers of Serbian vocal village traditions. Under the influence of mediated and popular music genres, these tone structures gradually

have fallen into disuse and have been supplanted by tempered diatonicism in the interpretations of younger singers. This is the parameter that has been most difficult for young singers to revise, unless they have had opportunity to hear non-tempered intervals performed live within their families or immediate social environments. When running rehearsals for the youth choir, I found that this parameter could be mastered only by persistent work that relied on auditory impressions gained from recordings.

One prejudice in discourses of Western ethnomusicologists, regarding non-tempered tone rows, is that “the notion of the narrow large scale has definitely negative connotations in terms of value” (Steszewski 1991, 380). Even educated Serbian musicians, as well as ethnomusicologists from abroad who are unfamiliar with this kind of scale, consider it as “singing out of tune.” However, achieving narrow tone rows in the workshop is imperative for performers as it is key to attaining the physiognomy of a large body of songs from the above-mentioned older Serbian and Balkan vocal style, as well as from some of the more recent traditions.

Skilfully performed second chords in songs with two vocal parts are highly valued in the aesthetic tradition of Serbian vocal village practice. According to the standards of village audiences, the two voices have to “match like bells” (Petrović 1989, 66-67). Generally speaking, second intervals are treated as consonant in the songs of older village traditions among Serbs and other ethnicities in the Balkans. I strive to preserve this convention among young singers in the ensemble.

Another element of great importance to preserve is the use of improvisation within the framework of traditional performance codes. This involves using melodic variations from one melo-stanza to another, without abandoning the traditional “vocabulary” expressed in melodic formulas. This aspect of performance has not yet been attained by the choir, but remains one of the key tasks for their future work. An impediment lies in the tendency of most young singers to move out of Topola, and thus leave the association, soon after they graduate from high school. They cease to perform actively, which makes the skill of improvisation unattainable.

In conversations with people who frequent the artistic association’s concerts, I have discovered an interesting and important fact concerning the reception of rural songs. The audience (the community) has an impeccable ability to recognise quality in performance. Laymen listeners, led by their own personal tastes when listening to interpretations of the young members of the singers’ assembly, form their evaluations in the

following way: *a cappella* singing is “good” (high quality) when the singers can make everyone present in a hall quiet and when silence is the sole acoustic environment for singing. In other words, a performance has to engage the full attention of listeners. This shows that the social community of Topola has maintained an awareness of the appropriate way to listen to this music, in other words, that this genre is not meant for mere entertainment. Namely, a great many listeners recognise it as part of their musical surrounding. The music still resonates in their memories as a part of their everyday lives and festive occasions. Although the genre under discussion has to a large extent been abandoned, together with the contexts in which it used to exist, it is still recognisable as property of the community and hence maintains specific significance to it.

A commonly held conviction about the need for a quality vocal ensemble in Topola is greatly encouraged by achievement awards, which the group continually receives in regional and national competitions and music festivals. The singing group from Topola ranks among the best in national competitions. The standard of quality in these competitions is evaluated in terms of faithfulness to traditional models of performance of regional folk songs. More important competitions usually include ethnomusicologists as jury members.

Links to the community

According to views expressed by people living in Topola and its vicinity, the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association has become a symbol of active engagement with traditional dances and songs. This is especially significant given that the chain of intergenerational transfer of traditional music skills was broken about three decades ago. Certain elements of the archaic vocal tradition were vital in this region up until the 1990s (Jovanović 2002, 8). However, in conversations with young singers, it has been confirmed that older members of the singers’ families have vivid memories of some forms of traditional vocal expression in their native villages. Striving for a continuity of style also is illustrated by the fact that a male singing group from the nearby village of Svetlić has been part of the association since its inception. The group has emerged from modern village life conditions and needs (see Hofman 2007). The fact that the granddaughter of one of the group’s soloists sings in the association’s youth assembly also indicates that it is possible to enable continuity in singing practice.

