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Between two worlds:

**Approaching Balkan Oral Music Tradition through
the use of Technology**

as a

Compositional and Performing Medium

A Thesis presented for the degree of

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Jovana Backović – Between two worlds:

Approaching Balkan oral tradition through the use of technology as compositional and performance medium

Abstract

This text explores the problems of interpreting musical identity, meaning, and socio-cultural value of a compositional work influenced by two traditions with different values: the modernist tradition based on Western European classical heritage, and the oral tradition of the Balkans. It also follows the process of transformation and recreation of the author's musical language: from classical, notation-oriented to a more intuitive, improvisational and live-performance based. Through detailing some of the experiences of the author as a composer and a performer, it also discusses some observations on the ways in which this discrepancy between two traditions and practices has affected and still influences those creative practices in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia that relate to traditional music and its derivations. By identifying musical performance within certain socio-cultural contexts this dichotomy can be highlighted. As a result, a substantial part of this text focuses on investigating the capacity of a technologically assisted composition and performance practice to overcome this issue. Technology is here perceived not only as an instrument for recording, improvising, composing and performing but also as a medium which communicates musical value. In this study, the oral tradition from the Balkans was approached not only as a purely acoustic phenomenon, but it also included a raised awareness of the nature of the continuous fusion of various cultures in the region, as well as existing cultural and religious antagonisms. This study investigates the problems of constructing musical identity as well as the meaning of an author's creative practice in relation to the socio-cultural environment of its origin, whilst observing its reception by audiences outside the Balkan region. Socio-cultural environments are established through exploring the writings of the authors that depict the Balkans historical, cultural and musical spheres in relation to other cultural practices and influences.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is a result of research that spanned over the last five years. During that time, the importance of residing outside the Balkan region while researching and, later, writing has proved invaluable in discovering different viewpoints to my work and the region that has influenced it. Over this period of time I have greatly benefited from contacts with many persons, not only musicians and my supervisors, but people from all over the world who had shared with me their impressions of my performances and my music. Every musician that I talked to about the perception of Balkan traditional music had a little impact on this research, and my perception and ways of thinking has been challenged continuously, which has been the most beneficial to my approach to issues addressed here.

Several people helped me and encouraged my work and made considerable intellectual contributions. At the very start of this research, the valuable criticisms, patience and understanding provided by Dr. Simon Waters, Dr. Nicholas Brown and Dr. Jonathan Impett significantly helped me to question and rethink my own approach to music. As for the Balkan history and the issues related to former Yugoslavian countries the invaluable support came from Dr. Cathie Carmichael, whose suggestions helped me to discover and question the inherited modes of thinking and opinions that I had brought to this research without being aware of.

Few persons helped me to obtain sonic materials, which significantly influenced some of my music ideas and consequently the body of work submitted here. In particular Marija Vitas, ethnomusicologist and editor of the World Music Magazine in Serbia, who generously allowed me to use field recordings from her collection as a base for most of the compositions that constitute this research. I was also very fortunate to meet and interview storyteller and writer Jelena Čurčić, whose contemporary approach to practice of oral tradition greatly helped me to understand and formulate my own motivations as an author.

I would like to dedicate this work to people who are the reason for me being a musician before anything else: the audience.

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6. Approximate representation of *Part a* motif (transcribed by) Jovana Backović
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DVD content/compositions

1. Nigredo
2. Ismail I
3. Ismail II
4. Improvisation: excerpt
5. Psalm
6. Echoes
7. Abstract
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Notes on Transliteration and Pronunciation

(Serbian Latin Script)

A/a = a in align

B/b = b in butter

V/v = v in vast

G/g = g in grain

D/d = d in down

Đ/đ = g in gene

E/e = e in ever

Ž/ž = s in closure

Z/z = z in razor

I/i = i in ill

J/j = y in young

K/k = k in keep

L/l = l in left

Lj/lj = lli in million

M/m = m in morning

N/n = n in narrow

Nj/nj = ny in Canyon

O/o = o in original

P/p = p in pistol

R/r = r in run

S/s = s in sun

T/t = t in table

C/c = ts in tsunami

Ć/ć = ch in child

Č/č = ch in Chile

Dž/dž = j in Japan

Š/š = s in shadow

Up to 2003, both Cyrillic and Latin script were used as official in Serbia. In 2003, Cyrillic was established as the only official script in Serbia, yet both Cyrillic and Latin scripts are still in everyday use.

Chapter I

Introduction

The cultural and musical contexts of the research

'Individual memories almost invariably arise in the context of social practices, such as music exchange and communal listening.....These social practices and cultural forms appear almost inseparable from the memory of actual songs; as a sign of their time, popular songs create a context for reminiscence'. [van Dijck 2006:367].

For me, being a musician always meant trying to find and capture that elusive quality of music as a universal means of communication. When I started my practice as a composer, I haven't been aware of this myself – I only wanted to compose music I like, and hoped that it will mean something in other people's lives. However, the divisions between various music traditions I was exposed throughout my youth left me questioning the soundness of aesthetic parameters for music evaluation I received through the official music education. When I think of my previous music practice today, I see it as an attempt to find a way to the audience that was unhindered by social segregation mirrored in the music genres.

My music education was undertaken at the dawn of the digital era. It had three large streams of music information that almost never mingled between themselves, due to each bringing musical and cultural values of their own. Being born in the '80's, I was exposed to almost every imaginable musical genre being available on cassettes and radio/TV broadcasts. At home, as the daughter of a professional musician I listened to my father singing traditional songs from all the countries of former Yugoslavia and surrounding areas (Hungarian and Romanian songs were also a common part of the professional musician's repertoire in the '70's and '80's). My father knew the attitude that the 'literate' musicians (i.e. those that could read music notation) had towards those who could not. Being a musician that played 'by ear' all his life, he himself held a slight contempt for his 'schooled' colleagues who

could not perform music without notation. Although aware of this throughout my own primary and secondary¹ music education, I became fully conscious of these apparently irreconcilable divisions while I was studying for my composition degree at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, Serbia. I developed a continuous interest in all of musical trends present in the region of former Yugoslavia: 'popular' (Western influenced, pop, rock, jazz) 'traditional', 'folk' (songs I learned from my father and later, during my studies, colleagues ethnomusicologists). Coming mostly from the Western sphere, pop, jazz, electronic music, exotic sounds of different cultures presented an immense attraction (I remember my father having records of Yma Sumac², Jean Michel Jarre³ and Paco de Lucía⁴ next to the records of Serbian popular singers like Dragan Živković Tozovac⁵ and Zvonko Bogdan⁶ whose songs he had to learn – he often played with the orchestras that accompanied them). With my ears full of different and exciting music genres I eventually succumbed to what became a lifelong fascination with different varieties of folk and electronic music and their fusion. And when the time came for me to choose my career, I decided to try and pass the entering exam for composition department in Belgrade rather than try for a degree in piano performance. Composition in my mind meant freedom – freedom to choose my own means of expression.

However, undertaking a degree in classical composition proved to be different from what I expected, which is, I'm sure, typical for any young person choosing to do a degree in art. The feeling that accompanied my whole undergraduate education was the one of uneasiness – I did not feel that I fitted naturally with the aesthetic world of contemporary classical music or, at least, as it was presented to me through my education. Maybe as a result of that, I formed my own ensemble Arhai⁷, which after the modest beginnings in 1999 grew into a group consisting of nine musicians at one time. Next to composed pieces, the overall sound mostly reflected the traditional music of the region. At the same time, I was a performing musician – during my university years, I spent numerous evenings in clubs singing Latin jazz, which later

1 In Serbia, there are government funded music schools offering tuition in most classical instruments, having their own separate primary and secondary curriculum, with secondary schools giving option for pupils to focus more on the theory of music and/or performance.

2 <http://www.yma-sumac.com> accessed 01/08/2014

3 <http://jeanmicheljarre.com> accessed 01/08/2014

4 <http://pacodelucia.org> accessed 01/08/2014

5 His most popular songs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awmjmXcRYPI> accessed 01/08/2014

6 His most popular songs can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/VinotekaChannel> accessed 01/08/2014

7 <http://www.arhai.com> accessed 01/08/2014

proved to be invaluable in understanding a variety of music genres. I suppose, being an active musician's daughter I felt the urge to perform, and performing my own music was what I enjoyed the most. However, neither my work with Arhai nor this other music practice had any official impact on my academic works. At the time, I felt that any compositions that 'flirted' with popular (that is, commercial) music might be classified as belonging to the genre, therefore being considered less original (that is, less valuable).

As a result, after graduating composition in 2006 I faced the fact of having built up three distinct music personalities that did not have almost any point of touch in terms of musical aesthetic or evaluation parameters. I might not have been equally fond of all of them, but all three represented what I loved and respected in the music. Nevertheless, this situation felt unnatural. Holding three music personalities meant shifting from one set of musical values to another, and I soon realized that what I actually wanted all the time was to be able to create something that will reflect and possibly fuse all of these practices into a single, coherent music language. However, neither one of the cultural settings I've been exposed to enabled me to find a space to develop and explore this new expression. The result was a decision to come to the United Kingdom and study for a music degree that related to electroacoustic music and performance with technology – simultaneously allowing me to look back on my education and experiences and discover new approach to composition and musicianship through working with technology.

Before I came to the UK, my practical experience with producing electronic and electroacoustic music was practically non-existent. Although I listened to plenty of music that had strong electronic influences, I was never exposed to it in my studies in any way. It was quite hard in the beginning to shift from using the piano, notated music and pen and paper to using software. The compositions this study focuses on are a result of four years of learning to use the new software, experimenting with technology and my own voice, but first and foremost – trying to question and rethink the set of values that I inherited from my fifteen years-long classical education. While I was studying at University of East Anglia, I realized the immense power and pressure of the society (and education system) on the individual to conform to certain standards, beliefs and modes of behavior. Many of these I thought I was aware of, but I was astonished to discover how many of my mental habits in approaching and

discussing music were completely automatic and as result – unconscious.

Looking back on the body of work of the past five years and thinking of the best way to organize it, I decided it was most natural to follow the chronological order, as it reflects every new thing that I learned and applied. Therefore, it was divided into two stages/categories: short compositions, usually up to five minutes (*Nigredo, Ismail I, Ismail II, Improvisation: excerpt, Psalm, Echoes, Abstract, Miniature*) whose purpose was to experiment with different aspects of improvisation using technology. These tasks mainly meant experimenting with using and combining simple manipulation of the sound material like (changing the length, pitch, reversing, reverberation, etc.) to accomplish and maintain music flow until it shapes itself into a coherent piece of music. The second stage was an attempt to create a composition of considerable length (*The Balkanites*) which was expected to encompass all my previous experiences with technology and see how far vocal improvisation can take me in building up a higher musical structure (macro-form) of the piece. In order to maintain the macro-form, I had to pay a lot of attention to the choice of sound material and the ways in which it is used. This created awareness of the ways in which some of the music fragments evolved through the process they have been put through and imposed itself as the best solution within the composition. All these works, sound processes that I employed, and the musical decisions that had to be made with respect to each piece are detailed in chapter on methodology and analysis.

Almost all of the aforementioned compositions have a strong influence of both secular and sacred Balkan music traditions. What this meant was that (next to my own voice) most of the works were made using recordings of the environments where folk songs used to be sung and vocal elements of oral tradition, all integrated with my own vocal performance. The majority of these samples came from the collection of my former fellow student, ethnomusicologist Marija Vitas, who is nowadays the editor of 'Etnoumlje'⁸ – the only magazine in Serbia that focuses on world/folk music. She kindly offered me her own field recordings collection to use as a source of sonic material. The diversity of these samples, together with my own recordings (made in the period between 2009–2013) proved more than sufficient for this purpose.

While attempting to organize my musical efforts into a coherent picture, I became

8 <http://www.worldmusic.org.rs> accessed 15/08/2014.

aware of the importance of the fact that the practice of every living music tradition has its own socio-cultural environment and historical background. As Blacking noted,

'Music cannot make people act unless they are already socially and culturally disposed to act'. [Blacking 1969: 35].

Therefore, discussing any creative practice⁹ that relies on a certain musical tradition and not taking into account its cultural origins will severely impair any attempt to understand it. As Ian Cross has suggested:

'.... music cannot be conceived as a purely sonic phenomenon; when we look outside contemporary Western culture, we find music performing multiplicity of roles...music is not simply something that is heard and consumed, it is something that is done in interaction with others'. [Cross 2008: 151]

*The Balkans*¹⁰ – the second chapter of this study – thus focuses on detailing particular socio-cultural environments in which particular music genres flourish, while others are barely surviving (in this case I talk specifically about Serbia and the Balkans as a wider cultural sphere that my work relates to). This chapter also examines different viewpoints towards the Balkan region in general, and its traditional music as it was utilized in the works of classical¹¹ composers, particularly in Serbia. For me, having been born in a region impregnated with conflict and national and religious antagonisms, but also with cultural and musical variety, the Balkans had, and still have, the most powerful effect on my creative practice. The way I perceive oral tradition and heritage both in general and through my work are unavoidably related to the political and cultural climate of the region. Thus this is an attempt to capture what the Balkans 'are', what they might be and, transformed into a part of the sound world of an author, what they could become. In order to establish research within this setting, I will often cite musicologists and ethnomusicologists whose work

9 Creative practice as understood here includes music composition, performance and improvisation.

10 There are two notions of the Balkans: physical and political. Geographically, countries usually included in the Balkan Peninsula are the former republics of Yugoslavia, as well as Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Kosovo. Cathie Carmichael has written extensively on the Balkans as a political construct: her list of publications is available here: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/history/people-profile/cathie-carmichael#publicationsTab>

11 That is, composers born in the region and educated in the West, or influenced by the works of Western composers.

focused on composers who employed motifs from Serbian folk music in their works. I will also refer to authors who have discussed the problems of Eurocentric attitudes towards cultural regions considered 'Eastern' or 'Oriental', as these dualistic perceptions play an important role in my own re-evaluations of different approaches to composing music.

The third chapter focuses on the oral tradition and briefly details the gradual transition from primary to secondary orality in Serbia due to the advent of sound recording, reproducing and broadcasting technology, and how the people's practice and perception of traditional music consequentially changed.

Broadcasting technology (with Radio Belgrade founded in 1924) made the general distinction between the music of agricultural and newly formed urban areas in former Yugoslavia more apparent, so I tried to show how the establishment of a recording industry augmented this division further. As Walter Ong points out, since the arrival of the technology that enabled sound to be recorded and reproduced, there is hardly any primary orality left in the modern world [Ong 1982: 11]. The radio and influence of commercial distribution of recorded sound was certainly the one of the reasons for the slow vanishing of oral practices as they used to be. Without a doubt, this is a common enough occurrence, but it certainly highlights some of the ways in which particular divisions came to be and only deepened with time: a chasm between village and city cultures, oral and notated music, native and foreign, 'Western' music.

In this chapter, I also inspect some of the elements of oral tradition practice and improvisation relevant to my compositions *The Balkanites*, *Nigredo*, and *Ismail I and II*. I also discuss the practice of *guslar*¹², a domestic equivalent to the bards in the West, and how, as my research progressed, it became a metaphor of my own compositional and performance practice today. It is very difficult to find and interview *guslars* today since the performance practice has lost its original function and become politicized [Milojević: 2009]. Without the social function that it used to perform, the public need for *guslars* ceased a long time ago. However, the existing evidence was enough to inspire the comparisons among researchers with other genres and musicians, in particular jazz performers – where I found another parallel

¹² *Guslar* is the bard who recited/sung epic poetry with the accompaniment of the instrument, the *gusle*, a single-stringed lute found throughout the Southeastern Europe. This practice is one of the oldest examples of oral tradition in the region.

with my own experiences as a musician. H. W. Foster made an interesting conclusion, emphasizing that:

'jazz musicians and oral epic bards focus upon process rather than product, which is to say that their "product" exists only as the performance event itself, which temporally frames the "process" of creativity' [Foster 2004:156].

The emphasis that I put onto performance as a creative act opens up a new perspective, particularly relevant to compositions consequential to this research, which are semi-improvised and mostly rely on intuitive rhythmic and melodic patterning and their variation as a structuring technique. As Foster remarked about the *guslars'* performances:

'exact repetition of an archetypal utterance is not the goal of the oral composer; instead, by imitating a traditional pattern, he creates or invents a 'new' one' [Foster 2004: 158].

This 'imitation' is not a conscious one; however, what is true for this oral composer of the old times is even more applicable to the works that this study relates to.

Foster's argument provided me with the initial foundation for the analogy between one of oral tradition's most basic traits and the fundamental concept of the composition *The Balkanites*, which is discussed in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter dealing with the methodology and analysis is an attempt to approach compositions more as a *process* entirely dependent on the author's perception of time, and less as a preconceived constructive idea. The situation of an author who seeks to establish a relationship with his own work through analysis is, to say the least, peculiar, demanding, and in all honesty – quite uncomfortable. It requires the separation of the one who creates and the created on more than one level, and a considerable shift in perspective that might result in unexpected changes in how one perceives one's own work. Creating a piece that is not notated and involves the manipulation of sound, improvisation and is rooted in the musical tradition of a certain region imposes several problems for analysis. In order to reach as wide an understanding as possible, it was necessary to examine not only all the sonic elements that were crucial in creating the compositions; the *temporal* nature of music as it unfolds in time and my perception of it became the defining point in reaching the conclusions regarding establishment of the macro-form. As previously

mentioned, I came to perceive *The Balkanites* as the *process*, which through the act of improvisation and sound manipulation reformulates collected material from the field, my own vocal material, as well as referring to the improvisational relationship which I, as a performer (vocalist) develop with all these different sonic 'clues'. Neither one of the pieces contains an exact repetition of any of the traditional melodies or rhythms, but the improvisational parts point to them on an abstract level – by staying within the sphere of certain scales and creating rhythmical patterns which, through continuous variation, never stay the same. As composition required putting forward the vocal and improvisational aspect of the performance, classical notation was deliberately avoided, not only for its inadequacy, but also for it being designed as a tool with the main purpose to control the accuracy of output performance as much as possible. In the case of *The Balkanites*, accuracy in performance is not sought, since an absolute version of the pieces in the form of a score does not exist nor it is envisaged. Rather, the form of minimal written commentary is used where applicable/needed in live performance, describing the ways in which devices applied to sound can be used, approximately when in the timeline the changes happen, and sometimes simply describing the emotion that is to be projected. *The Balkanites* is my attempt to acknowledge my own musical archetypes and to see how the 'primary' orality of traditional music I was exposed to as a child and young adult translates into 'secondary' orality through technology mediating my musical choices as a composer.

Although most of the compositions are partly built on fragments of recordings of traditional instruments, they are far from a musical 'collage'. The 'authenticity' of the sound objects is there only to help limiting my own aesthetic reactions to the Balkan music heritage, while being free of political or ethnic considerations in the process. Samples were chosen by their timbre, and by more abstract categorization by being 'string', 'woodwind', or 'percussion'. One of the criteria was also to choose fragments which, while retaining their recognizable traits, allowed me to manipulate them freely and by doing so, build an organic whole with the vocal improvisation.

Being a vocalist, this research offered me an opportunity to explore the limitations imposed by the sound qualities of my own voice, as well as my aesthetic choices and applied technology. The female voice and themes that women sing about in

traditional songs have a long history in the Balkans, as anywhere else in the world. As they often reflect the heritage of wars, hardship and life shaped by society's taboos, I came to recognize the lament songs as the ones that I am most responsive to as a performer. Women are the ones who used to ritually lament over a deceased on funerals, as it was considered dishonorable for a man to publicly express the feelings of grief in that way. Women were also considered much weaker than a man, as a result of village culture and strict patriarchal upbringing where the strength and responsibility lies with the man as the 'head of the house'. A particular type of song that partly influenced the work *The Balkanites*, was *sevdalinka*. *Sevdalinka* is a traditional form of folk music from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but is popular and performed throughout the whole former Yugoslavia region, mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina naturally and then Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. As it stands for most of folk music, *sevdalinka* songs usually have no known author (apart from the more contemporary ones). The word *sevdalinka* itself comes from Turkish word *sevda* that is most commonly used to describe love, particularly unhappy / unrequited one – the word *sevdah* in Bosnian is associated both with a melancholic state of mind and with being in love.

Sevdalinka has several traits that, for me, combine into an archetype of traditional tunes of the Balkan region and which I tried to recreate in my own way while working on pieces in the last couple of years. First, they do not have fixed tempo or metrical structure: it is often up to the singer to determine both, and 'lead' the accompanying instrument or orchestra giving clues for tempo and music phrasing during the performance. As a result, are rather slow, leaving a mournful and disconsolate impression. Secondly, the unique combination of Eastern (Turkish), and Sephardic elements make this genre of music stand out among other types of folk music from the Balkans¹³. And lastly and most importantly, the aspect of lamentation for me represents the region: often torn with wars, religious and political conflicts that are still present today. With the use of my own voice in *The Balkanites* I tried to trace and express that, while hopefully successfully constructing my own, musically consistent, 'archetypal Balkan' as a consequence.

¹³ Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only former Yugoslav republic with strong presence of three religions, Islamic, Orthodox Christian and Catholic. There was also a Jewish community, but many Jews were killed during WW2 or emigrated to Israel after 1948. It was also the only one with a long history of multinational small traveling bands of musicians.

To come closer to my own 'musical archetype', I utilized free vocal improvisation: vocal lines were recorded without a premeditated plan, and new vocal layers were added as a reaction to the first vocal lines or other sound samples. As a result, a responsorial type of structure dominates. Apart from the *ostinato* fragments that impose their own rhythmic-melodic framework, the whole composition leaves an impression of a constant 'dialogue' between different melodic lines.

Regarding the performance, both the field recordings and my own voice were treated in such a manner as to contribute towards three things: firstly, structuring of the sonic surroundings that communicate the possible directions in which improvisation might lead the performer whilst, at the same time, imposing limitations to it; secondly, sonic clues that could be connected with each other and structured via an improvisational process in any way performer chooses within the given timeline; and lastly, maintaining the musical flow in such a way as to give the listener the impression of continuous narrative and the impression of the wholeness of the piece.

These three considerations constitute the framework within which the pieces were created, and taken as such, are the point from which we can understand the relationship between the necessary premeditation of an established macro form and the improvisation-based parts that constitute it. Though improvisation was a basic approach to structuring the musical flow, achieving a functional form in a composition of considerably longer length (45 to 60 minutes) required both careful choice of sonic material used and the ways it was manipulated and combined. As the voice is the predominant medium, one of the main considerations was regarding the sonic qualities and particular timbre of this single voice, and how to distribute its presence through the piece and balance it with other material. One of the ways employed was to alternate between different functional roles of the voice in the musical narrative, having homophonic and polyphonic structure alternate with parts where the voice is present but not the driving force of musical flow. Parts were not composed separately beforehand and then connected in the operational macro form, as every line (track) had to be made with the possibility of at least one change that can occur during the performance. Approaching composing and performing as **activities/processes**, rather than a finished product that has an absolute version and demands of the

performer a complete accuracy in reproducing it, enabled me to view the act of performance in front of the audience as truly an act of creation; responsive to both the audience and the physical space where it unfolds.

The investigation of the chosen musical discourse and the related issues mentioned above can be described as having three main aspects: ideological/contextual, technical/structural and theoretical.

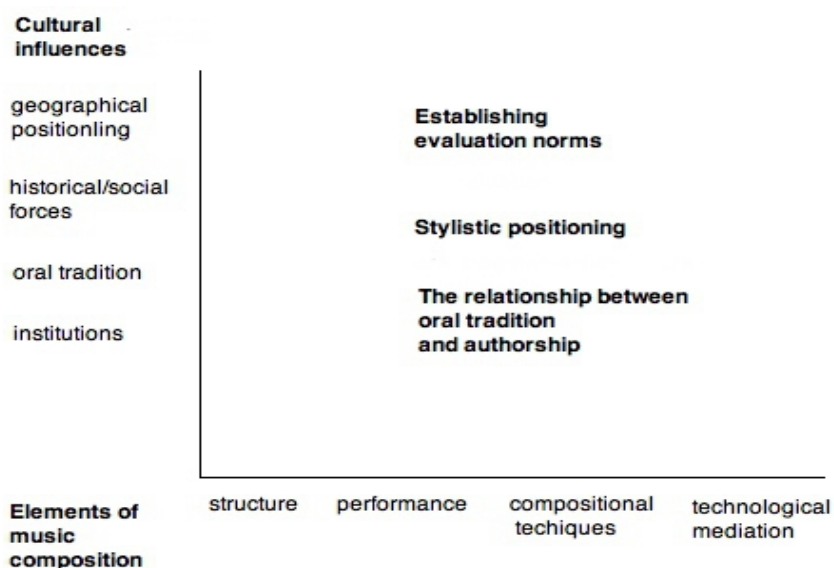
Ideological/contextual is the aspect that arises through the attempts to place these compositions culturally, geographically and historically, and is also concerned with recognizing the norms within which a given musical work can be interpreted (Chapter I). This includes discussing national movements in composition, the function and perception of traditional music in the region and its gradual change, following the awakening of the national music movement in 19th century Europe (composers like Antonin Dvořák, Bedřich Smetana, Frederic Chopin, Jean Sibelius). In Serbia, the perception of composers and artists of the first half of 20th century that were engaged with traditional music also went through changes: from being seen as the most respected members of society and preservers of national 'spirit', to being perceived by the latter generations of composers (the second half of 20th century) as 'backward' and 'conservative', in comparison to a more 'modern' approach.

The theoretical aspect of the research (Chapter II and III) attempts to position the author within the framework of dualities so much present in all considerations regarding the Balkan region. Polarities such as that of East and West, Europe and Asia, and contrasts such as rural – urban, nationalistic – democratic and marginality - centrality.

Technical/structural aspect (Chapter IV) is focused on two things: the analysis of all the electroacoustic works includes identifying sound objects and their sonic qualities, how they are combined into larger sections and finally structured into the macro-form of the piece. The second consideration is the examination of essential musical parameters such as repetition, transformation and contrast that are responsible for impression of temporality, and their distribution throughout the composition's timeline.

The following representation (figure.1) shows how this particular mapping of ideological and technical approach can intersect in creating this particular music discourse:

Figure.1 Convergence of ideological and technical approach



Considering the context of the works will enable me to answer following questions: how the created pieces relate to the Balkan as a whole (particularly *why* I choose to relate to the whole region rather than to a more specific location), and will also attempt to highlight certain conceptions about the music of the region, and their influence on the presentation and promotion of the creative practices at present.

Structural analysis has helped me to demonstrate the manner in which the elements of oral tradition change through employment of particular compositional techniques and chosen technology. The chapter on oral tradition will try to establish possible parallels between the nature of improvisational parameters used by the author, and

the improvisational elements known to have been used by performers of traditional music (the *gusle*¹⁴ players in particular). And finally, the discussion of some theoretical approaches pointed to possible interpretations of the ambiguity of the work caught in between the aforementioned dualities.

To summarize: in order to approach the understanding of created works, their impact and broader contextualisation, this study will reflect and discuss in particular:

- 1) Problems that arose from the existing divisions between Balkan (especially Serbian) oral music traditions and contemporary Western European music education, and how this division influences the compositional practice of the author.
- 2) Some of the relevant historical and political perspectives on the creative practices that involve the use of oral tradition; composers from Serbia and some former Yugoslav republics that were influenced by folk music and their relationship with the political climate.
- 3) Perception(s) of the region: What is 'Balkanism', the 'otherness' of the Balkans within Europe.
- 4) The status of oral tradition in Serbia today, who are the people who keep it alive and how.
- 4) Discerning which particular elements and practices of oral tradition are embedded in my own compositional work and how they are transformed through the use of technology and the creative decisions of the author.
- 5) How the embodiment of oral tradition contributes toward the establishment of musical macro-form.
- 6) Composer and performer as one – how the utilisation of one's own voice as a main creative tool influences the perception of the work itself;
- 7) The voice in improvisation, and its relationship with technology: the advantages and limitations of its use.

¹⁴ The *gusle* (Albanian: *lahuta*, Croatian: *gusle*, Serbian: *гусле*) is a single-stringed lute traditionally used in the Dinaric Alps region of the Southeastern Europe. It is played by the singer, (*guslar*) as an accompaniment while he is singing epic poetry.

Once explored, these issues can then be combined into a single consideration: what are the main parameters and cultural contexts within which certain creative practices should be discussed and evaluated? Generally, composers and artists either naturally inherit or consciously apply cultural values that reflect or contrast their work, which inevitably relate to certain traditions. However, although the aim of this research is to investigate and show how these particular influences combine in creation of a musical work, we hope to arrive at the point where, within the given methodological frame, the individual musical identity of the created work itself becomes obvious. Therefore, we perceive this text not as an attempt to define, but rather to explore the metamorphosis of the elements of oral tradition into highly individualised works and the possible ways of perceiving it. As a result, communicating meaning through music becomes possible when the author strives to fully comprehend the importance of the cultural contextualization of the work itself.

Chapter II

The Balkans

2.1 The Balkans as cultural sphere 'in between'¹⁵ - a construct or reality?

'Are we, or will we become the East of the West or the West of the East; or perchance we are predestined tosearch and find a third course, our own synthesis rooted in this crossroad, this transition from one world to the other?' [Tomašević 2005: 120]

It is often said that the Balkan region is perceived as a 'periphery' of Europe. As a result, in the past two decades, a significant number of publications have focused on examining the way in which the West 'mythologized' the Balkans. The majority of these writings came in the abundant flow after the groundbreaking work of Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978), which was followed by Maria Todorova's 'Imagining the Balkans' (1997). These two texts are often considered to be the most important contributions to the topic of Western (mis)construction of the East and are certainly the most widely known. However, there are some major differences between them; although they both discuss the Eurocentric construct of 'Orient' and 'The Balkans', 'balkanism' does not involve imperial relations with the West, it has been not so widely represented in consequential scholarship and it has been perceived less the 'alien other' than as the 'outsider within' [Fleming 2000]. We might add 'outsider within' to the geographical and cultural idea of Europe as well. As it is, all these publications discuss the Eurocentric perspective as the one responsible for 'constructing' the Balkan myth. This approach has several problematic points: firstly, it is mostly concerned with a political engagement of the term and tends to neglect the other aspects of the Balkans as a cultural region. Secondly, although this perspective still positions the Balkans as a part of Europe, it often emphasizes the differences with the other parts (Central and Western Europe). Therefore, as Alexander Vezenkov argues, studying the Balkans as a region of Europe is misleading and should be questioned, but not by accentuating the differences with Central and Western Europe [Vezenkov 2009]. A simple acknowledging of the

15 Between European and Oriental, East and West, Byzantine and Ottoman

Balkans as part of a culturally diverse Europe will not contribute much to understanding this discourse. I would suggest that the source of problems in interpretation partly lies in the fact that perceptions of Europe as a cultural sphere and Europe as a continent overlap and are not distinguished enough one from another. Often, this results in some Balkan nations perceiving themselves or being perceived as European. If not perceived as such, the only alternative seems to be considering the Balkans in relation to 'Asia' or 'The Orient'. However, as Vezenkov stresses (and, so far, my own experience as a musician from the region confirms), the cultural sphere of the Balkans bears more similarities specifically to the region of Anatolia than to any concepts of 'European', 'Asian' or 'Oriental' culture. Specifically in Serbia, the influence of Turkish culture and traditional music is evident, especially bearing in mind that Serbia and its surrounding territories were under the control of the Ottoman Empire from the second half of the 14th century to the late 18th century [Pennanen 2008]. Due to the political situation in the region, which is widespread with religious tensions between Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Muslims, this fact is often overlooked by tendencies to present the Balkans as part of Europe. As Vezenkov puts it:

'The Ottoman period (roughly late 14th-19th centuries) is by far the most problematic for the retroactive "Europeanization" of the region. It is because, on the one hand, scholars from Balkan countries reject everything Turkish and Islamic, portray the Ottoman Empire in a negative way, present it as foreign "Asiatic" domination and blame it for the underdevelopment of the region, but at the same time they insist on studying the region enduring these centuries in an "all-European context". As a remedy, Balkan historians as well as many Western scholars tend to exaggerate the role of the Byzantine heritage and view everything as "post-Byzantine", while undermining the changes due to the Ottomans' [Vezenkov 2009:64].

As Risto P. Pennanen remarks, many musicologists of the 19th century were trying to base their interpretation of folk melodies according to the ancient Greek scales, so strong was the belief in the myth of Greece as a cradle of Western civilization and its uninterrupted music tradition from the ancient times till the present day. It is easy to establish the reason for such a behavior. In his words,

'After introduction of nationalism in the area during first half on 19th century ...the Ottoman political and cultural influence became a serious problem for the Western oriented members of the educated classes'. [Pennanen 2008: 127].

The educated classes, being the ones who write national history and preserve national memory, portrayed Turks only as ultimate 'villains' that oppressed the non-Muslim folk, thus retaining the clear boundaries between what is 'ours' and what is 'Turkish'. Pennanen observes that scholars were 'imagining' Turkish culture as static and unchangeable, yet, then as well as today, Turkey itself was far from being a homogenous society; it was multiethnic, and all these differences could be heard in the music of the time – the Levant and Eastern Anatolia being some of the regions with a characteristic folk music style. Actually, having multiethnic musical groups at the time was not unusual, like the Ferhad Ahmed's band that consisted of Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish and Macedonian musicians that were visiting Sarajevo in 1913.

This internalization of negative Western attitude towards Oriental traits can be easily tracked in the writings of some composers, like Biljana Milanović writes about Petar Konjović¹⁶:

'Suitably for the Balkan terrain, Konjović felt the need to separate folklore from other aspects of the Orient, first of all from those revealing an Ottoman heritage. In search for 'purity' cleansed of 'oriental deposits' that were for him 'clear signs of the degeneration of our folkloric motifs' [Milanović 2008: 21].

However, Konjović later wrote *Koštana*, an opera that is clearly inspired by South Serbian music – an area that inherited and retained some of the most typical melodic and rhythmic elements of Ottoman music culture, because Southern Serbia was the last one to be liberated from Ottoman rule (after 1878). The very conflict between ethnicities and religions also created the Balkans as they are today. As Inja Stanić states:

'The conflicting interests of Islam and Christianity - politically so catastrophic for the region - also created something valuable, which made possible the birth of a music unique in European history' [Stanić 1997].

So, where do we place the Balkans? It seems that considering the Balkans (culturally) as part of Europe, or an extension of the East, the Orient or Asia, will not

¹⁶ Petar Konjović (1883-1970), Serbian composer who lived and worked in the first half of the 20th century and became a prominent representative of a modernist approach to traditional music of Serbia.

answer the purpose completely, and not only because of the supposed 'stereotypes' developed in the West. These stereotypes were internalized and manipulated politically, often leading the scholars based in the region into complete denial of any Islamic influences, musical or any other. It would seem that the only course that will make it possible to establish the investigation of this particular cultural and geographical region, is to do it **without** trying to fit it within before mentioned contexts, and honestly **recognizing** the influence of Ottoman culture altogether with European wherever it is present – especially when it comes to music.

However, precisely this outcome is the one that is hard to achieve. Up till now, the term 'Balkan' itself has become so problematic that many simply do not use it, preferring to relate to the region as Southeastern Europe. An individual not so well acquainted with the region might easily think that these terms relate to different geographical areas. However, the question of terminology is far from being unimportant – it only shows how far this division in conceptions goes. Also, if we look closer into the recent political affairs of the region, it is easy to notice that this division is not the matter of purely academic concern - it strikes right into the center of all the current political struggles. Especially in the former Yugoslav territories, with people from these republics divided over the issue of their country becoming part of the European Union. Therefore, it is hard for researchers, especially ones that are based in the region to draw the line that separates cultural issues from politics, as in many cases that line is simply - nonexistent.

2.2 Ideologies and question of terminology: Balkans or Southeastern Europe?

The Balkans are never... 'the Balkans as such'. The meaning of the Balkans is multiple: it changes in relation to how a particular ideology articulates it' [Hatzopoulos 2008: 185]

What renders the Balkans so difficult to grasp and understand, are the problems that arise when we attempt to define or place them culturally, geographically and politically (in any order preferred)? [Šarić 2004: 389-407]. Since I am here primarily concerned with issues that relate to musical heritage and shaping an individual musical identity at a particular point in space/time, I will have to limit our general

inquiry to the and geographical placement of contemporary Balkan states and in particular, Serbia. My main perspective towards any sort of musical practice views it as a practice embedded in culture, and taken as such is naturally diverse, especially in the Balkans. As Jim Samson has observed,

‘Here many musics jostle for attention; they cross over in novel ways; their affiliation to political and social units is far from stable’ [Samson 2005:43].

Following the recent works of political history related to the Balkans, I am inclined to believe that the political struggles in the region in the past several decades can be partly illuminated from the angle of conflict between nationalist and non-nationalist ideologies. According to what Hatzopoulos has observed, communism, liberal internationalism, agrarianism, were the ideas that rejected the nationalist conception of the Balkans and strived to unify the region as a single political space, striving to transcend the regional nation-state based system [Hatzopoulos 2008:185].

The other perspective, represented by the authors such as Maria Todorova, is more concerned with the (mis)representation of the Balkans in the public view of the West, and how it has affected the past and current state of affairs in the region, including the self-perception of the Balkan people. By offering a framework that emphasizes cultural tensions in relation to the political climate, this perspective made it a bit easier to grasp the development of some of the tradition-inspired musical works.

From the Western perspective, since the 1990s nationalism has been almost the only realm to be acknowledged as essential for understanding the Balkans. One of the side effects of nationalist ideology was a regionalization and appropriation of folk music by each country, although, as Samson points out [Samson 2005], it might also be a byproduct of research into their folkloric heritage that communist East European countries encouraged after the Second World War. However, this tendency escalated during and after the war in the 1990’s, having individuals arguing about which instrument belongs to each nation, the most typical being *gusle*. During the same period there was a curious revival of this instrument’s performance practice, but quite devoid of the essential purpose it once had – to pass stories and songs about the history of the people. Instead, as Jasmina Milojević has observed, it became a tool

used to deliberately strengthen nationalistic sentiments and for political manipulation [Milojević 2009: 4]. The debate of whether the instrument originally belonged to Serbs or Croats shows clearly to what extent people were ready to twist the facts so they could fit into their agendas – not to mention that the *gusle*¹⁷ were played not just by Serbs and Croats, but also by Albanians [Milojević: 2009:4].

The Yugoslav wars in the 1990's and political turmoil heavily influenced the public view (particularly of the Western and European countries), and magnified the crisis allowing the terms such as 'Balkanism' to be created and used in a negative context without much hesitation. 'Balkanism' amongst others, became a synonym for conflict leading to disintegration of territories into smaller countries. As Andrew Hammond stresses, the Bosnian war in particular became the defining model for the Balkan Peninsula, despite the general peacefulness of other countries [Hammond: 2004]. As the nationalism has been officially acknowledged to be the main fuel used to maintain these aggressions, it was almost regarded it is an inherited tendency rather than result of political and religious tensions in the region. The problem of exaggerated misconceptions about the Balkans still has to be approached and dealt with today, especially as it influences almost every attempt to understand the cultural life of the region.

Taking all this into account, while searching for the title that could best describe my intentions with the principal composition *The Balkanites*, I realized that term *Balkanite* (Serbian: *Balkanac*) that has been used both outside and inside the region and mostly with the same (negative) meaning everywhere, could be perfect for describing my intentions with the piece. For me, 'Balkan' has neither positive nor negative connotation. Although my means as an artist to influence perception of the audience are limited, I wished to create a piece of music that could bring forward my own archetype of the Balkans – hopefully as complex and beautiful as I hear it in my mind. Following the thoughts of Maria Todorova on the subject, I agreed that the negative application of this word appeared to be a result of internalization of the Western conception about the region, sometimes going so far as to treat nationalism as being more of an inherited tendency, than a result of arguably artificially

17 Albanians call their *gusle lahuta*, and although the actual musical practice and structure of the rhyme in the poems/songs are different, the instrument itself is the same.

heightened political and religious tensions in the region. This, and simplistic interpretation of complex ethnic-religious issues (like the one portrayed in the 2011 movie *The Land of Milk and Honey* directed by Angelina Jolie) are making understanding these conflicts even harder. Also, the available writings on the temperament of the Balkan people (written almost entirely by travelers and writers that are *not* of Balkan origin¹⁸) reveal a general disposition of the authors to ignore urban centers and concentrate more on villages and peasant life and customs, as they were more 'authentic' or 'untainted'.

Nonetheless, the people's awareness of these preconceptions of the Balkans generated the term and use of *the Balkanite* as 'bad word' in the region itself. Especially in Serbia, it is a synonym for being primitive, bucolic, having a strong patriarchal upbringing and general intolerance for differences in sexual orientation, religion and culture, which often results in violence. These tendencies **can** and often are seen as synonymous with all forms of nationalism that are still present. As Jim Samson remarked:

'Nationalism is part of the history.....it also distorts the history, re-inventing the past in its own image and then freezing that past in ossified figures'
[Samson:2013:2].

This trend stands in opposition to 'the European' ideal, that represents the democratic and tolerant approach to ethnic, religious, social and cultural issues. From these considerations sprung the general notion of some of the non-musical purposes and interpretations that *The Balkanites* might acquire, as a piece that seeks to accomplish the completely opposite effect than the term it originated from usually brings. However, it is not an attempt to ignore the decades of Western influence and reestablish the long lost 'innocence' of the past; neither it is a random collection of musical fragments that happen to belong to the same region gathered in a forceful attempt to recreate an artificial imaginary state of unity. Utilization of the term in this particular case represents the fundamental search for creative personal voice, yet whose nature arises from a strong awareness of musical common ground that goes far beyond the single-minded national considerations that were the excuse for

18 E.g. West, Rebecca, intr. Geoff Dyer, (2006). *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia*. Edinburgh. The book is a good example of tendency to 'romanticize' the Balkans.

destructive conflicts in the region for so many years.

However, it would be an oversimplification to say that the main cause for the 1990s wars in the Yugoslavia that led to its disintegration was the lethal combination of previously suppressed and now reawakened nationalism that was bound with strict religious orientation. The political situation of the time heightened the conflict of interests between republics and enabled leaders like Slobodan Milošević to gain power [Djokić and Ker Lindsay 2011]. With the particular political climate of that period, multi-national and multi-confessional communities such as Bosnia and Herzegovina were the ones more easily manipulated into a conflict. In Serbia, the general perception of the Orthodox Christian religion as the only one remaining from the glorious past of fighting with the Ottoman Empire, served as the justification for identifying national identity with confession. As argued by Clark:

'This was mainly based on the projections of the past where the Serbian Orthodox Church, as the only surviving national institution during Ottoman occupation, became the "guardian of Serbian culture" and one of the main carriers of Serbian national identity' (Clark 2008:129).