At the age of seventeen, Marija Jevtić from the village of Svetlić, one of the places where I did my initial fieldwork, recently matured as a

soloist. She demonstrates excellent potential as a future carrier of the singing tradition of her region. Although just a beginner, she sometimes spontaneously introduces non-tempered intervals into her interpretations of songs, using the musical practices of her native village and other villages in the region. These obviously are part of her musical memory, which she carries intuitively and manifests during the singers' assembly's performances. I consider keeping specific tone rows to be very important markers of local musical "dialect" on which girls can build their interpretations.

From a conversation with her grandfather Dragan Jevtić (b. Svetlić, 1945), an extraordinary singer and a knowledgeable carrier of village singing, we learn that he only has words of praise and contentment for his granddaughter who is following in his footsteps. He credits our work in the association, not himself or the tradition of singing in his village, as the following interview excerpt illustrates:

J. Jovanović (JJ): You have listened to the young female group from the assembly; you have performed together with them as well. Could you, as a carrier of village singing tradition, tell us your impressions about their singing?

Dragan Jevtić (DJ): This group, in my opinion, has achieved a nice result. They won the first prizes at every competition [in which] they took part—what more to say! They have improved very much during past years. I am very glad to hear them singing so well. The younger members joined; I think they will be getting better and better, and the group will last for a long period.

JJ: Could you compare the way [that] they sing, with rural singing in your village in the past?

DJ: There is no big difference ... Maybe the girls' singing is somewhat more beautiful, because they rehearse regularly. In the past, people gathered and sang during their work; they did not practice. But the songs remained the same in melody and in text. Definitely, the children inherited the manner (Interview with author, June 2008).

There also is another strong family link with traditional songs that are present in the association. During the course of my work with the ensemble, I had the opportunity to observe part of a young person's process of integration into the wider social community. Twenty-one year old Maja Stanjević has been a member of the vocal group since its founding. She was born in Sarajevo and comes from a refugee family that

moved to Topola in 1995, from the Romanija Mountain region in eastern Bosnia. Maja's mother Ljiljana Stanjević and Maja's aunts still sing songs that belong to the above-described old Serbian and Balkan vocal style. It is of extreme importance to them that Maja, along with her mother and aunts, remains a living carrier of this kind of rural singing tradition from their native county. Several recorded songs belonging to the older tradition, performed by Ljiljana and Maja Stanjević, bear witness to a music idiom of eastern Bosnia that has been completely preserved in the new environment. This is the two-part heterophony and bourdon structure typical of the region of Dinara (see Dević 2001, 2002). Both music styles have a narrow, non-tempered tone row while the heterophonic songs demonstrate an occasional movement of voices in parallel seconds.

According to recent ethnomusicological findings, in rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, village singing and older music idioms remain common not only on festive and solemn occasions (such as family Saint day *slava* and weddings), but also in everyday life, especially during family gatherings (Ranković 2007a, 9-10, 25; Ranković 2007b, 41-42, 48 and fn. 2-4; Tadić 2010, 1). People have preserved the custom of socialising through singing for their own pleasure and communication. Maintaining friendships through enjoying songs is an important part of their lives. Such a social milieu preserves not only musical heritage, but also participation in community through collective music making, and the closeness and satisfaction that can manifest through singing together. Such is the experience that Maja spontaneously impresses upon younger members in the association. She does it by physically gathering girls around her while showing new phrases or practicing songs. At the same time, her stable intonation and reliable voice provide strong support that encourages others to sing freely. She also is patient and full of empathy to the younger. In this way, she leaves a positive impact on the ensemble's collective spirit.

As has already been pointed out, traditional forms of music making have disappeared in the customs and everyday life of Serbia. Ljiljana Stanjević states:

I have not heard people sing at weddings or *slavas* in Topola, but I have heard some songs that you brought to the assembly, that belong to the tradition of our native county ... When I listen to the young group of singers in the Oplenac association ... as a listener, I expect that these girls, who are really gifted, will have the chance to prosper with these songs.