The state of affairs today (2014) in Serbia still partly reflects Clark's statement. One of the most extreme alliances of nationalism and religion was a Serbian radical nationalist group known as *Obraz* (Cyrillic: *Отачаствени покрет Образ*) founded in 1994, and whose activities were forbidden since 2009 by the Serbian government. *Obraz*, literally translated means 'cheek', which corresponds to 'face' in English – to lose a 'cheek' holds the same meaning as losing the 'face', or 'honor' and for their members encompasses all the values of a 'good' Serb – taking pride in being an Orthodox Christian, consequently being actively against any individual or nation, religion, or behavior perceived as a threat to the values *Obraz* stands for. This group was often called *klerofašisti* (forged from kler/priesthood, fašizam/fascism) and managed successfully to stop many cultural, religious and artistic gatherings that were against their political/religious views (gatherings of ethnic and religious minorities and homosexuals in particular).

It is easy to claim that communism, as an ideology, was oppressive towards any sort of explicit expression of national or religious feeling in former Yugoslav society. But,

in practice, when we look into the music production of this era, it did not mean that ethnic music of any kind was suppressed, quite the contrary. As well as music genres imported from the West like rock and jazz, the popular folk music scene thrived. Rock actually was the music that defined and united Yugoslav youth, and some of the rock/punk bands like Ekatarina Velika (Catherine the Great) were listened everywhere and toured the entire country.

The war and hatred that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia were and still remain justification for any future cultural, religious and national antagonisms. Fortunately, there is a growing tendency among creative individuals and the intelligentsia of Serbia and other republics to start addressing these questions outside the political sphere and trying to find a way back to the cultural exchange that made living in the former Yugoslavia so worthwhile. This tendency is even stronger in Yugoslav diaspora, especially among the people that left the country at the dawn of the conflict and remember the country as it was before the war. There is a considerable amount of people who still consider themselves Yugoslavs; and, in many cases, this is not a political, but a cultural statement that ignores ethnical and religious differences in favor of cultural exchange that defined Yugoslavia and made it what it was.

Another consideration that I frequently encountered in contemporary academic research related to the region is the question of terminology – we find two terms in usage: 'The Balkans' and 'Southeastern Europe'. The term 'The Balkans' is officially used in Greece and Bulgaria, both countries having a long history of academic research and usage of the term. However, since the signing of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe in Cologne, Germany on June 1999, official institutions are reluctant to use the term 'Balkans'. As Hatzopoulos puts it,

'The Stability Pact could...potentially 'Europeanize the Balkans'
[Hatzopoulos 2008:156].

meaning that Europeanization and de-Balkanization are effectively becoming synonyms. If we look at the matter closely, it is not difficult to understand the reasons of this 're-branding' of the Balkans: academics supporting it are gaining fresh and clear space for research which is not heavily weighted with negative contexts that the

use of a particular term inevitably brings. That might be partially the reason why the former Yugoslav republics like Slovenia and Croatia, which have already joined the EU, do not apply the term to themselves, but always to the 'other' [Sarić 2004: 393]. Nevertheless, one of the main arguments in favor of the term 'Southeastern Europe' is that term 'Balkans' still is, and will stay connected to the past aggression and incessant conflicts. As Eugene Michail noted:

'Violence was the theme that dominated more than any other image of the Balkan' short historical time....This persistent focusing on the theme of violence underpins a sense of continuity that has often followed the image of the Balkans throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It also provides one of the key bases that underpin the analysis of Balkanism, that a negative 'frozen image' of the Balkans had been established by the end of the 1910's'. [Michail 2011: 79]

Also, the use of term 'Southeastern Europe' will re-position the Balkans as part of Europe, taking it away from the 'false' position of being between East and West. Yet, it is predominantly the Western perspective that creates research which has Western concepts and standards as a starting point, therefore often overlooking or distorting the real state of affairs. As Said puts it:

'The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing that orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work.' [Said 2006: 283]

Although Said's statements (particularly in the light of contemporary research) might sound extreme, nevertheless the pressures of various nature on the Balkan states to bend towards European social, economical and political standards in order to become accepted as part of Europe are real. Among scholars, this creates a particular attitude towards Europe which is not typical only for the Balkans. In Chakrabarty's words:

...a third-world historian is condemned to knowing 'Europe' as the original home of the 'modern', whereas the 'European' historian does not share a comparable predicament with regards to the pasts of the majority of humankind' [Chakrabarty 1992: 19]

Different countries developed different reactions to these perceptions: according to Maria Todorova, the Romanians do not use the term 'The Balkans' in relation to themselves, but rather choose 'Southeastern Europe'. The Greeks do not have a negative conception of the term, quite the opposite: the fact remains that, for several centuries, Greece was the centre towards which the whole Byzantine Peninsula gravitated, and consequentially held long-lasting and great supremacy over the cultural and religious life of the whole region (not to forget, Hellenic culture was present long before the settlement of the Slavic tribes in the Balkans). Actually, alongside Bulgaria [Todorova: 1997:54-57], Greece is probably the only state that has a history of accepting its positioning as a Balkan state. Both of these countries have centers for Studies of Balkan history, art and culture (*Institute for Balkan Studies* in Thessaloniki publishes the journal *Balkan Studies*). Turkey and Turkish scholars have a rather unique perspective towards the Balkans, since they gave the name to the region and, during the Ottoman period, they were in control of the whole area. The period of Ottoman rule and dominion of Turkish culture and tradition had a vast and long lasting influence on the region. The music of Bulgaria, a majority of former Yugoslav republics, Greece, Albania, all show the similarities which can not be denied – opening a huge field for comparative ethnomusicology.

Precisely this perspective is what makes use of the term 'The Balkans' in relation to my creative practice problematic. How does the Western public opinion on the Balkans influence the region itself and, in particular, Serbia? The travellers who initially came from the West did not have the contemporary anthropological concern of projecting their inherited concepts onto the alterity or 'otherness' of the Balkan people¹⁹. Concepts are not passive, and not restricted to the Western public through its reflection in the mass media; common people were (and still are) quite aware of the status and public opinion their countries hold in the West, and it irrevocably influenced their own perception of themselves. While being in Serbia, I realized that any perspectives that I had been exposed to were oriented towards either positive or negative response to 'Balkan' or 'European' values, whilst I felt that creative practice, although one small fragment is still an embodiment of culture and as such, should

19 A typical example of this is Rebecca West's book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*. Her attitude towards the traits of people, customs and events she describes (no matter is it glorifying or condemning them) gives at least as much information of her own perception and cultural habits as of the people she describes.

have the space for developing its own values. Yet, in the given circumstances, especially in Serbia, the aesthetic impact of the work influenced by music tradition gives way to categorizing that is inherently political in nature. Composing music with prominent folkloric elements is usually associated with inclination towards nationalistic political option, disregarding how much the work itself has to do with actual Serbian tradition.

Also, the fact is that cultural boundaries of the countries rarely completely match the geographical ones. If we only look into the famous example of the 'wandering' melody that has at least five known versions, some of them being: *Aj ruse kose* (Serbian: Ah, that blond hair/DVD content/Song examples/track1) *Üsküdar'a gider iken* (Turkish: On the way to Üsküdar/DVD content/Song examples/track 2) *Από ξένο τόπο* (Greek: From a distant foreign land/DVD content/Song examples/track 3). This shows that there are tunes that travelled throughout all countries in the Balkans²⁰. The lyrics are often completely unrelated. Recently I heard a recording from Syria of the same melody, where it is a Qasida²¹ (DVD content/Song examples/track 4), a form of a religious poetry. This, for example, might be taken as an indication that melody originated outside the Balkan region.

Just listening to different versions of this same song and the subtle differences that despite everything, leave the recognition of the melody unmistakable, urged me to try and understand how and why the perceptions of the Balkans I was exposed to during this research differ from my own experience – as far as music is in question at least. The fact that this song has so many versions and is known everywhere hints something about its structure, scale, melodic and rhythmic changes that appeals to all equally. I am inclined to think of it as a particular cognitive pattern that is embedded in the musical heritage of the region, a part of its musical archetype – and that is precisely what I was trying to reach for in this study.

20 For a comprehensive introduction to this song and how people see it, there is Adela Peeva's documentary about it, *Čija je ovo pesma?* (Whose is this song?)

21 The qasīda (also spelled qaṣīda; in Arabic: قصيدة, plural qasā'id, قصائد; in Persian: قصیده or چکامه, chakameh, in Turkish: kaside), is a form of lyric poetry that originated in pre-Islamic Arabia.

2.3 Fusion of 'East' and 'West':

Serbian music from a historical perspective

What we understand as music tradition is, among other things, a result of a historical development of the region or specific country. For example, being strongly inclined (as an Orthodox Christian country) towards the Byzantine commonwealth led Serbian music into its own characteristic transition, where the slow development that took medieval music towards romanticism did not happen in the same way as in the West [Marinković 2007]. In the 19th-century Serbia, this transition was a natural consequence of the migrating musicians bringing their experiences back to the country, after learning classical music in West European centers. The fusion of these influences with local music tradition was inevitable. The first generations of classically trained composers emerged in Serbia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and, whilst some were self-taught, the majority were educated composers trained at European cities²². This fusion is most evident in the period that is commonly classed as romanticism in Serbian musicology [Marinković 2007]. The way some of these authors fused European musical styles with Serbian musical heritage became the foundation of what is today generally considered a national style in composition, among them Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856-1914), Isidor Bajić (1878-1915), Stanislav Binički (1872-1942), Petar Konjović (1883-1970), Miloje Milojević (1884-1946) and Josip Slavenski (1896-1955) [Tomašević 2005].

Orchestral music in Serbia was initiated by a Czech musician Joseph Schlesinger, who came to Serbia originally as a music teacher and then was invited by Prince Miloš who, in 1831, decided that Serbian army needed to establish the first orchestra with professional musicians, the 'Prince's Band'. Schlesinger wrote music based on Serbian folk songs and conducted the first orchestral performance in January 1842 [Andreis, Cvetko, Klajn 1962].

Around the same time the first choral societies (like Belgrade's First Singing Society, founded 1853) started to organize [Petrović 2004]. However, although the Belgrade's First Singing Society occasionally provided music education, it was far from enough for a thriving community of city folk with the fast growing interest in Western music.

²² Prague, Leipzig, Budapest, Rome, Paris

Music education as we know it today was finally introduced and developed by Stevan Mokranjac, Stanislav Binički and Cvetko Manojlović. In 1899, they founded the first Serbian music school that educated generations of professional musicians, thus establishing a standard of music education which was later built upon [Klajn 1956].

Serbian language was not used in compositions until Kornelije Stanković²³ began to write for choirs [Peričić: 1969]. The work of Stanković is important because he was the first Serbian composer to receive Conservatory education. He was also sponsored by the church to write down church oral practice [Stefanović 1985].

Among Serbian classical composers influenced by traditional music, one must single out Stevan Mokranjac²⁴, one of the most distinguished composers born in the second half of the 19th century [Mosusova 2001]. His work was essential as a foundation for a national movement in music, as he collected, recorded and transcribed many of the previously unwritten Serbian folk songs and used them in his compositions. This practice continued throughout the 20th century and became the basis of contemporary ethnomusicology in Serbia. His work was also highly influenced by church melodies that he often utilized as a basis for his work. Among his most acclaimed and performed pieces are the fifteen *Rukoveti* (literally: 'handfuls' or 'garlands') - a collection of songs and music based on oral traditions from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Metohija, Macedonia and Bulgaria. He did not venture far away from the original tunes: however, they were harmonically interpreted in the minor/major tonal system, and a structure of his choral pieces often corresponded to the Western oriented works sung by choirs at the time.

The fact that these melodies were not only recorded, but performed in different arrangements and on occasions completely different from the ones they were originally conceived in and usually sung, marked the beginning of an end of the 'pure' oral tradition in Serbia. Tradition was still passed orally from one person to the other in the villages: but, the growing 'city' culture in time became stronger and overwhelming, until the advent of radio technology in the 20th century almost completely obliterated traditional ways of passing music from person to person and from generation to generation.

23 Kornelije Stanković (1831–1865) was a Serbian composer, best known for his work with folk and church melodies that he himself collected and harmonised for a cappella performance.

24 Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856–1914) Serbian composer whose entire opus was highly influenced by church and folk songs.

Mokranjac's a cappella opus has been a great influence on the works of composers coming after him, and not just in Serbia. They were and still are often performed in Bulgaria, a neighboring country that cherishes a strong tradition of a cappella performance. My own interest in choral music developed from an early age, having sung in the church choir that often performed Mokranjac's works. Later on, listening to arrangements of Bulgarian traditional tunes brought by '*La Mystere de Voix Bulgares*'²⁵ beautifully arranged by some of the most distinguished Bulgarian composers such as Philip Koutev, I developed a fascination with this particular a cappella style. Among other influences on my music that relate to traditional music, this was one of the strongest.

The next generation of composers that turned towards traditional music as a source of inspiration were the modernists. There are several ways to categorize composers of the Serbian modernist movement. The one I have adopted is Melita Milin's argument on the four stages in Serbian musical modernism [Milin 2006]. As this work is not primarily concerned with Serbian modernism, I will only be giving a short summary according to Milin's periodization, insofar as it relates to this research [Milin 2006:103].

The elements of Impressionism and Expressionism under Germanic influence mark the first stage of Serbian modernism (1908-1945). These influences could be registered in the works of several leading composers of the first half of the 20th century (Petar Konjović, Stevan Hristić, Miloje Milojević, Josip Slavenski, Marko Tajčević).

The second stage (1929 -1945) was marked by a group of composers who all studied in Prague and applied certain progressive compositional techniques such as free tonality, atonality, dodecaphony, micro tonality and athematicism: among them Mihovil Logar, Predrag Milošević, Dragutin Čolić, Ljubica Marić, Vojislav Vučković, Milan Ristić [Veselinović - Hofman and Milin 2010]. All of these techniques enabled these authors to relate to the region's musical heritage in their own particular way. This was especially true of Ljubica Marić²⁶, who was the first one to use Byzantine church music [Despić and Milin 2010] in her secular works (*Музика Октоуха* : Music

25 <http://themysteryofthebulgarianvoices.com/>

26 <http://www.ljubicamaric.com>

of the Octoechos), while reaching for an original musical language of her own. I was particularly intrigued by her composition *Песме простора* (Songs of space), a cantata for mixed choir and symphony orchestra (1956). The treatment of vocal parts deeply resonates with the Byzantine and medieval heritage, rich in modal melodies and Marić's characteristic harmonic choices that complement them. Having said this, Marić, however, was not interested in 'national' expression in particular - it was more of an exploration of a poetic approach to 'archaic' in music [Milin 2006: 112].

The third stage (1951–1970) is marked by a renewed interest in Western modernist art dating from before the Second World War. It fully introduced and developed the contemporary avant-garde approach, the beginnings of which can be traced back to the works of the previous generation of composers such as Milan Ristić, Dušan Radić, Dejan Despić, Vladan Radovanović, Enriko Josif, Stanojlo Rajičić, Vasilije Mokranjac, Aleksandar Obradović, Ljubica Marić, Rajko Maksimović). All of these composers were born in 1920s and 1930s and all of them were educated in Belgrade after the Second World War.

The fourth stage (1956–1980) was the period during which the post-World War II avant-garde developments found their home amongst Serbian composers. Some of them conceived almost simultaneously with, but independent of, the current progressive development in the rest of the world (Vladan Radovanović, Aleksandar Obradović, Petar Ozgijan, Petar Bergamo, Srdjan Hofman).

The first Serbian modernist composers that allowed the influence of the tradition and folk heritage in their works were Petar Konjović, Miloje Milojević and Stevan Hristić, all born at the end of the 19th century. Although they were instrumental in establishing the aforementioned national movement, they were at the same time experimenting and migrating further from Romanticism towards Impressionism. The most prominent composers from the beginning of 20th century studied in Europe, mostly in Prague. Ljubica Marić, Stanojlo Rajičić, Milan Ristić took influence from Schoenberg, Hindemith and Haba, while judging the 'conservative' approach of prior Serbian composers as too dated. The desire to consciously explore and widen the national expression was outside their interest, at least during their Prague days. A peculiar case is that of Josip Štolcer Slavenski (1896-1955) whose work was highly influenced by the folkloric heritage of the region. He also had a strong interest in

Eastern musical traditions, and supported the rebirth of Balkan traditional music through contemporary artistic expression, while being strongly opposed to the unchallenged acceptance of all influence from the West. [Živković 2006] Instead of focusing on a single national heritage²⁷, he was one of the composers whose music ideas were embracing the whole of the Balkans while also acknowledging interest in some of the Eastern cultures. This might have been the result of having spent a considerable portion of his life in an old Yugoslavia, with a political system which (at the time) was not based on national divisions, but on the ideology and practice of Yugoslavism²⁸ [Djokić and Ker-Lindsay 2011].

Many of the aforementioned composers taught at The Faculty of Music in Belgrade. The history of The Faculty of Music²⁹ in Belgrade, from its founding to the present day, also reflects this tension between different values and aesthetics of 'national' and 'modernist' movements [Medić 2007: 283-285]. Yet, the ways in which folk music transformed in the modern era thanks to the advent of technology is what had the real impact on the lives of people, especially the arrival of highly influential music genres from the West, such as pop, rock and jazz which changed the perception of folk music forever. In Serbia and some surrounding countries, it resulted in the appearance of the genre popularly known as 'turbo-folk', which is ordinarily connected with the 1990's post-war political and cultural climate, while being widely popular in all former Yugoslav republics [Gordy 1999].

All of the aforementioned authors highly influenced the music of their era both as composers and music educators, and were also responsive to the current political and cultural climate. However, I am here concerned with the one particular change that was brought about by these educated musicians.

There are several long-lasting consequences of their work and ideas that gradually changed the way public (mostly living in urban communities) perceived 'traditional' music. Some of the more significant changes that the Western music education of

27 That is easy to notice, even just from looking at the titles of his compositions, like 'Symphony of the Orient', and 'Balkanophonia'.

28 Yugoslavism, as an idea and political concept refers to union of all the territories populated by South Slavs which includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M), Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.

29 Until 1973 it was called Belgrade Music Academy.

Serbian composers brought to the practice and perception of oral tradition from the region were:

1) The arrival of notation which made preservation of the tunes possible, but also, through rearrangements of melodies for non-traditional and well-tempered instruments, set in motion their gradual removal from their original context. It also facilitated the practice of 'composing in the spirit of' traditional tunes. Sometimes some of the more popular of these works became reabsorbed into the oral tradition, their identity becoming increasingly divorced from the original author. These changes were predominant in North Serbia (Vojvodina) where the majority of the educated elite were centred (Vojvodina was a part of Austro-Hungary until 1918 which explains the constant influence of Austro-Hungarian culture).

2) The practice of major/minor harmonisation of traditional melodies, originally mostly sung a cappella, or accompanied in unison with an instrument.

3) Exposure to Western musical standards and cultural values and their gradual internalisation as one of the consequences of the notation and musical practices relating to it. Another consequence was a changed perspective and (re) evaluation of traditional music, from the new standpoint of 'high' culture coming from the West. In urban environments the tradition became accepted only by being 'filtered' through the standard of the well-tempered pitch system, which became a new aesthetic ideal.

4) The growing division between rural and urban music accentuated by the changes brought by this re-orientation of urban centres to Western culture, especially in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

5) The advent of sound recording and broadcasting technology, with Radio Belgrade (founded in 1924) as an institution that shaped Serbian cultural milieu most decisively [Dumnić 2013; Vesić 2013].

These are some of the historical changes that formed contemporary classical music education and contemporary music of the present day Serbia in general, as well as surrounding former Yugoslav republics. Without the detailed examination, it is evident how much individual musicians and composers could influence the music life of their time, and public perception of the music of their time. Yet, the advent of technology

that enabled the listening and recording of sound changed this relatively straightforward balance between the 'composed' and 'traditional' music forever in so many ways that are still hard to name or classify them all, especially in the present day - where the fast flow of information due to digital technology creates and dissolves cultural and musical trends in incredible speed.

In order to discuss 'Balkan' or 'Serbian' music in particular, it is necessary to examine in more detail how these regions (taken as cultural spheres) are perceived today, not forgetting their political and geographical positioning. The 'imaginary' Balkan of both 'East' and West' does not inhabit just the political sphere, it is reflected through all layers of social life, including artistic production. Serbian and other traditional music of the Balkans have recognizable musical identities of their own, however almost indistinguishable from one another at the borders of each country. The fact remains, that this heritage, however, does not bear many similarities to Western European classical tradition. Balkan (and Serbian in particular) might be a region geographically inextricable of Europe, yet it is culturally constructed as 'the other,' addressed and perceived as such precisely as a result of Eurocentric perspectives.

2.4 Serbian musical identity and European context

It is impossible to give attention to all the countries of the region and their dealings with Western influence, so as the example best known to me I will mention the developments in Serbia, which are fairly conclusive and bear plenty of similarities to the countries of former Yugoslavia. As Tatjana Marković observed, there are two ways in which positioning authentic national musical culture in Serbia (and the Balkans) has been assumed as referring to Western or Central European contexts: firstly, relations to Western Europe are interpreted as a proof of Europeanization; secondly, there is a negative opinion supported by the belief that this process is likely to suppress national identity, and possibly damage the preservation of cultural authenticity [Marković 2009]. This is the key moment and important to single out, as it is in many ways still a paradigm of perception of the Western influence in the region. 'Europeanization' brought the values of 'high' culture which, applied to this particular social environment, empowered the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' (taken as a synonym to 'cultural', 'of higher value'). In terms of music, the introduction and use

of music notation quickly distinguished the musicians educated in the West from folk musicians, and brought them to a new level, mostly associated with the social and cultural life of the 19th century city. Under the influence of foreign education, their perception and evaluation of national music changed. For example, as Marković points out, among musicologists, the first national opera is usually taken as a landmark for ascending to the 'higher' level of culture, indirectly laying down the parameters according to which national culture 'should' be valued [Marković 2009].

Composers and musicians of the second half of the 19th century that were educated in the West adopted these values through their training, and were the first ones attempting to establish the similar institutions for music education in the region. Aside from instrumental lessons, notation and music history and theory (including classical harmony and counterpoint) were just some among the subjects taught.

However, since the political situation in the Balkans changed in the late 1980s (Yugoslavia's disintegration), the forced quest for a new identity in changing circumstances induced a reinterpretation not just of national history, but also the other aspects of self-representation. Evidently, musical life and education were strongly influenced by these events. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, two trends were clearly present: on the one hand, a tendency for a wider contextualization with the rest of Europe; on the other, the stressing of specific national differences even within the same region.

It is not a surprise to discover that, in the 19th-century Europe, alongside with the growing consciousness of one's national cultural treasure, educated people were becoming aware of important and active part of the heritage that constituted the national feeling: *traditional songs* and *poetry*. The awakening of this feeling in Serbia and surrounding countries happened alongside the period usually termed as romanticism in Western music, roughly the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, the contemporary of Jacob Grimm, was the one that reformed Serbian language and created Serbian alphabet (published in Vienna 1827). Up till then Russian Cyrillic alphabet was used.

The first original poetry written using the new alphabet was in the romanticist-lyrical style, but strongly referring to oral tradition and trying to preserve its formulae and metrical patterns [Petković 1980: 183] Through the poems of Branko Radičević, Petar Petrović Njegoš and others, the new, the reformed Serbian language was slowly established and gained its acceptance and use with the wider public. These poets used *deseterac*, (decasyllable, *deset* means ten), the traditional ten syllable poetic meter characteristic for Southern Slavic epic poetry³⁰. All these poets read and cherished the national poetry, originally collected and published by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić³¹. He is the first one to start collecting epic songs, fairy tales and songs, previously left to the collective memory of oral tradition.

Alongside poets, and following Karadžić's pioneering collection of Serbian folk tunes (with added notation) published in Hungary, composers were collecting and notating traditional tunes themselves, and, to enable the city folk to perform them, they started writing simple arrangements mostly for piano and voice, or piano and violin. These arrangements became hugely popular among the city people, especially as many of them were musically educated. Following the common practice of socializing in the 19th century, traders and clerks organized social gatherings at their homes, and singing or playing was an important part of it. These works were not considered of the high cultural value, as 'high' musical culture was synonymous with Western European musical conventions and harmonic rules of the time, but, as composers fused those with oral tradition the new style started to emerge, bearing the characteristics of both cultures. One of the first to do this was a Serbian composer Kornelije Stanković. He was among the first to apply simple diatonic harmony to traditional melodies, simple enough for the common people to perceive them as part of preserved tradition, unharmed by over complicated manipulation. This restraining harmonic simplicity however, although it did not enable the style to develop, brought out the typical harmonic formulae of the traditional tunes. As they were almost always accompanied with the same harmonic combination, the typical 'code' was developed – the folk tunes were ending mostly on the second note of the scale, which was

30 Decasyllable (Serbian cyrillic: десетерац) was a commonly used meter in epic poetry of the Southern Slavs (for example Serbian epic poetry accompanied the *gusle* instrument).

31 Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (Serbian Cyrillic: Вук Стефановић Караџић; 1787–1864) was a Serbian philologist and linguist, the major reformer of the Serbian language. He was the first collector of Serbian fairy tales and folklore. He was the author of the first Serbian dictionary.

interpreted harmonically as the fifth of the dominant chord, so the typical 'cadence' would be (in C major) D major7 – G major (i.e. # 7 - V). This cadence became the recognizable mark of folk tunes or pieces written in folk manner.

Under the influence of writers, literary critics, and philosophers, composers and musicians accepted and propagated the idea of creating 'national' high culture, by finding their inspiration in folklore. This was one of the ways to identify and express national feeling, and it naturally followed and imitated European national movements. National heritage became something to be appreciated and acknowledged as equal to European, and arrangements of traditional tunes became the common way to educate people and make them conscious of their own tradition, bringing the appreciation of it to a whole new level.

The first slightly more complicated musical forms that emerged and went beyond single musical pieces were in the form of cycles of songs, already mentioned 'garlands'. At first, they be just arrangements of songs put together in random order, but composers (like Mokranjac) soon started connecting them in a way that will give us enough arguments to call them compositions, especially his orchestral suites – as there will be the story behind the order, and many of the songs will be actually composed in the 'manner' of folk tunes.

Composers would often mix different parts of the songs in order to maintain the cycle as the higher form, and will also try to achieve the thematic unity by placing repetition of the first song(s) at the end, often slightly differently arranged. Songs themselves usually retained the simple three or two part structure (*a b a* or *a b a b*) and homophonic treatment of melody was common, for the sake of retaining the authenticity of the original tune (this general idea of 'cyclic' structure of pieces I applied in *The Balkanites*, with using the same material for the beginning and the end of the piece and having recursing, although differently treated, sonic material). Writing music in the folkloric style on the lyrics of the popular poets was also largely accepted, and these compositions especially helped to establish the foundation of the 'new urban' oral tradition of the cities. However, as time passed, this difference between old-style folk music of the province and 'new' (European influenced) composed folk music of the cities grew wider, becoming one of the most

distinguished marks of the division that, since then, has never ceased to exist. Today, it's the gap between purely 'urban' (i.e. Western) music styles of rock, pop, jazz, classical, and the so-called 'turbo-folk' scene which mixes quasi-traditional tunes with rhythms and production of pop and dance music.

Among the composers who at some point in their careers took their inspiration from oral tradition is also Josip Slavenski; one of the composers at the beginning of 20th century who freely related to Balkan folkloric heritage and beyond, both creatively in the music he wrote and in his public statements. In her work about the relationship Serbian composers had with Balkan music heritage, Biljana Milanović overviews Konjović's, Milojević's and Slavenski's attitudes towards tradition, discussing the ways all of them internalized the Western images and values and projected them in their work [Milanović 2008]. The first two were conscious of the 'negative' Western perspective on the Balkans:

"a man with a knife in his teeth"....something wild, tactless and uncultivated, disproportionate"³².

As Milanović suggests, this was Milojević's opinion of the music of Slavenski, as he believed that his music enhanced the 'negative' elements in the Balkan stereotype. Actually, composers Petar Konjović, Miloje Milojević and Kosta Manojlović believed in the necessity of cleansing ethnic music from all oriental elements as these influences were 'un-national' [Dvorniković 1939].

However, Slavenski had a different perspective. In his writings, he used the metaphor of the Balkans 'uncultivated' élan vital to criticize Western European bourgeois aesthetics and the feedback mechanisms of provincial narrow-mindedness that created an image of cultural inferiority in the region' [Milanović 2008: 23]. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofrman's centre-margin paradigm is applicable to this situation and may certainly illuminate the similar situation today:

32 Miloje Milojević, Review of the Belgrade philharmonic orchestra interpretation of *Four Balkan Dances* by Josip Slavenski, *Politika*, 06/05/1938.

'Countries in other geographic areasbuilt their professionalism...by overcoming their compositional, and generally musical, amateurism through mastering that knowledge which the West acquired during the historical development of music and promoted into the vocational standard and content of musical education. In that respect, the West was reputed as the multiple musical authority and centre almost since the beginning of the history of professional European music, and everything whose quality was measured by the extent of accepting the knowledge and criteria of West European music – filled the 'white space' of its margins' [Veselinović-Hofman 2011: 31]

Slavenski was the first to criticize the West and refused to take for granted the Western perspective to life (and art) as necessarily better. His compositions were a reflection of what he believed: that Balkan music possesses the freshness, strength and vitality of a primitive, untouched world – and also that it has the potential to bring rebirth and to revitalise Western traditions [Milin 2005]. Although he is generally considered to belong to the first period of Serbian modernists, his works are different and more expressionistic than of his older contemporaries (Petar Konjović, Miloje Milojević, Stevan Hristić) and he was evidently strongly influenced by works of Béla Bartók and Stravinsky. To describe his stylistic orientation in short, his modernist approach manifested through bitonality, sometimes atonality, and polyrhythm [Milin:2006:108] which all opened different possibilities for reinterpreting folk music within the sphere of contemporary composition. Also utilisation of drones, ostinatos and an un-tempered tonal system, which are all typical for the music of the region, were not rare in his works. His way of reinterpreting music tradition was unique, and so was his interest in representing musically the variety of religious groups which were (apart from Buddhists) almost all present in the region. The *Symphony of the Orient*' (known also as *Religiophonia*) is a good example of this (DVD content/Song examples/track 6).

2.5 Towards ethnomusicology³³ of the Balkans

'Conditions in which ethnomusicologies in developing countries operate are, as a rule, rather limited, and so are locale specific research endeavors, which in any sense should not ultimately limit their magnitude of areal research' [Lajić–Mihajlović 2012: 80].

The coexistence and cross-fertilization of peoples in the Eastern European areas may themselves be responsible for the incredibly rich and varied body of folklore [Stanić 1997]. Melodies and rhythms are migrating from one country to the other, and its customary for people to listen the traditional music of surrounding countries and to put lyrics of their own language to the 'borrowed' melody. Next to the famous example of this practice I already mentioned (*Chia e tazi pesen? / Whose is this song?*), here is another song illustrating the case of political and national considerations making all the difference in perspective: Macedonian / Bulgarian song *Makedonsko devojče* (DVD content/Song examples/ track 5). Unlike the previous case, the lyrics and the melody are the same, but here the problem is the fact that Bulgarians do not accept Macedonian people as a nation; they still regard Macedonia as region in Bulgaria rather than an independent state (it is not acknowledged by Greece either, and because of that this former Yugoslav republic is recognized by F.Y.R.O.M³⁴ instead of Macedonia).

After years of performing music that was influenced by music traditions of Serbia and the surrounding countries, I have become acquainted with the similarities among the musical heritages of different states considered to be a part of the Balkans. When it comes to music and cultural heritage, the boundaries are not that easy to establish. Having performed at several festivals throughout the region, this became apparent, as well as the fact how often the common public is unaware of these similarities. As an outsider writing about the music in the Balkans, Jim Samson also noticed this:

'...insiders, whose knowledge of their own musical traditions might be comprehensible...often know surprisingly little about the music of their immediate neighbors' [Samson 2013: 1].

33 The term coined by Izaly I. Zemtsovsky, Russian born ethnomusicologist and composer.

34 Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, name accepted by the U.N

This is not surprising, and especially considering the vastness of the region not many had dared to attempt comparative research³⁵. Comparative ethnomusicological findings and works are too scarce, in comparison to the vast amount of research (usually not even translated or published in other languages) being done in relation to each country's music heritage. If we take only former Yugoslavia as an example (although mostly there is no language barrier and scholars can read the works written in different dialects), the fact is that the 1990s wars in many cases completely severed the connection between researchers from different republics, as it was simply not safe to travel for the sake of conferences and field research. This situation has improved in recent years as far as former Yugoslavia is concerned, however the state of comparative research regarding other countries has remained the same.

If we look into the music performances that relate to Balkan music as a separate genre, one observes the existence of various festivals that focus on Balkan music, and not only in the region itself, but also in Germany, Italy, France – almost all the countries of the European Union have at least one festival that promotes ensembles playing 'Balkan' music. According to my experience as performer, these festivals and the profile of performances they feature show clearly what is Balkan music considered to be in popular culture today. The most successful musical 'product' of the region are the Romani, i.e. 'Gypsy' bands (e.g. the brass ensembles) whose music, infused with pop and other popular genres often bears little resemblance to a particular heritage of any country of the region. The best known examples of these are: Fanfare Ciocărlia³⁶ (Romania), Boban Marković Orchestra³⁷ (Serbia), Taraf de Haïdouks³⁸ (Romania) as well as Goran Bregović³⁹, an author and singer from Sarajevo that has been successfully promoting his own mixture of Balkan folk and Gypsy music traditions for years. It is a fact that, because of his popularity and image of the ambassador of the Balkan music, his work is usually associated with the Balkan and, although predominantly derivative in nature, commonly perceived as authentic [Dumnić 2012: 348]. Dumnić's description of Bregović's work sums up exceptionally well what audience expects from performance that includes 'Balkan' in

35 At present, the only book that attempted synthesis is Jim Samson's *Music in the Balkans* [Samson 2013].

36 <http://www.asphalt-tango.de/fanfare/artist.html> accessed 01/08/2014

37 <http://www.bobanimarko.com> accessed 01/08/2014

38 <http://tarafdehaidouks.launchrock.com> accessed 01/08/2014

39 <http://www.goranbregovic.rs/> accessed 01/08/2014

its promotional package:

'In his compositions, Bregović made an effort to present the Balkans as a place of passion and entertainment. For that purpose, he used elements of local folklore (first of all trumpets, 'es-tam' rhythm, and female singing of the Central Balkans) in fusion with Western popular music' [Dumnić 2012: 350].

This perception of Balkan music forced me, both as composer and a performer, to face the question of authenticity numerous times – often because of the pressure to make the appropriate choice of festival or venue to perform at. In this research however, it is addressed as part of an attempt to outline a particular musical identity of an author as reflected through diverse cultural contexts in which the works are placed and as such, I believe, requires a different approach. Establishing Balkan ethnomusicology as a separate discipline might help scholars to engage more with these and many other issues with which researchers (myself included) usually have to deal single-handedly: (1) Producing more research that focuses on comparative ethnomusicology with an interdisciplinary approach, thus enabling scholars to share their interests and methodology; (2) Translation of a vast amount of existing works that focuses primarily on local traditional music, thus rendering it accessible to scholars who do not speak any of the languages but are interested in the subject; (3) Establishing online 'music library' of the region that can be contributed to.

All this would help scholars (especially the ones from the region itself) to create a research space that goes beyond national borders, and enable researchers to freely discuss the differences and similarities in music heritage. It would have helped me enormously with understanding the diversity of the Balkan traditions if this platform existed, not to mention the access to wealth of musical information. As Olga Pashina recommends, one of the ways to approach this would be through area studies in ethnomusicology, and focusing on (1) defining the borders of dissemination of the specific folk phenomena; (2) revealing the regularities and the dynamics of their geographical distribution;(3) and proposing a historic-cultural interpretation of the results obtained [Pashina 2012: 88].

The political struggles and wars that gave birth to the term 'Balkanism' created the climate which tends to neglect the cultural aspect of life in the Balkans, and the potential its culture (and music in particular) has for communication and development of appreciation and respect between the countries. Every single country has abundance of existing ethnomusicological research as well as field recordings that with passage of time grow more and more valuable. I hope that my work with traditional music will help bring the cultural aspect of the region more into focus of interest and offer an alternative to the usual perception of the music of the Balkans.

Chapter III

Oral tradition

I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality'. It is 'primary' by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print. [Ong 1982: 11]

3.1 Primary orality

As Lawson has remarked, there is a certain irony of discussing the orality through technology of literacy, but it is inevitable [Lawson 2010]. Oral tradition before literacy and technology was, and still is, a reflection of the unique human need to preserve important and valuable facts and skills, from different sorts of craftsmanship to historical and other information important for the survival and identity of the people. It served to aid collective memory and give entertainment, especially during the work, festivities or hours of rest. Since there were no ways to record the information, folk tales, history and songs were passed word of mouth from generation to generation. In Serbia and surrounding countries they were often sung by skilled *guslars*, performers of epic poetry. Matija Murko draws a comparison with the modern world in regard to the functionality of these activities, observing that 'national epic poetry was and is – for the nobility, the middle class, and peasantry – what concerts, theatres, and other amusements are for us'. In Dalmatia a peasant told him this:

'You people in the city, you have your music, and we have our songs' [Murko 1990:116].

Even later on, when the distinction between urban and rural areas became more noticeable, epic poetry bards were still the ones to maintain the tradition and give the people pride in their history and heritage.

In the territory of former Yugoslavia, people who became *guslars* and were singing these songs came from a variety of professions, and the vast majority of them were male, in accordance with the strict patriarchal ideas of propriety. However, females

were not forbidden to learn, only to perform in public: Matija Murko noticed that women knew how to recite the poetry but they didn't know how to sing it [1990: 115] . However, only males were trained, and from the early age.

This tradition had an important impact on the preservation of tales, but as a composer I became interested in the sonic and musical qualities of the *guslar's* performance: the rhythm of the decasyllable, the improvisation within the limitations of a given structure, the minimalistic choice of notes combining into a melody with mantra-like qualities. I'm inclined to believe that the musical elements of the *guslar's* song were functioning as mnemonic help, making it easier to memorize and recall phrases when fitted into the rhythmical structure of decasyllable. During her research conducted on *guslar's* musical memory, Danka Lajić-Mihajlović observed that the *guslars* who store a larger number of melodic patterns are able to memorize new melodic content with more ease, as well as noticing that:

'...in the course of formation of mental representations, *guslar's* in their memorisation strategies combine auditory and tactile (kinesthetic, motoric, and muscularly) memorization [Lajić-Mihajlović 2012: 78].

In Serbia, epic poems are taught in schools – they are the standard literature of Serbian language in primary and secondary education and quite a challenge to learn by heart. It was obviously impossible to learn them as *guslars* did, and yet, it was not until this research took place, that I had realized how unaware I was of the actual 'event' and significance of a *guslar's* performance [Bohlman and Petković 2011]. The difference is as big as being present and listening to a *guslar* whose performance has a direct social and political value in the community that is gathered to listen as opposed to just reciting or reading words of paper. What was taught to us in schools was actually just one version, usually the first one ever written down (by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić). Obviously, that is not the way *guslars* would perform the song, since there were no absolute versions to adhere to and they were allowed to improvise – one more example of the distortion literacy brings to the perception of oral tradition.

In his compilation of short essays on Serbian ethnomusicology Dimitrije O. Golemović points out several interesting traits of traditional songs. One of them is the

unity of poetic and melodic elements [Golemović 1997: 5]. He witnessed singers being surprised when asked to separate them, reflecting on the fact the word for 'lyrics' actually does not exist. It's simply *pesma* – the song. This is one of the main reasons for choosing voice as a main bearer of musical activity in *The Balkanites* – the fact that the lyrics and melody could be freely improvised in attempt to depict a certain emotional state or create an ambiguous situation for myself as a composer, offered more than one possible direction from a given situation in the piece.

Of course, this is not the absolute rule among the singers Golemović interviewed, but it does reflect the predominant attitude among them. Second, what we consider a song today and in the time before the arrival of technology significantly differs. The song had a functional role in rural society, people were singing when looking after sheep or tending the crops. There were also ritual songs and all of these were split between the sexes – certain songs were forbidden for women, and yet some reserved exclusively for them (like lament, *tužbalice*, an improvisational form of singing that is performed by women on funerals expressing the pain and loss of the family and friends and numbering the qualities of the deceased). Each lament required preparation, and a woman that knew the deceased and was either an acquaintance or a part of a family circle usually did it. What is interesting is that the songs had a predetermined social function, and rarely could be heard without the occasion that demanded it. Some villagers believed that it brings misfortune to sing a song, especially ritual ones without a real demand (some of them were highly specialized, like the ones that were calling for rain). This is to be expected, as ritual singing has often been syncretic by nature and was performed alongside dance and ritual acting. However, over time, and following the social changes and technological advancement, these songs begun to disappear from social practice and gradually lost their original social and religious role.

As Golemović stresses, the nature of traditional forms of singing was changing slowly, and not in a great measure [1997: 23]. Without the means to record it, any person who learned the song tried to imitate the singer and memorize the song as best as possible. Improvisation the way we know it was not part of the oral practice. However, he pointed out the occurrences and melodic changes that *could* be named as improvisational: ornaments as melodic variation, especially in the melismatic type

of song; a heterophonic⁴⁰ type of singing; fitting different lyrics onto existing melody, and of course the failing memory of the singer often force him to improvise⁴¹. Some of these I have incorporated in *The Balkanites*. Aside from *sevdalinka*, the genre that influenced *The Balkanites* the most is lament (*kukanje*) whose melodic traits⁴², tonal instability and lack of fixed concept in narrative makes it the most variable style of traditional singing. It also incorporates falsetto notes and sounds that are not singing in the traditional sense, therefore coming closest to the modern idea of improvisation. Golemović also mentions one form of improvisation that was quite unique, where the performer recites the words backwards. However, he stresses that, as this is (understandably) quite hard to follow for the listeners, it's extremely rare. Although I used the reverse of sonic elements often in *The Balkanites* and in different capacities, it is a common enough electroacoustic technique, and it does not allude to the particular oral practice.