It is the case, too, that singing at the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association builds relationships between people and helps in establishing

the full identity of a young person who carries the traumatic memories of war from her childhood. Music can have a key role in establishing one's identity under changed circumstances (see Bohlman 2004, 267-71).

Maja's exceptional talent and rich vocal range have been invaluable to the singers' assembly while her personal singing experience has been of great importance in the process of learning songs belonging to the older tradition. During my cooperation with the association, Maja also began to build her own relationship with the music and with her own potential. Her singing experience and exceptional giftedness—derived from her clarity of expression, stability of intonation and voice, and use of ornamentation—also brought aesthetic pleasure to others. Research on folk music expressions among refugees in Serbia (see Golemović 2002) and my own interest in this subject (in the Belgrade area: see Jovanović 2007), have shown that old forms of traditional music can serve as markers of distinctive local identities that originate in different native regions and contexts. In other words, they represent elements of diversity among different groups of immigrants. In our case, the situation is inverted in a rather interesting way: It is the older village singing tradition that serves as a bridge between the particular musical elements of Šumadija and Bosnia, on which we work in the workshop. These include heterophonic and bourdon singing, which involve non-tempered tone rows, agogic accents and ornaments as important stylistic features.

The case of Maja and her mother has, on the other hand, confirmed a theory of Dimitrije Golemović that the songs belonging to a more recent tradition, sung *na bas*, serve a function of social cohesion for different refugee groups in Serbia (Golemović 2002, 62-64). For example, Maja's mother wrote the following lyrics to a song using a traditional poetic idiom, then dedicated them to Maja and the association as a token of her gratitude to the people of Topola for having accepted her family and herself:

I'm a girl from Romanija / that's why I dance the dances of Šumadija / My mother gave me birth in Sarajevo / but from there I moved to Topola / Oh, Topola, my sweet town / You took me under your wing / Your wing was great / and fed me with bread / I'm proud of our cities / thus our songs remained / I love Bosnia and Serbia, too / such is the fate God has given me²

This case serves to highlight music making by Serb refugees from Bosnia, who have been largely absent in international discourses on refugees from the wars in the former Yugoslavia (see Bohlman 2004, 267, 271).

In this case, one also can observe a generational difference in understanding the given musical idiom and lyrical content. For the mother, this particular means of communication came completely naturally, while for Maja's generation this could not be said. In Topola, the young prefer topics common to their majority (such as love, for example) and that affirm their sense of community as a whole rather than their individual destinies. It was for this reason that the song had never been sung in public. We gathered a smaller group of qualified singers for the purpose of recording this song, keeping in mind that it contained a wholly personal confession from female members of the Stanjević family. The performance provided an outstanding example that could be compared to earlier applied ethnomusicology projects that showed ethnomusicologists in contact with refugees belonging to other ethnicities from Bosnia (see Pettan 1995, 217, 223).

Cooperation and gathering: Musical activism and cross-cultural learning

Many compromises have to be made when choosing the repertoire for a young singers' assembly in today's Serbia, given the social circumstances described earlier, and modern musical tastes that are shaped by media. At the Oplenac Cultural-Artistic Association, as already stated, main goals were for me, to teach the singers songs from the region, and for the singers, to learn these and to accomplish the highest possible standard of performance. With the enrichment of their singing experience came an expansion of repertoire as we added songs from other parts of Serbia and neighbouring areas. Cherishing the national music idiom, both as an educational endeavour and as a means of personal development, remains the group's top priority.

In order to maintain youths' interest, it was necessary to enhance the repertoire according to musical tastes of the younger generation. We included songs with which they could identify, such as modern popular songs with a folklore foundation, or urban songs. For this purpose, several arrangements of Serbian urban songs have been made in Topola, especially those popularised by successful performers such as Biljana Krstić and Branka Vasić. The arrangements include a modest attempt at using traditional non-tempered wind instruments such as *gajde* (bagpipes) and *kaval*,³ or percussion instruments such as *daire* (tambourine) and *goč* (drum). Also, songs originating from other music cultures—such as Greek, Irish, Russian and Romanian—were included in ways learned from field recordings (in an “authentic” manner) or from arrangements (that I made

in cooperation with instrumentalists). This approach proved constructive and seemed to attract youths who prospectively wished to join the vocal group.