Due to the lack of comparative research, it is hard to generalize about the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic traits that different countries might have in common. The oral traditions of the Balkans are mostly based on modes and originally mostly did not have a conscious harmonic dimension. Even in cases when the songs were harmonized within the Western major/minor system (especially the urban 'remix' of traditional music in urban culture), their modal nature has often remained obvious. However, using the word 'modes' inevitably points towards ancient Greek scales and is potentially misleading. It is true that most of the songs that are written down could be interpreted within the Greek modal system, yet recent research [Pennanen 2008] clearly points out to a different interpretation: the Ottoman culture and music had (and still has) a major influence on the region and its the music heritage – no other influence apart from Western had and still has the same impact. Therefore, modes are here used in the broadest meaning possible: to distinguish between the major/minor system and everything else. To illustrate some of the similarities between the influence of Ottoman musical heritage, here are two examples of songs from South of Serbia (*Karanfile cveće moje*, *Simbil cveće*) and one Turkish song (*Penceresi Yola Karşı*) that are all sung a cappella by me to eliminate the potential

40 Singing the original melody and its ornamented variation in the same time.

41 There is an interesting pilot study by Danka Lajić-Mihajlović focusing on the musical memory of the *guslars* and the factors that influence it [Lajić-Mihajlović 2012: 67].

42 Laments usually start with high pitched note and going lower, often in glissando which resembles cries.

differences in production that might be distracting otherwise:

Figure no. 2 *Karanfile cveće moje* (DVD content/songs examples/track 9)



Figure no. 3 *Penceresi Yola Karşı* (DVD content/ songs examples/ track 10)



Figure no. 4 *Simbil cveće* (DVD content/ songs examples/track 11)



The fact remains that these songs and the scales used have different names and history in Serbia and Turkey, for which reasons I refrained from trying to interpret melodic changes in compositions using the framework of a particular scale. As the conscious choice of the scale/mode did not influence the compositional process of the works discussed in this study, the analysis (fourth chapter) focuses more on the simple noting the presence or absence of tonal center, characteristic intervals appearing in the particular points of the piece, and (where applicable) note possible correlations to some of existing traditions.

Rhythm is another trait that I consider very important in identifying what I hear as characteristic of the music of this region. An abundance and variety of rhythmic-melodic structures can be found all around the region, starting from the songs performed completely *rubato* to the ones in metrical divisions that the Western music practice is most familiar with (4/4,3/4,6/8 etc). Yet, as Nice Fracile correctly observes,

the asymmetrical *akşak* rhythm (very popular in Turkey) represents one of the distinctive and most vital features of the musical traditions on the Balkans [Fracile 2003], though, this term in Turkish music theory refers only to the grouping of nine pulses into a pattern of 2+2+2+3 [Stokes and Reinhard 2001] Whether it be 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 11/8 – the main trait of these rhythms is that each is composed of smaller rhythmical cells of 2 and 3. So, 5/8 can be 2+3 or 3+2 . 7/8 divide has two versions, 2+2+3 (more frequent in Bulgaria) and 3+2+2 (almost everywhere in Macedonia and south of Serbia). 9/8 is typical for Turkey and as previously said, most popular division is in 2+2+2+3. The 11/8 divide ordinarily has a nice symmetrical grouping of 2+2+3+2+2 (called *kopanitsa* in Bulgaria) and is characteristic of for Bulgaria, though off course groups of 2 and 3 can be combined differently. Together with Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey remain the three Balkan countries most abundant with asymmetric rhythms. Especially in Bulgaria their instrumental (dance) music often does not fit with just one, but is made from several different asymmetrical rhythms, so we can find tunes that have a structure like this: 2+3, 2+2+3, 2+2+2+3, where one normally has to learn the melody by heart first before being able to determine the rhythmical subdivisions. If accompanied with a percussion, the accent is not necessarily always on the first note of the rhythm grouping: it often falls on the first note in the group of 3 (in cases of groupings that do not start with the 3, as in 2+2+3), rendering the division more rhythmically interesting.

Another group of distinctions that were not related to Anatolian influence, are typical of some parts of former Yugoslav countries like Dinaric Mountains and Istria (Istra in Croatia). It has its own style of vocal ornamentation and singing that sets it clearly apart from Anatolian tradition. I've been listening to recordings of this music for years, and analyzing the vocal improvisations of *The Balkanites* helped to see how much I was influenced by this music. This style of singing has the following traits (1) non-tempered singing (2) two voices moving in parallel seconds (often thirds and sixths in Istra, Croatia) (3) the presence of chromatic scale in melodies, sometimes pentatonic (like in Medjumurje, Croatia). This type of singing is more archaic than the music which originated under the influence of Ottoman culture, and it barely survives today. The string of cultural changes that started with Ottoman rule went unbroken to modern era - among them, changes that technology (radio) brought both in culture and way of life allowed only a limited amount of cultural practices to survive.

3.2 Secondary orality – from notation to sound recording

The first technology that attempted to mediate oral tradition was literacy, and in the case of music – it was music notation.

Being a classically trained composer generally means that certain skills and knowledge are acquired through the process of education: knowledge about compositional techniques, music theory, orchestration and history of music are usually among them. However, transmission of this knowledge would not be possible without the existence of one fundamental tool, namely, musical notation. Before the emergence of technological innovations capable of recording sound, notation was the only way (apart from the oral tradition that transmitted knowledge through folk songs from one generation to another) for a musician to make his ideas transferable to others, and is still (in some form of score) the most common way to present a work at institutions for music education in the West. Notation is what made analytical thinking about music and music theory possible. Nevertheless, notation (like any other tool available to musicians) channels and influences the music created [Pardo 2007]. Notation-centric training is not always applicable, but aside from that – it also induces certain ways of listening, which tend to be applied to different kinds of music, disregarding if it being appropriate or not. The resulting situation is that musicological methods tend to gravitate towards musical parameters that can be notated, and therefore tend to neglect or have difficulty with widened parameters which are not so easily transferable into notation, as is presumably the case with electroacoustic music.

In order to record musical ideas, a composer must become conscious of the exact pitches and rhythmical structure that are used. As such, notating different versions of the same musical material can be very time consuming. The kind of awareness that emerges as a result of the notating process in turn develops particular patterns of analytical thinking towards one's work that can be beneficial for a composer. Nevertheless, sometimes during this process a lot of original ideas (especially if they contained parameters not easily notated) will be changed or rejected in favour of those that could fit a notational system more easily. Furthermore, composing for me

translates into a process that includes a lot of improvisation on the basic music material (as is the case with the work discussed in this study); it might involve working and improvising until I reach the single acceptable version of the musical idea, which would be first written down and then developed further. This system confines the 'waste' musical information to music memory even before actual notation takes place, which therefore creates a major loss of improvised material during the process. In addition to this, musical intentions often do not appear on a score due to lack of time and/or fatigue, as standard notation is a complicated cognitive process; after spending a certain amount of time working on a piece, I discovered how often I found myself unable to distinguish between the ideas which constitute aesthetically acceptable choices and ones which do not.

The Western culture changed with the mass literacy, but as Carruthers [2008] shows, both the orality and literacy were shaped by historical forces and were culturally embedded, and I was surprised to discover that literacy as we know and perceive it today in comparison to spoken word was undervalued. The possession of good memory and excellent oral skills were considered the indication of the highest form of intellectual development. The historical development of notation as the only form of music literacy, and music theory that followed it changed music scholarship in the West, but also limited the access to music investigations, by turning it into notation – oriented activity. How this changed the perception of music and what is necessary for understanding it, is easy to see from what Nettl observes:

'...the academic musical establishment has made lay public feel that without understanding the technicalities of musical construction, without knowledge of notation and theory one cannot properly comprehend or deal with music [Nettl 2005: 221].

Furthermore, how unacceptable would this Clanchy's observation on perception of writing in medieval times be to a modern scholar?

Writing anything down externalized it and – in that process – changed it and falsified it to some extent....Writing was untrustworthy in itself, and furthermore its use implied distrust, if not chicanery, on the part of the writer. An honest person held to his word and did not demand written proof [Clanchy 1991: 193].

After several years of being entirely immersed in creating music without any notation, I was finally able to compare my experiences and changes in the creative process itself that were brought by using just recording – both as a tool in creating sonic material and aid in composition based on improvisation.

The recording technology brought physical reproduction and multiplication of a single version of the recorded music. With the appearance of radio culture, the way songs could spread via musically literate performers added one more dimension, and created the peculiar cycle:(1) composer writes ‘in the manner’ of traditional music; (2) song gets recorded and broadcasted on the radio;(3) song gets into the repertoire of orchestras;(4) song becomes a part of oral tradition again. One of the biggest recording labels was *Jugoton* (the dominant record label in the former Yugoslavia at the time) and had a huge impact on the history of music production in the area.

Jugoton published a unique collection of traditional music of the region, the best example being the five extensive series of Long Play recordings, accompanied by survey texts on the music of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia and Vojvodina. This publication is significant as one of the very rare examples of music historiography in Yugoslavia from before the 1990s that also includes composers belonging to ethnic minorities, such as Károly Krombholz or Ernő Király, who worked in Vojvodina, or Albanian composers from Kosovo [Vuletić 2011].

Introduction of radio and the production of recordings of stylized traditional music emphasized the changes that were already happening in the culture of Yugoslavia – the disparity between rural and urban cultures and ways of life. The urban folk music of Yugoslavia is a phenomenon well known to researches on the popular culture of the Balkans. The popularity of this genre today is immense even outside of national borders, and despite the strong opposition from institutions of culture, it grows stronger. The usual perception of this music among researchers is precisely as described by Ljerka Vidić–Rasmussen:

‘Implicit in the term ‘newly-composed’ are novelty, temporariness, bricolage

and kitsch; that is, a lack of historicity, stylistic coherence, and aesthetic/artistic attributes [Vidić-Rasmussen 1995: 242].

However, this music showed (and still does) an incredible vitality. By the mid-1980s this genre alone was responsible for more than a half of the total output of the Yugoslav record industry. Also, as Vidić-Rasmussen observes, the majority of singers belonging to the genre come from the Southeast-central regions of Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia, a demographic picture that also reflects a broad stylistic pattern [1995:247]. She also gives the example of *Južni Vetar* bend (Southern Wind) that really is a perfect example of the mixture that had enormous success – that of oriental influences in vocal style with what was considered the modern technology at the time. As she puts it:

‘The orientalism of *Južni Vetar* was manifested primarily in the performance styles of its singers, featuring highly melismatic treatment of tunes, nasal timbre (evocative of Islamic religious practices), and rhythmic variety in the form of mixed metres such as 7/8 and 11/8. Contributing to the definition of style was a showcasing of up-to-date recording technology; the singers' parts are electronically processed and mixed along with various reverb effects, polyphonic intermingling of electric guitars, and drum machine.’ [Vidić-Rasmussen 1995:248].

It is obvious that, with the adoption of technology, every single country in the world went through some kind of transformation of oral heritage. What makes this interesting is how commercial thinking changed the perception of what is ‘traditional’. ‘People’ became ‘audience’, pop elements were introduced and the concept of a ‘pop idol’ applied to this fusion. According to Vidić–Rasmussen, music became a commodity, even more popular after the conflicts that disintegrated Yugoslavia, as it was cheap and approachable – and it had plenty of national references. Among others, that is the reason it was (and still is) often connected with nationalist political forces, though, ironically enough, it is far away from reflecting what is considered (among scholars) to be the genuine musical heritage of the country. The most interesting example of a ‘turbo folk’ star in Serbia that is well known even outside the ex- Yugoslav territory (in Bulgaria especially) and that survived from the 1980’s till today through all the changes of political regimes was Svetlana Ražnatović, or simply ‘Ceca’. In her work there are plenty of examples of appropriation of Western music, and more than that – songs were taken often without even changing the key or arrangement, only lyrics changed and melody made to fit the current fashion in

performance style (the good example of this practice is the Queen song 'Another one bites the dust' that in Ceca's interpretation became a fusion of rock, disco, oriental style of singing and pop (DVD content/Songs examples/track 7). Despite her association with the known criminal who later became her husband (Željko Ražnatović, who was killed on 15 January 2000), and the accusations of misappropriation of money from football player transfers and for illegal possession of weapons later on for which she was sentenced, she is still the most successful turbo-folk artist in Serbia, next to one of the pioneers of urban folk Lepa Brena, and her less successful contemporary counterpart singer Jelena Karleuša.

As a matter of fact, many of the former Yugoslav artists adopted many highbrow and popular music styles from the West, and many of them became appropriated to fit the domestic audience, often having the lyrics changed. Here are some examples from former Yugoslav rock and pop culture: Riblja Čorba's (Fish's Soup) song: *Daj mi lovu*⁴³ (Give me money) is a cover of The Who's *Boris the Spider*⁴⁴; Merlin's song *Mesečina*⁴⁵ (Moonlight) is a version of UB 40 – *Where did I go wrong*⁴⁶; Plavi orkestar's song (Blue Orchestra) *Ljubi se Istok i Zapad*⁴⁷ (East and West kissing) is a cover of Mamas and the Papas – *California dreamin'*⁴⁸. Following Vidić–Rasmussen's observations, it is true that we could argue that today, from the aspect of commodity and being accessible, there is no difference between turbo-folk in Serbia and pop music in the West, for that matter. As its functional role in society goes, that might be so. Yet, there is one difference, that makes this particular genre problematic for purely musical research. In Serbia, ever since the Milošević era, exactly when the music genre related to folk is in question, it is associated with one or another publishing/media house which is, in the public's perception associated with one or the other political option. Not without the reason – often the people that were members of the political party currently in power held the highest positions in media houses and therefore could control them. This being the case, artists were often in a position to see their work being published but then used in such a way that it became highly politicized and often misused. I remember watching the peaceful protests in

43 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dnR9IL25pl> accessed 10/08/2014

44 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvFuUaCe8eY> accessed 10/08/2014

45 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5thBGR1C64c> accessed 10/08/2014

46 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRxEZV1sOgw> accessed 10/08/2014

47 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35nw9Su5pG0> accessed 10/08/2014

48 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhZULM69Dlw> accessed 10/08/2014

Belgrade, (February 2008, Serbia) brought up against the declaration of independence of Kosovo on 17 February 2008. Some of my music as well as other authors was played on the loudspeakers while people were walking. The reason for this was the fact that my 2006 album *Mysterion* was released by a major Serbian label PGP RTS⁴⁹ and the music had elements of folk tradition. However, once the violence broke and the American embassy was attacked, I was watching the young people rioting, all of it accompanied by the sounds of one of my favorite compositions (DVD content/songs examples/track 8). That made me feel like an unwilling accomplice of the current political system's mass manipulation, and influenced my decision to continue my work outside the region.

Why do I perceive urban folk (turbo folk) and its relationship with political sphere so important? In a country whose elite often perceives this genre as representing a nationalistic ideology and conservative/patriarchal/rural values, people that are holding different political and cultural values are often urged to distinguish themselves by adopting the exaggerated 'Western' perspective on this matter. This situation being as it is, makes any contemporary and artistic attempt to approach the traditional music difficult, as 'traditional', 'folk' music is burdened with issues and misconceptions that are often completely unrelated to its original nature and role in social life. Putting aside the issue of copying Western music, the fact that Islamic influence is the strongest and most recognizable melodic trait of the turbo folk music makes things even more difficult, since that is precisely the trait most problematic and hard to be accepted as a part of a pro-European way of thinking. As R. Archer shows, Bulgarian *chalga*, Romanian *muzică orientală* and Albanian *muzika popullore* are having a resembling pattern and show a similar status in their countries as turbo folk in Serbia, proving this phenomena to be widespread on the Balkans [Archer 2012]. The turbo folk's popularity in the former Yugoslavian republics and wider in the region today is the phenomena that most clearly highlights the opposition between the 'East' (Islamic/Turkish influence) and 'West' in the Balkans – influencing and distorting the domestic perception of all other types of music that are associated with traditional music in any way, especially among the elite.

⁴⁹Produkcija Gramofonskih Ploča (Production of Gramophone Records of the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation)

'All Balkan post-socialist countries saw the development and popularization of pop-folk styles in the 1990s which were deemed problematic from the perspective of certain elites due to similar criteria including poor aesthetics (kitsch), problematic urbanization and the presence of an internal orient, a musical Ottoman legacy. I consider it productive to also consider the musical phenomenon within the frame of ongoing anti-Ottoman imperatives... Alongside the notion of aesthetic inferiority and unsuccessful modernization, the presence of a problematic orient remains salient in all Balkan states [Archer 2012:201].

Thus, the 'Oriental' in music becomes dejected from both opposing parties: the educated 'urban' elite ignoring it as kitsch, and extreme nationalists deeming it an unhealthy influence, a 'weed' that has taken root in pure Serbian culture and needs to be taken out. This does not mean that all of the traditional forms of music in Serbia and surrounding countries have 'Islamic' influence, far from it – there is far too big a variety in folk music for such a simplified claim to be sustainable. Yet, acknowledging traditional music that has an 'Oriental' like sound as a source for individual creative practice brings all of these issues in, especially while attempting to place it aesthetically and culturally.

Stating all this, there is an interesting comparison to be made regarding the ever-changing perception and associative linking of 'traditional', with 'national'. In the 19th century, all these influences were present in the traditional music as much as they are present today. However, composers born in the region yet educated in the 'West' did not perceive any of it as 'Islamic' and 'Oriental' - it was simply part of a national heritage which was taken as such and the authors felt free to borrow from traditional music, rearrange it and compose 'in the manner' of it – one might say that was the fashion all around Europe, following the awakening of the national spirit. Yet today, in Serbia, a composer who has a strong inclination towards engagement with traditional music of any kind is potentially endangering himself with being considered as 'conservative', 'traditional/nationalistic', 'backward', and in some cases, even 'commercial'? The question that naturally follows is: how much that perception has to do with the music itself, and how much with the current cultural and political climate that the academic music elite is naturally part of (even when strenuously opposing it)? I believe that the same conclusion A. Pavlović reaches in regard to epic poetry is applicable to different 'use' and 'interpretation' of traditional music as well:

'The politics of Serbian epic poetry is the politics associated with it, and inserted into it, during the process of publication and canonization of the oral tradition in the first half of the nineteenth century [Pavlović 2013:34].

One of the alternate (possibly broader) approaches to this issue is placing all these forms of music under an umbrella term of 'vernacular culture', and observing them from the socio-cultural perspective: as Bohlman points out, vernacular music has been traditionally positioned 'against cultivated music' [Bohlman 2002]. As R. Jakovljević puts it:

'Scholars mainly use the term *vernacular* to encompass folk and folk-derived artistry, which is the distinctive property of one local-range culture. As a concept, it underlies the significance of oral transmission, non-standardized communication, and language usage among ordinary, common people' [Jakovljević 2012: 298].

Detailing the change in reception and apprehension of traditional music through the past two centuries by the elite and educated scholars in the Balkans is an extremely complex question and as such, out of the scope of this work. Nevertheless, as an attempt to highlight some cases of traditional music being appropriated by 19th century composers, and (mis)used by turbo-folk artists of today, I hope I was able to point out in which ways the perception of the general public and educated elites shifted from acceptance to denial of those elements of traditional music that might be today deemed as 'foreign' or 'Islamic' elements. Since more than half of the compositions submitted as a part of this research do incorporate some of these elements, it was important to point out the possible ambiguous reception of those works in the country where my undergraduate musical education was undertaken, and where the first ideas of strong connections between different forms of traditional music and political ideology had been formed.

3.3 Oral tradition and the Voice – contemporary contexts

At this point, I have to mention two female performers who greatly influenced my work in different ways – the storyteller Jelena Čurčić, with whom I share an interest in

Balkan oral tradition and performance in relation to it, and Lisa Gerrard⁵⁰, the composer, musician and vocalist whose explorations of different oral traditions and styles of singing, especially her usage of voice as an active agent in compositional process, have always resonated with my own ideas.

Lisa Gerrard is an Australian-born vocalist and composer who is best known as part of the music group Dead can Dance⁵¹. Without going into too much detail about her career, I'd like to point out some characteristic ways in which she perceives music and her own voice that greatly helped me to contextualize my own work within certain existing creative practices. She is well known to sing in her own, invented language; and here she sums up well why she often chooses to sing without words:

*'Gerrard...has often sung in a curious, non-specific language; resulting in a suitably inclusive form of expression. "When I was growing up, you didn't get Irish people speaking Italian or Greek or anything like that, so my experience of hearing these other languages on a daily basis meant I could just listen to the tones and patterns and there was a kind of music to that in itself." She adds, "The Irish have a strong tradition of story-telling and so to me singing without using words to tell a story was such an exotic idea.'*⁵²

In my own compositions, this 'singing without words' came from trying to create space for expressing the meaning in music that in non-verbal; to help melodic and rhythmic patterns form themselves into structures through improvisation, rather than focusing on the meaning of the lyrics and conveying the message through the words. Gerrard also puts a lot of emphasis on the intuitive, instinctive, and improvisatory when she talks about music creation and structuring:

*'You call upon the power of your instinctive ability to open up the pathways of - I'm not sure what they are - but the pathways that allow you to communicate through music and respond to harmonies and create the architecture.'*⁵³

50 <http://www.lisagerrard.com> accessed 22/07/2014

51 <http://www.deadcandance.com/main/bio/> accessed 22/07/2014

52 <http://guestlisted.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/lisa-gerrard-dead-can-dance-interview.html> accessed 22/07/2014

53 An interview with Erin Lyndal Martin, 08/10/2012, cited from:

And in the paragraph below, she partly reveals the motivations behind this non-verbal communication and her usage of voice; although our musical journeys are different, I found that the ways in which we approach communicating with the audience are similar:

'I want to unlock my musical centers and my voice and remain more abstract where I'm not telling people what I think, but I'm opening a pathway to the heart so we can connect with an emotional bridge.' (ibid).

And finally, how she sees her exposure to different musical and cultural influences resonates perfectly with how I perceive my connection with the Balkans, its multitude of nationalities and cultures, and how I interact with this heritage as an artist. In her words:

*'This might sound strange but this is almost about our cultural heritage, not only as Australians or as Antipodeans, but as human beings. We're connected to everything culturally and the thing is – there's this discovery that we make through music that voyages into another culture. When you live in a place like Australia – if you're **really** tuning into the frequencies that are coming out of the ground – then you're taking on the responsibility of the maybe six or seven different nationalities'.*⁵⁴

Lastly, in the sense of musical language and treatment of voice, I believe there are plenty of similarities to be found – such as predominantly modal melodic, vocal harmonies and improvisation, and singing style influenced by a variety of oral traditions. However, It is not the prime aim of this research to conduct investigation that strives to provide platform for contextualization of my work through comparative study; nevertheless, it was extremely useful to read the words and listen to the music of the one author whose approach to creating music is so similar to mine⁵⁵. Trying to pinpoint these similarities helped me to articulate better which aspects of my work

<http://www.popmatters.com/feature/163686-the-carnivals-begun-an-interview-with-dead-can-dance/>
accessed 22/07/2014.

54 An interview with Jonny Mugwump, 04/09/2012, cited from: <http://thequietus.com/articles/09902-dead-can-dance-interview> accessed 22/07/2014.

55 A good example is her composition 'The Unfolding'. Singing in non-specific language, modal melodic and vocal harmonies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5JDposTncU> accessed 23/07/2014

are worth investigating and consequently, how to conduct the analysis as well as interpreting the results of it.

When talking about oral tradition today, it is important to mention that there are few contemporary approaches to keeping the Serbian oral tradition of fairy tales alive; I have been fortunate to discover an author and performer Jelena Čurčić whose effort to translate and organize them resulted in a book *Serbian Fairy Tales*⁵⁶. While researching different archetypal characters present in the Balkans, the insight into her work and perception of oral tradition became an enormous inspiration for all compositions that relate to the music heritage of the Balkans. Jelena Čurčić is a London-based storyteller, fusing contemporary and historical fiction of her own making with myth and legend passed down through the rich Balkan tradition of storytelling, developing performance language in a manner highly engaged with the audience and the community. The book, *Serbian Fairy Tales* was inspired by the 2012 bicentenary of the first publication of Grimms' Fairy Tales. Her current performance format is named *Vila's (Fairy's) Mountain*⁵⁷, a storytelling performance based on Serbian fairy tales.

While reading her book, I realized that Jelena's and my work, although different, might have some points of similarity: firstly, although in different ways, we were both approaching oral tradition in a creative fashion, as performers; and secondly, Jelena Čurčić was born and brought up in Yugoslavia and witnessed the violent, decade-long break-up of the country at the end of 20th century. After gaining her degree in English Language and Literature, she moved to London in 2002⁵⁸. After meeting her in January 2013, Jelena agreed to do an interview with which I attempted to unravel some of her motivations and influences, her background and her perception of oral tradition in the contemporary world with an aim of comparing them to mine. A complete interview is available in the Appendix 1.

What I found significant after interviewing Jelena, was the importance of the fact that we belonged to the same generation, we were born in the same town and witnessed the same events that changed our country forever – from one big country and

56 <http://www.serbianfairytales.com/book> accessed 23/07/2014

57 <http://www.serbianfairytales.com/show> accessed 23/07/2014

58 All biographical information provided by Jelena Čurčić.

diversity of cultural life and experiences, through war and conflicts that severed connections of any kind we were left with a small space that suddenly became the horizon of most people's cultural experience. All these influenced our choices as artists, that today live and work outside our native country. Perhaps because of all this, I perceive Jelena's way of approaching tradition as similar to mine: markedly outside the national and political considerations, and, through engaging with the heritage of one group of people, trying to reach what is universally human. While watching Jelena perform, it was obvious that it was more than an attempt to re-create the original practice and context of oral tradition; she was weaving in her life story into it and creating her own bridge between the individual experience and the collective heritage of Serbia. Through showing the way in which these stories became part of her life, she pointed the ways they could also be inherited by the audience. And that was exactly how I felt and what I hoped for with my own work.

Chapter IV

Methodology and analysis

4.1 Composition and improvisation

'The very existence of an observer – the analyst – pre-empts the possibility of total objectivity. No single method or approach reveals the truth about music above all others' [Bent 2001: 528]

As Bent points out in his reinterpretation of a famous *observer paradox* cited above⁵⁹, the presence of the observer inevitably influences the result of analysis, and in case of music, even more so – especially in the situation of an author that observes his own work. Music is a temporal art, and although we can measure some elements of its physical (acoustic) manifestation, a full comprehension of music is still fairly beyond the reach of an empirical approach. Electro-acoustic music is no exception: there is no single method of analysis that is established and widespread enough to be automatically employed (as it is definitely the case with analyzing Mozart's sonatas, for example). The music analyst usually approaches analysis of musical composition through the score and recordings of performance, and most importantly, employs his/her knowledge of the composition's era, musical genre and cultural/historical context, which are all necessary to establish the framework that makes the analysis possible.

However, when it comes to electro-acoustic music, the score in plenty of cases does not exist. There are several definitions of musical analysis that might be applicable; here we will conform to the musicological encyclopedia *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, stating that musical analysis is the

'...resolution of musical structure into relatively simpler constituent elements, and the investigation of the functions of those elements within that structure' [Bent 1980:340].

This is a simple yet applicable way of approaching the analysis. Just distinguishing the 'simpler elements' however, was not enough to come closer to the formation of

⁵⁹ The observer's paradox refers to phenomena where the observation of an event or experiment is influenced by the presence of the observer/investigator.

the macro-form – it was also necessary to record as minutely as possible the actual creative and cognitive process of choosing material and developing improvisational parts. Before I go into a more detailed examination of the compositions, I will briefly state some definitions of composition and improvisation that I find are the closest to defining my overall creative practice.

Composition can be defined as a process that, by its nature, places creation and realisation of musical ideas in different time lines [Sarath 1996]. This means that multi-layered temporality is essential to composition as a process that often happens on several levels [Pardo 2007]. Additionally, formulating a musical idea in such a way to make it transferable as a score involves: (1) the practice of writing different parts of the piece at different times, (2) being able to reflect on how these segments relate to each other and (3) manipulate those relations. Often different parts of this process overlap at different points of a piece's timeline, thus enabling the composer to orchestrate one part of the piece while having other sections at the level of the basic idea.

In contrast, **improvisation** is the real-time process of structuring music through its creation and performance. Although both composition and improvisation are temporal in the sense that they organize sounds in consecutive series thus creating (hopefully) comprehensive music narrative, there are two crucial differences. Contrary to composition, while we improvise, we can not change what has already passed, and also can not predict the future music choices, especially in live performance.

In all the works I utilised both vocal improvisation (understood here more as insisting on intuitive music choice rather than one-off musical activity) as well as pre-structured sonic sequences. However, creating a piece close to an hour in length or more cannot be built on intuitive decisions alone, and the role of improvisation changed.

For *The Balkanites*, Improvisation proved to be the main structuring strategy as far as creating of micro-form (individual parts of the composition) went. However, each part had to be readjusted according to the general concept of how the macro form will look like. These readjustments were a continuous process: each time a relatively important change is put forward in one sector resulted in slight or major modifications

of the other parts. In practice, this meant a continuous listening of the composition several times and always from the beginning until I reached the section I was working on. The main parameter here for introducing changes or leaving sections as they are was always the overall impression I would get after listening – if something felt too short, too long, or the contrast between materials was too big or too small. This was a part of creative process which, although entirely subjective, I attempted to somehow quantify by introducing activity density⁶⁰. Activity density and other major music parameters and characteristics of each part and change in the music narration have been noted in the representation of structural and sonic activity (table no.3).

To do this, the first draft of the composition was done as a series of improvisational parts, some of them purely vocal, the others with some other sonic material already present to induce the vocal response. A second phase was the detailed work on the parts themselves: every major change was noted and written in the form of verbal comments in the scheme.

I discovered that both of the creative processes mentioned above (composition and improvisation) could be pursued through the utilisation of technology without the absolute necessity for a composer to be fully aware of musical parameters such as pitch, harmonic progression or rhythmical/metrical structure. Being able to immediately record musical ideas and choose quickly among all of their possible modifications, as well as the improvisation based on those ideas, gave me more liberty to follow intuitive music choices without the immediate necessity of transferring them into notational system.

While thinking about possible approaches to an analysis of the works, the emphasis was put on determining what kind of analysis would be the most suitable regarding the aims of the research itself. The contextual and cultural background of the musical material was examined in the first part of this paper. While reading through the notes I made during the composition process, I was able to abstract the following major factors as the most influential ones in establishing a functional macro-form:

- ***Structure/distribution of musical material*** (determining sections and subsections of the composition, how they relate to each other, the nature of improvisation and

⁶⁰ Activity density parameter most broadly refers to measuring the rise and fall in the amount of sonic information at any given point of composition timeline.

how it influences the form),

- **Music parameters** (registers, sound manipulation processes applied, presence or absence of tonality etc)

To organize and represent above mentioned factors I followed Dora A. Hanninen's criteria for music segmentation as being of three basic types: sonic, contextual, and structural [Hanninen 2003: 67]. Within the scope of my analysis, the 'sonic criteria' was interpreted as being primarily related to individually recognizable segments, which, following Hanninen, I will define as a grouping of tones or other sonic material recognized by an analyst as a readily audible unit.

'Contextual criteria' I use to relate to group of parameters that helped me to identify the subsections of macro-form, such as: (1) the scope of similarities/differences between the sub-sections (2) functional relations between the subsections that come as a result of establishing the first point. 'Structural criteria' is looking in detail into sonic criteria in order to distinguish sub-parts.

Hanninen's definition of segment, segmentation, contextual criterion and sonic criterion were most helpful with the process of dividing the work into sections and subsections. How these parameters are applied to the music itself can be found in the analysis of the composition *The Balkanites*.

4.2 Musical structuring and sound processes in the short works

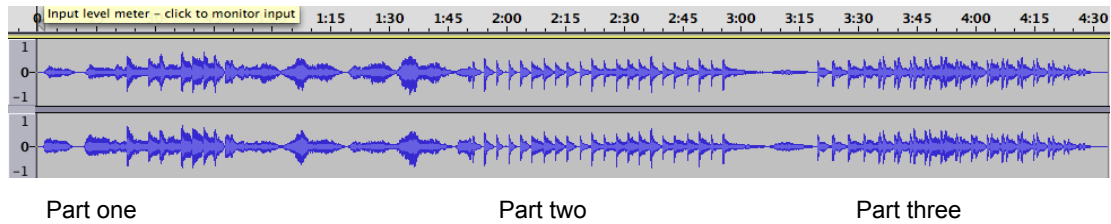
In order to illustrate sound manipulation strategies, I shall now discuss some of the shorter works and explain how they relate to each other and *The Balkanites*. Among the ones primarily based on vocal sound material, those worth mentioning are: *Nigredo* (2009) and *Miniature* (2010) (DVD content / compositions/tracks 1 and 8), based on recordings of vocal ornamentation in a wider Balkan tradition, *Ismail I* and *II* (2010) (DVD content / compositions/ tracks 2 and 3) based on a recording of Turkish folk song. *Improvisation: excerpt* (2009) (DVD content / compositions / track 4), which highlights how improvisation is an important part of the compositional process and performance. This excerpt illustrates the improvisation through use of technology. *Psalm* (2010) (DVD content / compositions / track 5), is based on sound

samples taken from the recordings of a Serbian monastery of Kovilj's monks, singing psalms in the Byzantine style. *Echoes* (2009) (DVD content / compositions / track 6) are made almost entirely of sounds that do not have a determined pitch or rhythmical structure. It represents the dimension of this author's sonic world that is intentionally unrelated to vocals and pitch (in contrast with the pieces mentioned above) and it assists, through establishing a dialogue with vocal elements, the formation of macro-form in *The Balkanites* (2013). The *Miniature* is similar to *Nigredo*, being made entirely from vocal recordings and featuring the form of vocal improvisation that will become the main structuring force in *The Balkanites*.

These pieces show in miniature the sonic processes that were later applied on the voice in *The Balkanites*, among which one finds: transposition, reverberation, filtering, reversing, and looping. The music narrative was built through layering the improvised vocal lines in a sort of melodic dialogue (not always imitative by nature), which were in the final result creating responsorial texture, in fact quite typical for religious services in orthodox Christian churches (liturgy). This way of creating a musical dialogue can be often found in traditional music as well, where one person sings the 'lead', and the rest of the group sings the 'answer', which is often the same or different melody with lyrics that follow as an extension/explanation of the ones introduced solo. In the shorter works the main contrast often comes from the introduction of loop/ostinato with the principal role of reinforcing the rhythmic and tonal stability. All works are graphically represented as waveforms, which seemed the most natural illustration of both the timeline and micro/macro form of the pieces themselves.

Nigredo (2009 / DVD content / compositions / track 1), is a composition made entirely of recordings of a single vocal (plate 2). The term *nigredo* (latin) was a common part of alchemic vocabulary and describes the process of all substance's disintegration back into *primal material*. Here this is used as synonym for the action of the transformation of particular vocal ornaments typical for the Balkan region. Below is the visual representation of the audio wave:

Plate 1 - Nigredo

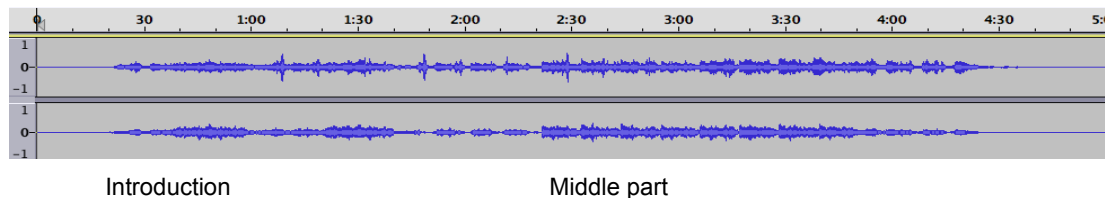


The piece has three distinctive parts. Vocal elements are here first introduced through short ornamented motif in its natural register (Phrygian mode; characteristic of the traditional melodies that were under the influence of Ottoman/Turkish culture) and then transformed into a percussive layer towards the end of the piece. The interaction between melodic and rhythmic impulses is underlined with low pitch drones that reinforce the feeling of a stable tonal centre throughout the whole piece, whilst also providing the impression of different acoustic spaces and depth. The chief structuring mode is responsorial – the form of question and response between the naturally positioned vocal line and transposed lower melodies. The prevailing sonic manipulation techniques of the composition are pitch alteration, reversing, and putting vocal lines in different spaces (reverberating) to create depth. The aimed for consistency of sonic world is here accomplished through use of sound material that originated from a single source (voice). The second part (at 1.55 min) sets forth with the first short, non-melodic element that becomes the main constituent of the rhythmic repetitive sequence in the third part, also bringing in a slight contrast. Apart from the appearance of the percussive layer that is accomplished through echoing this component (at 03.20 min) there are no sharp contrasts so this piece's narrative unfolds uninterrupted till the end, with the rhythmic element being brought in front and melodic positioned in the background. The main compositional approach is the transformation of sound material, with repetition applied towards the end as to facilitate the fragmentation of the music flow.

Ismail I and II (2010 / DVD content / compositions / tracks 2 and 3) is a two – part work based on recordings of Turkish folk songs. I had an opportunity to record Turkish waffle-seller, singing several traditional songs mostly from different parts of Anatolia. This composition has two parts and presents two different treatments of the

same voice.

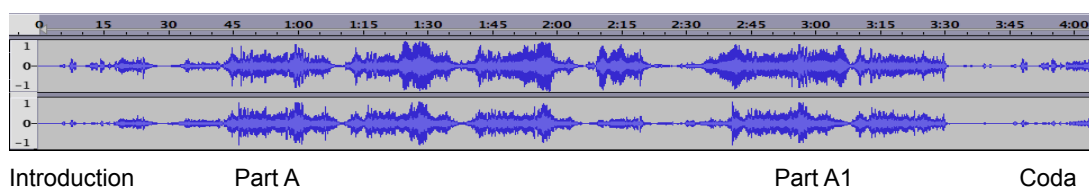
Plate 2 - *Ismail I*



Ismail I was made as a combination of traditional melody that was partly transposed and pitch – altered occupying the high register, and combined with a piano sound processed to emphasize the instrument's percussive qualities. The main concept of the piece was to establish and sharpen the tension naturally coming from the opposition of these two most distinctive sounds. The floating tonality of the voice is in an unnaturally high register and the repetitive piano motif occupies a very low one. The general structure can be branded as homophonic, as the listening perception naturally gravitates towards the higher layer. This form does not contain any contrasting materials; both predominant sounds are present from the beginning till the conclusion of the work, apart from the middle part, which functions as a rest from piano sound (1.55 – 2.22 min) so the chief structuring process is gradual transformation of the sound material, mostly created through manipulating the levels of tension rising as a result of confronting the relationship between two major sound materials.

Ismail II is more oriented towards manipulation of the actual natural sound of the singer's (Ismail) voice, and it is entirely created out of the recording of a single Turkish song (*Sari Yazma*). As I was already comfortable with recording and manipulating my own voice, working in this was an opportunity to explore how the sound of a male voice with its characteristic regional ornamentation changes while put through the same processes.

Plate 3 - *Ismail II*



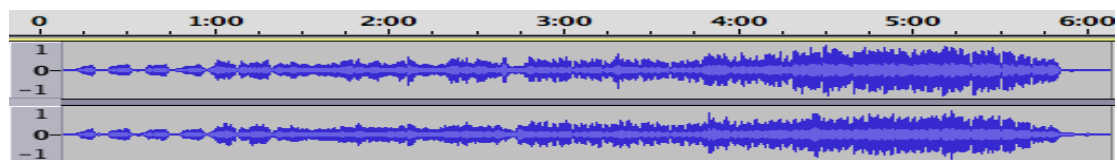
The structure of *Ismail II* formed itself as a ‘conversation’ among three different registers/modes of the main vocal line, with a resulting structure that can be perceived as a polyphonic. In the introduction, the high-pitched register of the tune is brought out, with a low one coming in at 0.45 min, also bringing in the time- stretched fragments of the tune (part A). After a short rest from the low processed pitched vocal, Part A1 retains the same structure while dropping one of the sonic elements out of the structure (stretched vocal line) towards the coda. As to sound manipulation, functional role and register, the Coda corresponds with the Introduction and therefore gives the form of the composition a sense of closure. The major applied processes apart from pitch alternation, were time-stretching and filtered panoramic movement. This work has preserved the tonal stability of the original melody.

Improvisation: excerpt (2009 DVD content / compositions / track 4). As improvisation became a crucial part of the compositional process and performance, I found it necessary to include an excerpt of a live session that illustrates the improvisation through the use of technology. The session was conducted using the BOSS ME-50 guitar multi-effects processor as a vocal processing device and software instrument controlled through MIDI keyboard with the main role of establishing harmonic surroundings for vocal lines.

material. Characteristic of this type of structuring is a particular kind of transformation that includes the repetitive layer, and where the musical narration entirely depends on changes around the vocal pattern.

Psalm (2009 live performance recording / DVD content / compositions/ track 5) is infused with Orthodox Christian chants. Orthodox Christian music sung at the monasteries in Serbia has two distinct styles: Russian chant and Byzantine (Greek) vocal tradition. For this piece I used samples of psalm 117 sung in Byzantine style by monks belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Christian monastery Kovilj. Typical for this vocal tradition is singing in unison, or more often, it has *ison* (second melody/drone note, that underlines the main one or mimicking the function of a bass line). The actual melody of the psalm is not present, but it is referred to throughout the overall structure, melodic phrase and Phrygian scale used. The *Psalm* has two parts, part A being of homophonic texture, a single *rubato* voice that is underlined with short recorded voices of monks reversed, singing Alleluia. The A part tonality shifts from C# - B - C# - C - C#, making it the main drive for melodic structuring and advancement.

Plate 5 - *Psalm*



Part A (C#, B, C#, C, C#)

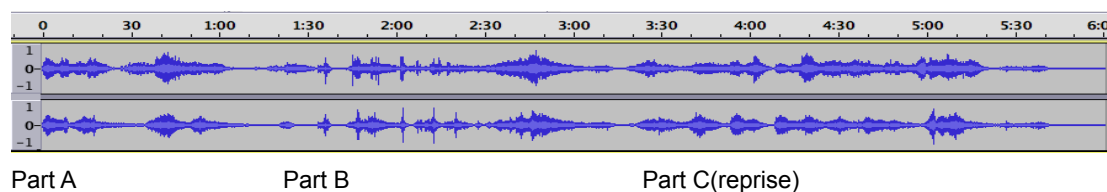
Part B

The second part of the piece (02.50 min) has a polyphonic structure, it is characterized by layering three or four vocals to construct the harmony, on top of a tarabuka sample that gives the tempo and is transposed to C# to fit the tonal center of the work. Vocals form an ostinato movement that becomes a base for the four-part harmony and a support for the top voice that improvises within the given harmonic progression, with the bass voice transposed an octave down. It presents a strong contrast to the first part in tempo and structure, however by keeping the same tonal center and by introducing the change gradually this piece retains the feeling of a

whole without the necessity to return to the initial material. The main structuring processes in part A are a gradual transformation of melodic elements through re-pitching and shifting of the tonal center, while in part B repetition is a major structuring force. With every repeated fragment something new is added or slightly changed in order to retain the impression of development.