It goes without saying that many friendships developed during rehearsals, and were strengthened through performing and travelling together. During the past year, I have tried to foster a cooperative relationship between the association and Miloš Nikolić, a reputable performer of traditional instruments, as well as with his pupils. I hope that this will lead to further enrichment of the girls' musical experiences. It also has become quite common to see young singers from Topola performing with assemblies from other towns, and working independently on maintaining the repertoire. In future engagements, whether it is me personally who teaches the singers, or whether they continue to engage the music in other ways, one can expect their interests to deepen, along with their knowledge acquired initially through me and informed by my fields of ethnomusicology and ethnology. They are likely to form new ensembles independently.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind all of the positive aspects of the work done on revitalising village songs in Topola as well as a *capella* singing traditions, I still have questions about how best to ensure the continued survival of these songs in all of their breadth and beauty (see Ober 2007, 19, 31-33). That is primarily the problem of participants in the music scene itself, where there is danger of the songs becoming "museum-pieces" (as suggested in Averill 2004, 108 and Kisliuk and Gross 2004, 257). So the problem of securing new contexts for the songs nowadays persists as the main issue. I also am interested in how best to develop awareness of the aesthetic value of rural music traditions. Currently, performances of village songs *have to be* of the highest quality in order to assure positive reception, and justify the presence of traditional musical communities in contemporary, everyday life. Traditional Serbian songs survive by virtue of their artistic or aesthetic functions in contemporary circumstances (Elschek 1991, 52).

It is not easy to predict the future continuity of Serbian traditional singing in general, bearing in mind the complex social, material and other circumstances discussed above, as well as a lack of systematic governmental support for such projects. In light of this, it seems that the role of ethnomusicologists in the continuity of Serbian song should not be underestimated. However, examples of relevant ethnomusicological work

in Serbia are rare.⁴ There is no widespread, organised action on revitalising traditional songs. Still, my contacts with informants and young singers in many places in Serbia show that the living elements of the tradition provide good potential.

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Notes

¹ The term was coined in 1994 by musician Antonije Pušić (alias Rambo Amadeus), who used it in a parodic sense. Soon, the phrase gained usage in a much wider sense: not only for a music genre, but also for a subculture and Weltanschauung. Turbo-folk combines two contradictory concepts: turbo, a term connected to fuel injection car systems and that in a figurative sense, means “challenge, speed, fearlessness and taking part in the newest trends”; and folk, a term connected to folk music (Kronja 2001, 10).

² The Serbian original reads: *Djevojka sam rodom s Romanije, / zato igram kola Šumadije. / Rodila me majka u Saraj'vu / pa ja pođo' ka Topoli gradu. / Oj, Topolo, moje mjesto mило, / ti si mene primila u krilo. / Tvoje krilo veliko je bilo, / pa si mene hljebom othranilo. / Ponosna sam na gradove naše, / zato naše pjesme i ostaše. / Volim Bosnu, volim i Srbiju, / Bog mi tako odredi sudbinu*. The song's melodic basis was a folk tune from Bosnia that is well known in Serbia, where it is popular among Bosnian immigrants and refugees.

³ There is no English translation for this term. *Kaval* refers to a “wooden rim-blown flute of South Eastern Europe and Turkey, similar to the *ney* of the Arab world. *Kaval* may once have referred to various Balkan duct and rim-blown flutes, accounting to the present day diversity of the term’s usage” (Atanasov et al. 2001, 424).

⁴ There are examples of ethnomusicologists’ engagement in singing workshops in cultural-artistic associations in the towns of Pančevo, Sivac and Gornji Milanovac. Involved ethnomusicologists are Sanja Ranković, Gordana Roganović and Ivana Nedić. The engagement of Serbian ethnomusicologist Vesna Bajić, who works at an association of this kind in Koper, Slovenia, should be mentioned also.