Echoes (2009 / DVD content / compositions / track 8) is a composition made almost entirely of sounds that do not have a determined pitch or rhythmical structure. It presents the dimension of the author's sonic world that is intentionally unrelated to vocal and pitch (in contrast with the pieces mentioned above). This particular utilization of sonic material unrelated to pitch will later be developed further in *The Balkanites*, and through establishing a dialogue with vocal elements, assist the formation of a higher structure.

Plate 6 - *Echoes*



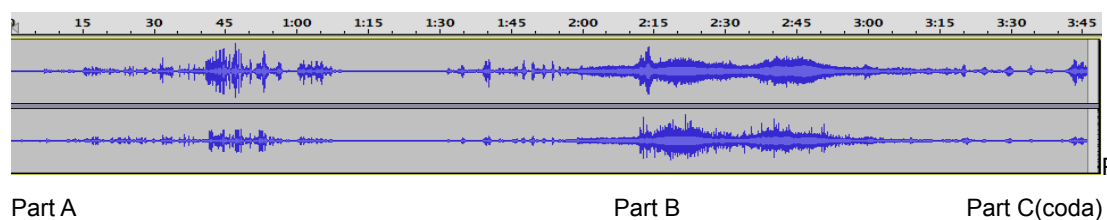
It is not easy to analyze a piece of music that has no recognizable melodic, harmonic or rhythmic structure, at least not according to the classical standards. However, the overall structure can be established in relation to the utilized sound material. *Echoes* consist of three main parts. Part A introduces a couple of time - stretched cymbal and shells sounds, and is based on the dialogue between the high and low pitched ones. These sounds do not have any rhythmical density and the main focus is on their position in the available frequency range. Nonetheless, Part B brings in new sound material that is a relatively recognizable sound of shells rubbing against each other (01.24 min) and after the first part comes as quite contrasting in sound texture and rhythmical density (short, repetitive, and high pitched). This sound fragment goes through several alterations: reverberation, reverse, echoing, panoramic movement, and before giving way to the new sound of low pitched flute (Part C), is moved to the

background (03.23 min). The main trait of part B is a contrast that is brought on by the amalgamation of time stretched cymbal sounds from Part A with the distinctive transformed sound texture of the shells. Part C fuses all the elements introduced beforehand and brings in a very low-pitched flute sound, that opens the short reprise of the whole structure – first the characteristic cymbal sound from the very beginning of the piece at (04.38 min), then the shells sound in its most recognizable variation (05.25 min) that also serves as a functional coda to the piece.

Echoes has a couple of contrasting points in its timeline, in the first instance it is the introduction of new material (Part B) in the second, it is an interpolation of characteristic cymbal sound from the beginning that establishes the expectation of repetition, which however is never completely fulfilled. The length of the piece was (like in previous works) dictated by reducing the number of contrasting sound materials. In this way the contrasts within the work were kept at a minimum in order to maintain the structure as a whole.

Abstract (2009 / DVD content / compositions / track 7) is a piece created out of recordings of flute sounds that do not have defined pitch. The piece has a strong tension development, coming from the gradual change in volume and activity density.

Plate 7 - *Abstract*



Although in the case of this particular work it is very hard to speak of microstructure, the three main parts can be noted as a result of manipulation of sound objects: Part A introduces the main sound source, and manipulates the natural sound of the instrument's performance mechanism, which is mainly present through filtered panoramic movement fused with the contrasting, very highly transposed original sound. Part B brings the low drone and a change in rhythmical intensity and density of the sonic material (02.12 min) combined with a sudden increase in velocity, that

positions itself as the event towards which this whole work gravitates. The tension maintained by these elements dissipates slowly towards the end of the piece, where a low transposed and reversed flute sound becomes predominant (Part C, 03.10min) and closes the composition. As the previous compositions, *Abstract* is a structure that establishes itself more as a result of continuous sound manipulation that accumulates into one particular event, and less as natural succession of contrasting parts.

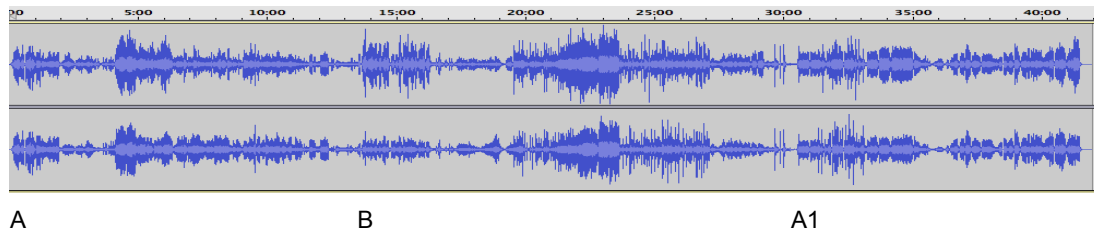
These shorter works hopefully illustrate the nature of sound transformation strategies and structuring that were used. However, several problems could not present themselves in these short works due to their very nature: the problem of structuring a piece approximately 45, 50 minutes in length, and the problem of maintaining this structure while paying attention to individual parts in all details. Also, limiting the amount of contrasting sonic material that was essential for maintaining the impression of the wholeness in short pieces became questionable as an approach to the creation of a considerably longer one. However, experience with shorter works indicated that the abundance of sonic material available for the work had to be reduced and organized according to individual parts of *The Balkanites*, and the prospect of their use in other parts according to their potential functionality in different sonic context. Coming back to previously used material and using it differently helped to establish the macro-form.

4.3 *The Balkanites* – structure and processes

The key to understanding *The Balkanites* lies in the dialogue between fragments of recordings of Balkan traditional instruments, and free vocal improvisation. One of the most distinct characteristics of the piece is the fine balance between parts that contain an ostinato rhythmical structure (mostly stable in tonality), contrasted to the ones with rhythmically and melodically free vocal segments that sometimes drift into bitonality. Although predominantly vocal, this composition does not refer to any particular singing tradition, and few phrases (in Serbian) that do appear are not used as bearers of meaning, but merely as sounds. As mentioned beforehand, the main criteria for the analytic organization of the music segmentation of the piece follows Hanninen's proposition of sonic, contextual, and structural criteria (Hanninen 2003).

The plate 8 below shows the macro-form of *The Balkanites* as a waveform:

Plate 8. *The Balkanites* waveform



In order to understand macro-form, more detailed micro-form (contextual level) and how those two relate, there is a visual scheme of the important aspects of all sonic events and processes in the composition. On the table 1 below structure is represented in three layers: **structural level** (that shows the macro form, marked with uppercase letters); **contextual level** (indicating the possible groupings of musical elements into subsections, marked with lowercase letters) and **sonic level** (detailing the sonic material used). The criteria behind choosing particular samples was always determined by the section that came beforehand the one I was just composing – the sounds had to be different, or if similar, processed in a way sufficiently at variance with the previous ones as to be perceived as contrasting. Music processes and important traits of used sonic material are organized according to subsections (lower case letters), making it easier to follow the aural events that justify identification of a particular grouping.

Table no.1

***The Balkanites* – representation of structure and sonic activity**

Structural criteria / macro-form

A	B	A1
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Contextual Criteria / micro-form

Introduction		a	b	c	d	c1	e	f	d1	c2	e2	Coda
<i>Real time Positioning</i>	00.00-04.12	04.12-07.01	07.01-11.12	11.12-13.35	13.35-16.24	16.24-17.24	17.24-20.05	20.05-24.44	24.44-29.42	29.42-33.44	33.44-36.29	36.29-42.03

Sonic Criteria / Individual sounds

Voice, Bells.	Saz (Turkish string inst.) Voice	Voice/ Leaf/ Stones/	Bells/ Voice/ Words Saz/	Monks/ Voice Words Bells/ Gaida (bulgarian panpipes)	Voice/ words Stones/	Gaida/ Voice/ Words Stones/ Church Ambience	Tarabuka/ Voice/ Saz	Monks/ Voice/ Saz/	Voice/ Words/ Church ambience / Bells/ Leaf/	Leaf/ Gaida/ Church ambience/ Bell	Voice/ Gaida/ Church ambience
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<i>Tonal positioning, scales:</i>	B flat, Aeolian mode/ Aeolian with augmented Fourth	A/G Aeolian mode with augmented Fourth	C/Phrygian mode with alternating between minor and major third, later on bitonal C/A b	No fixed tonal center	Alternating between D/C	No fixed tonal center	Unstable, Shifting from C# to D/ E/ B b	B b	Bitonal B b / D	No fixed tonal center	Tonal, pitched in between A and A b Going through: F /C/ B b /C#	B b
<i>Dominant register</i>	Middle	Low	Middle	Low	Low	Middle	High	/Low	Low - medium	High	From Medium to Low	Middle
<i>Main Sound Processes applied</i>	Reverse / Pitch trans ⁶¹ .	Looping/ Filtering/	Pitch trans. /reverse /time stretch ⁶² .	Reverse/ Delay/ Reverb./ Pitch trans.	Pitch trans./ Reverb./ Filtering	Reverb./ Filtering	Pitch trans./ Reverb./ Time stretch.	Delay/ Pitch trans.	Delay/ Reverse/ Pitch trans./ Reverb.	Reverse/ Reverb./ Delay/ Filtering/ Time stretch.	Pitch trans/ Delay/ Time stretch/	Pitch trans.
<i>Density of activity</i>	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	Low	High	High	High	Low	Medium	High
<i>Types of narration</i>	Transform.	Repetit. and transform.	Transform.	Transform.	Repetitive Transform.	Repetitive Transform.	Transform.	Repetition	Repetition	Repetit. and transform	Transform.	Transform.
<i>Level Of Contrast between segments</i>	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low	High	High	Low	Low	Low	High	

61 transposition

62 sound stretching

As mentioned earlier, upper case letters (A/B/A1) indicate the higher structural organization of the piece. The appearance of the new sonic material, repetition of the one presented earlier or a high level of contrast were the main criteria for establishing a new subsection. As shown in the scheme above, every time new sonic material is introduced that might justify constitution of a new subsection, it is represented with the new (lowercase) letter. Where the letters repeat, it points to the similarities that are a result of using the same sonic material. In the **sonic criteria** field, the sound segments that are crucial for separating a subsection on a contextual level are highlighted.

As the shifts from one subsection to another are often smooth (there is a fusion of sonic events on the peripheries of both parts) the representation of the piece in real time, though in seconds, had to be somewhat imprecise in regard to the exact beginning of the next section. The scheme also shows the most important music parameters characteristic to each section (scales, registers, tonal orientation), sound manipulation processes, and vertical complexity.

Vertical complexity is reflected in *activity density*, which represents the rise or fall of the number of sonic events that happen simultaneously in time. This value is hard to represent accurately as it might be relative to the perceptual habits of the listener, so it is roughly estimated at low, medium and high. Low and high points were established first as contrasts, medium being the value given to all other sections.

Types of narration indicate the presence of repetition and transformation as horizontal traits of the music flow. *The level of contrast* represents the total amount of changes that are singling out individual subsections as such, but it primarily shows they relate to the previously presented material; that is why there is no contrast indicator for the beginning of the piece. As it is present both on contextual (micro-form) and structural (macro-form) levels, it is discussed separately and in relation to the topic of balancing the use of sonic material against the presence of the active agent - the voice.

As composition *The Balkanites* in first attempts formed itself as a series of mostly wordless 'songs', it felt natural to keep the cyclic principle as a guide towards establishment of the macro form of the piece. This principle also influences the

Vocal layers around it also introduce a flat second, and melody is often shifting between the minor and major third creating further ambiguity. In the recording, the vocal lines are distinctly panned right and left, in consequence helping to enforce the impression of dialogue. The transition to *part b* is achieved through vocals morphing into C as a new tonal center.

Part b (07.01-11.12)

With the tonal center established firmly in C, the main structuring force in this part is vocal improvisation, the dialogue between several vocal lines distributed through low and middle registers, that refer to each other mainly through variations of the material presented. Again, this part is functionally established as a contrast to the previous segment, by coming back to an arrhythmical treatment of melodic lines that are shifting constantly from the minor to major third (relative to the C). Non-vocal material is here present in the background (the sounds of pebbles in motion and leaf playing) with the main function of contrasting layers. Towards the end of the *b* part, the leaf sound is more perceptible, though the sonic treatment of the sound shows changes in tempo and natural register (it resembles the sound of French horn). The passage to the next part is achieved through the introduction of a new loop - based structure shifting the tonal center briefly to C# as an indication of the change.

Part c (11.12-13.35)

Though part *c* is introduced with a looped *bağlama* sample, with pitch often gravitating towards C#, it does not have the fixed tonal center. This part generally functions as the bridge between parts *b* and *d*, and it reflects some of the more characteristic sonic material introduced earlier (*bağlama* sample from part *b*). The words uttered by voice here are not intended to have any meaning, yet, as an accidental result of the processing, one word is distinctive (*kapija*) Serbian word coming from Turkish *kapıyı* meaning the gate or the door. The new sound presented here is the sound of the church bells, slowed down and in an extremely low pitch.

Part d (13.35-16.24)

The central segment of this part comes from a sample of a monks choir from monastery Kovilj in Serbia. This sample was chosen by simple criteria: it represents a very common and characteristic opening of Byzantine influenced singing style (natural 7th leading to the tonic of the mode). With a few alterations by transposition, this melodic pattern shifts from D to C, and, as it was created first, presents a main element around which all the other musical elements were organized. The sound of bagpipes is the one that slightly shifts the stable tonality of this segment, as it appears in different keys. The sound of reversed and filtered church bells follow the melodic phrasing of the vocal tune.

Part c1 (16.24-17.24)

Some of the words that open this short segment are in Serbian, making this the first part with text. The literal translation of the sentence from Serbian (*Reči koje nemaju značenja*) is 'words that do not have meaning'. I wanted a short bit in this composition where I actually use one of the Balkan languages, it was natural for me to decide to use my native Serbian. Also, I particularly wanted to treat existing words more as a sound and less as a mode to delivering a message. That was the reason behind choosing this particular sentence, since the idea was to focus on the sound of the words rather than their meaning, which is much harder using one's mother tongue than otherwise. In this part, processed words are in dialogue with previously used material from part c, introducing also another pair of words *nemušt jezik* (wordless language). This comes from a famous Serbian fairy tale with the same name, that center on the young boy (shepherd) who by chance became capable of understanding *nemušt jezik*, the language that all animals can understand. It can be taken as a metaphor of the structuring processes in *The Balkanites*, as it points towards the main tool in developing the musical narrative – wordless vocal improvisation that attempts to communicate emotional states that go beyond the words and stories belonging to the particular traditional songs. In the actual story, the ability to understand animals helps the shepherd to overcome problems he encounters – in the *The Balkanites*, the wordless language becomes a metaphor for voice as a medium that attempts to establish and

communicate the musical archetype.

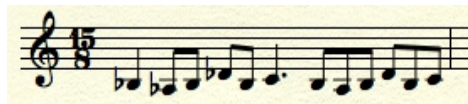
Part e (17.24-20.05)

The distinctive sound of Bulgarian bagpipes⁶³ [Atanasov 2002] is one of the main features of this part and dominates the beginning in different modes until 19.20, where the voices reappear, and the drum sound is introduced (*tarabuka's* bas on 19.39) marking the slow introduction of the main material belonging to the following segment *f*. Functionally, it serves as a bridge between parts *c1* and *f*.

Part f (20.05-24.44)

The main feature of this segment is a vocal pattern around which all the other improvising lines are created. Starting with a drum that emphasizes the beginning of the pattern, this segment is entirely structured through vocal improvisation that relies on a vocal loop that in initial improvisation sequence formed itself as a rhythmical structure of 15/8.

Figure 7 - *Part f* - rhythmical structure of 15/8

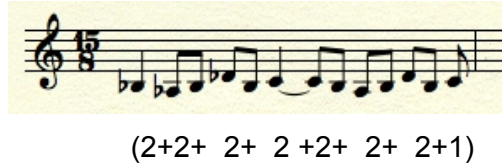


(2 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 3)

As presented in the example above, the internal organization of the loop can be easily displayed as six micro-rhythmical groups of two and three eighths, and in fact, was perceived as such when the loop was originally created. However afterwards, while improvising vocal lines over it, the actual division I perceived was the division that sounded more like seven quarter-notes plus one eighth-note. Therefore, sounding more like this:

⁶³ My favorite is the sound of Kaba Gaida, typical for Rhodope mountains in Bulgaria. It has a lower register than standar gaida. Examples of kaba gaida playing can be found at: <http://www.kabagaida.com> accessed 01/07/2014

Figure 8 - rhythmical structure of 15/8 reinterpreted



This is an interesting example of perceptual change that resulted because of the alteration in the context (adding additional layers). The whole segment is built around this motive, presenting a similar situation as in my previous work 'Improvisation – excerpt' where the musical flow was maintained by small changes in the surrounding layers while the repetitive layer stayed the same. Melodic and harmonic layers are the ones that bring change and maintain the impression of movement. The prevailing mode is Aeolian, with a major sixth here and there indicating the Dorian mode. The tonal center rests firmly on B \flat , making it the prevailing tonal center of *The Balkanites*.

There are several functionally different vocal layers: bass, introduced later on, rhythmical layer that joins in with the pattern, and three other voices that freely improvise within the given structure provided by the pattern. The reversed version of the pattern (approximately at 23.58) serves as a closure of this part, blending in with the sound of the monks choir that is re-introduced in the part *d1*.

Part d1 (24.44-29.42)

The sound of the male choir that was the main constituent of part d, has the same function here. Some of the new processes were applied, the sound pattern is here reversed and stretched, resulting in the very slow descending melodic line (D – C - B \flat), giving another direction to vocal improvisation. Due to the slow movement of this line, both D and B \flat could be taken as the prevailing tonal center of this part. A transposed bass vocal line that is present in the low register is responsorial in relation to the main material. The word *kapiya* can be heard again, by now becoming a leitmotif that binds some of the previous parts together.

Part c2 (29.42-33.44)

The sound of a bell announces the new part. Most of the sound materials have been already heard in previous parts, (a delayed single bass drum hit, time-stretched and reversed bells, the sound of stones put through different processes). The main structural purpose of this subsection is to present a contrasting segment to parts *d1* and *e2*, so there are no voices, pitched instruments or recognizable rhythmical structure used. The sound of a leaf closes this segment. This sound is now more present than when introduced first time in part *b*, in a key in between $A \flat$ and A , and introduces a new part.

Part e2 (33.44-36.29)

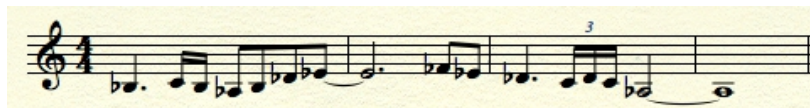
The returning sound of the bagpipes marks the beginning of this subsection, moving by transposition through different tonal centers, with the main being in between B and C . Towards the end, it settles in approximate $B \flat$ that leads to the coda.

Coda (36.29-42.03)

The *coda* is the part that was written before any other material, therefore giving the tone to the rest of the composition - after several sound processes applied, it was also used to open the work. The tonal center is settled firmly at $B \flat$, which, judging by the frequency of its occurrence during the piece, is the tonal center towards which the whole composition gravitates. As this was not done consciously, it gives some argument towards supposition that this particular tonic is the most natural settling point for my voice.

Melodically, the *coda* brings a couple of patterns from the *Introduction* that are now in their original state. One of them is this fragment in the Aeolian mode, with diminished fifth ($F \flat$) present here and there in the melody (fifth in relation to $B \flat$ as tonal center):

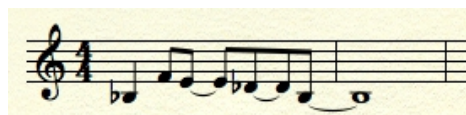
Figure 9 – Coda – approximated notation



5 b

And the melodic combination that marked the Introduction, now as it was originally sung:

Figure 10 – Coda – main motif



The main sound material comes from the first layer of vocal improvisation, that moves in parallel fourths, varying the individual motifs from the two structures presented above. Two vocal layers (lower and higher) that are moving in parallel fourths are complemented with a third one in natural register, adding the third layer to this fragment. Though some of the melodic lines moved slightly away from the initial tonal center, the ending confirms **B b** as the finishing tonic.

After looking through the analysis of the pieces presented so far, especially the ambiguity of their use in *The Balkanites*, there are several conclusions to be drawn: firstly, it becomes obvious that the main stylistic framework for melodic development were not particular modes or scales. Secondly, there are particular intervals and interval combinations that are frequently utilized, consequentially forming the sound 'pool' from which different melodic-rhythmic combinations are drawn. If it were possible to put together an 'archetypal scale' based on the frequency of intervals use and their combination, it would include:

-The frequent alteration between minor and major third which successfully pushes

melodic combinations further from major/minor distinction;

-Augmented fourth and often parallel fourths (fifths), adding the harmonic layer strongly quintal and quartal in nature;

-Natural seventh and flat second constitute some of the most present interval combinations in this piece.

There is a strong connection between tonality and ostinato patterns in classical music. It might be said that it is equally, if not more true for traditional music. Various types of repetition and ostinato structures are indeed commonplace in all the world's music. Next to the vocal itself and the way it is treated as a part of the creative process of the piece, there are three distinctive *ostinato* structures in *parts a, d, f* and *d1*. They have several roles: in a musical sense, they provide the particular grouping of rhythmic/melodic/tonal traits around which the improvisational vocal layers are organized, and are in contrast to the parts where vocal improvisation is free from strict tonal/metric suggestions. As previously mentioned, in traditional performance, we often find repetition; however, its elements are never stable: the tonal centre often does not conform to the tempered system, it slightly varies; the same song can be considerably changed from one part of the country to another, depending on the rhythmical changes in lyrics used (as they often differ). While modeling looped structures in *The Balkanites*, this was done in an attempt to imitate natural variances that occur in different performances of traditional songs. Yet, depending on the role of the looped structure within the macro-form and its relationship with the voice, different choices presented themselves in regard to the variance that could be applied to *ostinato* structures. The variance applied to these *ostinato* structures were usually influencing some of the below mentioned traits:

- The absolute tonal stability of the looped structure
- The identical and repetitive nature of rhythmical and melodic structure
- The register occupied by *ostinato* (low, middle and high).

The three distinctly different patterns used (*bağlama* sample in *part a*, a choir of monks in *part d* and vocal pattern in *f*) are the macrostructure cornerstones of *The Balkanites*, as these patterns are the most perceptible fragments of the music material used. In the macro-form the other segments, though differing among themselves, rest on a functional

contrast to these *ostinato* materials.

If we look at the macro-form of the piece as shown in the Table no 4 we can see that it is divided into three major sections:

A (a-b-c), B (d - c1 -e -f -d1) and A1 (c2 -e2- Coda)

As I mentioned before, while working on *The Balkanites*, I tried to conduct partial analysis (writing down materials used, sound manipulation techniques as well as listening to recording many times). This helped me to identify the sections later, and that the formation of these parts was mainly influenced by the combination of the following: introduction of new material, re-introduction of material from the previous parts with the degree of change and establishing the level of contrast between them. Part A is an introduction of materials that often reappear in the other subsections of the composition; part B has the highest level of contrast on both sonic and contextual level (in relation to A and A1), having the clear internal structure where the first and last parts contain the same material that contrasts the one in the centre (B: *d - c1 - e - d1 contrasting e and f*); part A1 serves as a functional 'reprise' of the materials from part A. Yet, the final decision had to be checked on of the perceptual level; I have re-listened to the composition many times and noting the final structure (macro-form) did in the end depend entirely on what I perceived as contrast and transformation of the sonic material used.

4.5 Vocal improvisation as a compositional technique

One of the main traits of the composition *The Balkanites* and the short piece *Echoes* that resulted as a part of this research is the use of voice, in particular – my own, female voice. As a composer that wrote instrumental music as well as vocal–instrumental, I am aware at all times of the fact that composition is often at least partly (if not completely) shaped by the nature of the chosen medium. Every instrument and voice all have their own domain, timbre, and how they sound in different registers. However, the way I was trained to approach composing basically meant using classical notation and piano as main composing tools, which is *fundamentally* different from the task that arose from

choosing a single voice as a main medium, and technology to shape both the voice and sounds collected from the particular cultural environment of the Balkans.

During the work on the *The Balkanites*, several structuring problems have arisen from the use of the same medium (voice) throughout the composition, mainly due to its natural limitations.

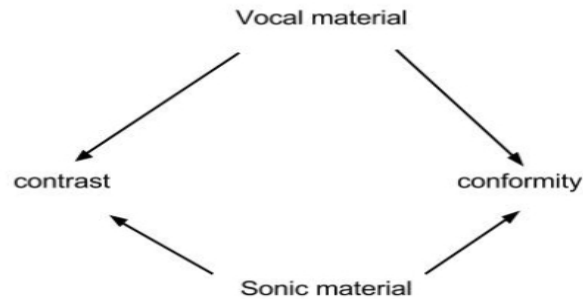
1) **Establishing the structure.** Having the same characteristic sonic qualities of the vocal, even with manipulating the sound through different sound processes can interfere with establishing the higher form of the composition. Naturally, a single vocal covers a limited amount of sonic possibilities, and in order to establish contrast, it was necessary to have some parts without a voice, and often vocal transposed out of its natural range. Where the vocal is the main drive for a musical narrative, texture, sound and registers were manipulated so as to maintain the impression of development and change. The different roles that my voice took within the piece depended on the functional space it occupied in relation to other sonic elements, but in general it corresponded with a homophonic and polyphonic treatment of the structure. Sometimes it took a role of *ostinato* / rhythmical layer, or would appear as a pitch – an undefined element that blends with the rest of the sonic material rather than being a prime bearer of music activity.

In relation to distribution of sonic elements, the main narrative generally established itself in two ways:

1) where the vocal was predominant, the amount of sonic material was reduced, taking a role of either a contrapuntal (contrasting) layer, or fitting in with the voice;

2) where the vocal was in the background or absent, more space was given to a greater variety of sounds and their interaction with each other. Apart from giving precedence to chosen sonic material, there was another way of aiding musical development, by putting these sounds either in concordance with (integration) or in contrast to each other, therefore constantly varying their possible relationships (as shown in figure 11 below):

Figure 11 – contrast and integration of musical material



2) **Vocal Improvisation.** In live performance, it meant working within a limited number of parameters that could be controlled at the same time. Changes in melodic-rhythmic parameter, texture and registers were the ones most employed for this purpose and all the other elements were arranged in accordance with this. I tried to keep the processes I would normally employ in live performance while creating the work. In composition, as a technique for creating micro-form, vocal improvisation usually meant layering the single vocal that functions as a guide, and then singing improvised lines or words that build structure and movement around it. The result is a responsorial structure that, in different forms, characterizes the whole composition. If the other sonic material is present, depending on the role and place the vocal takes in relation to it (is it placed in front, merging with the other sonic material or being in the background) the treatment of vocal changes in accordance.

While working on the *The Balkanites* I discovered that the greatest challenge lay in *distinguishing when* the intuitive choices that were made as a result of improvisation were contributing towards the music narration and development of structure, and when they were not. While working on the piece and the formal analysis of it, it became obvious that listening and experimenting are not always enough to settle some of the issues arising from relying on improvisation as the main narrative technique. Noting

down the main traits of the subsections as they were created while composing the piece at the same time helped with some of these issues: analysis forced conscious thinking about which parameters were **important** for establishing the narration at a particular point in the compositional timeline, and which **were not**. It also helped to grasp the overall distribution and utilization of different sonic materials and parameters and their role in forming the macro form.

One of the consequences of making intuitive musical choices the guiding principle while composing *The Balkanites* was discovering how relative the perception of the passage of time is in different parts of the composition. Depending on the musical material, the impression of the time passage would be different – slow, fast, moderate, or sometimes so slow that it seemed like it almost stopped.

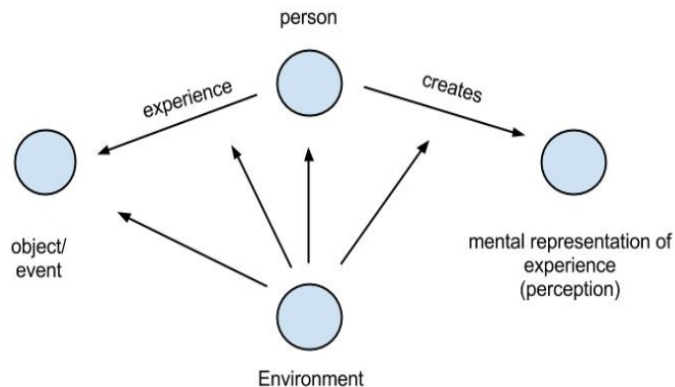
4.6 Perceiving musical time – density of music activity

When we think about time, no matter if it is taken as a general notion (objective view/measured time) or experienced as a factor in the creative process (as in music), we instantly become more aware of the existing distinction between time as itself and ‘representation’ of time we construct in our minds. Use of this term immediately triggers associative links to multitude of concepts: notion of cause – effect, a succession of events, simultaneity, cyclic principles, bio-psychological clock etc that can be all applied (up to a certain point) to musical narration. Furthermore, mental representation of time and all these concepts are inseparable from physical/biological measurement of time – which depends on a planetary cycle, day/night cycle, cycle of sleep/wake states etc. Therefore all representations of time are influenced by and constructed to fit these cycles our whole being experiences as inevitable. How this influences our experiencing the passage of time when it comes to music would make an extensive research on its own, so here I will concentrate on the performance of music in a specific space.

Music, as ‘temporal’ art, depends in great measure on the type of space or environment it is presented in, as well as in reverse case: ‘spatial’ artworks (paintings, sculptures) require a certain period of time in order to be perceived in their fullness. This comparison could as well be made in relation to our senses – visual arts are available to see and

touch, they have a physical, tactile dimension; they can be perceived as objects. Sonic arts address our hearing and are not physical in the same sense – therefore we can think of them as *events* rather than *objects*. However, human perspective built on senses forces us to make this distinction. If we could imagine existence of timeless being, his notion of *objects* will probably be equal to our notion of *events* – object is, at the end, just event of certain length in time. However, both ‘events’ and ‘objects’ share one characteristic which makes them equal, although they exist on different physical levels: our mental representations of them both in certain measure **depend upon our perception**. We experience art events/objects presented to us as being part of time/space, which we also belong to. In perceiving artistic work we use more than one sense, and the interaction between them is what enables us to acquire the experience. Any artwork takes place within a specific timeframe, which enables us to fully experience it – and store this experience in our memory as a mental representation. So, we have a work of art – an interaction between the work of art and our senses – and finally storing this experience as mental representation.

Figure 12 – creating mental representation



If we take a closer look at the figure 12 above, it would become obvious where the major difficulty in detailing the relation between the artwork and the individual that experiences

it lies. The variety of possible relations between the particular event/object in question and our experience of it depends on far too many variables.

It seems that cycle and repetition as musical principles are something that most musical genres have in common (apart from music composed using techniques that deliberately avoid any repetition or patterning), be it a simple folk tune, or a complex orchestral piece an hour and a half in length. These natural principles also seem to be linked to our perceptual habits and cognitive skills. As Gestalt theory suggests, being able to recognize a pattern, even when it is incomplete or just hinted at is an ability inherent to the human cognitive style, and is not limited to experiencing sound only. Music that affords a certain amount of recognition to the listener is often found pleasurable, and this fact has been known and utilized by composers for generations – not always consciously, of course. As Claude Levy Strauss puts it:

'The musical emotion springs precisely from the fact that at each moment the composer withholds or adds more or less than the listener anticipates on the basis of a pattern that he thinks he can guess, but that he is incapable of wholly divining. If the composer withholds more than we anticipate, we experience a delicious falling sensation; we feel we have been torn from a stable point on the musical ladder and thrust into the void. When the composer withholds less, the opposite occurs: he forces us to perform gymnastic exercises more skillful than our own' [Lévi-Strauss 1964:17]

This is one of the non-musical ways of describing the actual cognitive process that occurs when one's listening to music. The composer utilizes the same mental action while he is immersed in the creative process and the constant revisions of it, s/he is splitting his cognitive process into two streams: s/he is producing musical material and reacting to it immediately. However, the perception of the finished work entirely depends on the unknown side of this equation – the listener.

4.7 Types of music narration: principles of music translated into structure

According to my experience so far, structuring a piece of music can take two different paths, which do not necessarily exclude one another. Musical composition relies either on some preconceived structural idea, concept, technique or principle(s) that governs and is imposed on the musical flow. Or the composer builds the flow from the ground up, relying on one's individual feeling for passage of time, making an intuitive decision about *when* exactly will the particular music events occur during the piece's timeline. Often, creating a musical composition requires both of these approaches to be present, and every composer develops his own balance between them. What is common to both of these ways is the general necessity to maintain the impression of constant **change**, which, either slighter or larger, will help to maintain the feeling of development. There are several parameters common to musical creative processes, but they can all be reduced to balancing between presence and/or absence of: repetition, transformation, and contrast.

Repetition establishes pattern⁶⁴, expectance and predictability; (this is obviously true for any non musical event in time which repeats long enough). In traditional music, melodic and rhythmic formulae of any kind is proven to be a mnemonic help, and combined with lyrics is what forms a basis for *guslar's* poetry. In some parts of *The Balkanites*, it can be a driving force of musical narration. *Repetition* in micro-form is evident every time the sound that has been previously used returns as a part of new structure (like the sounds of *list / leaf*, and *gaida / bagpipes*) looking at the macrostructure, we can find this relationship between the *Introduction* part (reversed coda) and *coda* (original material that functions as a reprise).

Transformation is a gradual change: in small or larger measure it violates the established expectance by changing the pattern; (we still have expectance but not predictability).

⁶⁴ Pattern as used here, means the melodic, rhythmic or some other grouping that is recognizable as such and that is repetitive.

Transformation can be used as a tool for manipulating the existing material or introducing a new material gradually. One of the most employed types of gradual transformation in *The Balkanites* is when repetitive layer is retained as a constant, and the other parameters change (sonic material, register, tonal center, complexity). It is also the main strategy used in the *Improvisation/Excerpt*.

Contrast is the perceptible change in musical flow that usually occurs by introducing new music material with little or no preparation (we lose both the feeling of expectancy and predictability) or the sudden break in the development of music narration. Intensity of contrast correlates to several parameters changed from one part of the piece to the other. *Contrast* on a macro scale becomes evident either on the borderline of each part of *The Balkanites* if it is sharp (many music parameters changed at the same time) or later in the analysis when comparing the properties of each part when few parameters are changed. As to contrast, *The Balkanites* is built on the oppositions between three parts that have a recognizable melodic – rhythmical patterning (*a, d, e*) and other parts that lack repetition structures.

These types of narration might be called the basic ‘tools’ enabling the composer to create an impression of ‘movement’, or ‘progress’ in the piece, as well as building up the macro form. Since they apply to information distribution and are strongly related to our perceptive habits, they are also applicable to the works that involve more than one media (audio-visual, for example).

In shorter music pieces (*Echoes, Ismail I and II*) that are partly or entirely improvised, during the process of transformation of the given music material, I applied these principles on an entirely intuitive basis, therefore allowing the structuring to be a more unconscious process. However, with *The Balkanites* this method was not applicable to the composition as a whole. The shorter pieces have a time span from 3 – 6 minutes, and within that time usually just a single music idea was introduced, developed and brought to some kind of conclusion. With *The Balkanites* and its approximate length of 45,50 minutes, the process of structuring had to be conscious in many aspects, as the composition as a whole had to leave an impression of consistence, although built on different sonic materials.

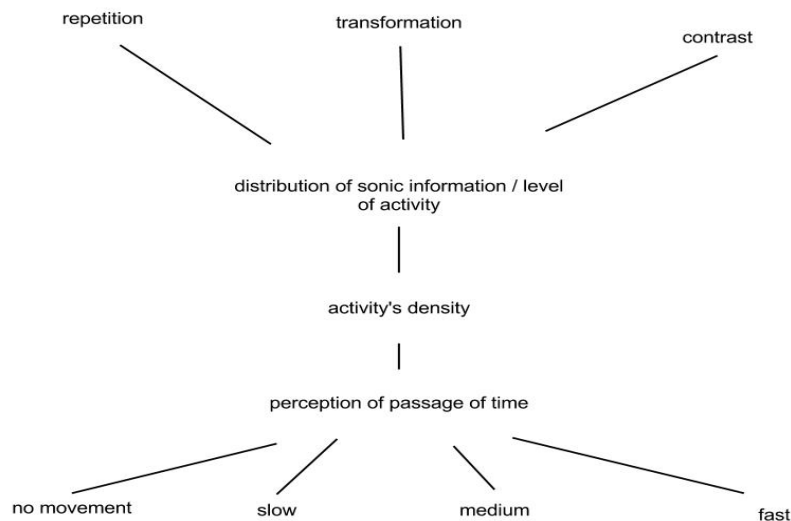
Change can introduce almost anything: new material, new sorts of repetition, and introduces new expectancy and predictability which at some point in the timeline will also be violated by returning to the first material (same or transformed), introducing a new one, or simply ending the piece. The best way to formulate it so far I found is in the tenth edition of 'The Oxford Companion to Music', where Percy A. Scholes defines musical form as:

'a series of strategies designed to find a successful mean between the opposite extremes of unrelieved repetition and unrelieved alteration'[Scholes 1977].

The balance (or absence of it) between the extremes of repetition and transformation, is a 'musical playground', where each composer and musician strive to find their own and unique place. The passage of time in music is perceived as in any other activity – that is, it entirely depends on the flow and distribution of musical information in any given timeline on our ability to absorb it either in its wholeness or partially. To be able to follow how the above-mentioned three principles interact, it was necessary to establish the **activity** that can represent all of them and their distribution throughout the piece's timeline. With the analysis of *The Balkanites* I also tried to reflect the principle of distributing sonic information as *activity*, where parts with less activity inevitably follow the more dense parts, and opposite (the flow of information is being referred to as an *activity*, and the variance in density of the activity as an *activity's density*).

The following representation (figure 13) shows how different types of narration relate to the perception of time passing:

Figure 13 - principles of music narration translated into activity's density



If the composer aims to give a listener an impression of completeness of the form, he has to employ all three of these types of manipulating music narration, especially if the composition is a long - lasting one. Judging by the pieces analyzed previously, depending on length, the contrasts will be sharper (as in longer pieces) or almost non-existent in the case of 1-3 minute miniatures. One of the results of an awareness of these parameters is that we can show how the curve representing the *tension* of the piece rises and falls in relation to them. Only following the minute analysis of the creative process can give the necessary insight that might enable us to graphically represent the tension (activity's density) of a single piece of music. As we see in shorter works (*Nigredo*, *Miniature*, *Ismail I and II*, *Echoes*) the predominant type of music narration is a repetition and transformation of the material exposed at the beginning of the piece, with contrast almost completely absent. As contrast comes from changing several music parameters at the same time or introducing new sonic material, this is only natural: as the focus was on the integrity of the shorter pieces, sharp contrasts could not be afforded. However, in *The Balkanites*, all three principles are employed as a structuring approach to both micro and macro-form.

The question of perception of time in music is a question for cognitive research, and cannot be properly addressed here. However, what can be noted are my perceptive 'habits' while listening to music, since these habits are the one most responsible for determining the macrostructure of the piece. To what extent these habits are universal would be an interesting subject for another line of research.

After many listenings and noting the impressions, I reached the conclusion that in *The Balkanites* the rise and fall in *activity density* (the impression of 'fast' or 'slow' passages of time) relates to the following parameters:

- presence or absence of *ostinato*; or
- presence of absence of detectable melodic structures

Figure 14 - micro-form and density of music activity

Microform	Introd.	a	b	c	d	c1	e	f	d1	c2	e2	Coda
Density of activity	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	Low	High	High	High	Low	Medium	High

Figure 14 shows the levels of activity density in regard to each subsection of *The Balkanites*. These levels are related to the parameters mentioned above and are only approximate/relative to the subsection that follows. In all the fragments of the composition where I detected *ostinato* movement, or melodic structures that are recognizable in its variations, density of activity was high – that is, the sonic material would give an impression of a faster time passage. The same conclusion stands for the opposite situation: parts that lack melodic movement or clear rhythmical organization are the ones with low activity density. Therefore, it seems that musical time manipulation for me depended entirely on the presence (or absence) of recognizable music structures, that are primarily melodic or rhythmic. Density of activity is equal to the amount of musical information that is conveyed to the listener. In order for the parts with high

activity density to have the biggest impact, it was necessary to surround them by fragments that have low activity density, which is clear from the figure above.

And some final remarks regarding style. As Harry White noticed, once analysis is performed, interesting results often arise, especially when a particular 'national' school of composition is in question: like the list of musical attributes relating to the 'Czechness in Music' made by Michael Beckerman. These attributes include very common musical occurrences such as first beat accent (related to speech and folk song), syncopated rhythms (often related to characteristic dances), lyrical passages, harmonic movement outlining triads a major third apart, two-part writing involving parallel thirds and sixths etc. As Harry White stresses:

'The point about this list is that, as Beckerman himself observes, it is both responsible to technical and aurally perceptible features of Smetana and Dvořák particularly, and likewise strongly reminiscent of the work of so many other composers without the smallest connection to Bohemia' [White 2004: 31].

Meaning that quite often, no matter how detailed stylistic analysis is, it is still hard to accurately grasp the unique traits of the composer's style using just analysis. In past, while I was working on the analysis of compositions (mainly classical and romantic composers), I was always hoping to find a clue to the ways author has structured his work and maybe determine the main traits of his style. In the case of *The Balkanites*, the analysis pointed towards main traits being: the utilization of parallel fifths and fours, general tonal stability, presence of repetition as a functional technique and predominantly modal melodic orientation. Of course, all of these can be applied to plenty of works and established styles in music. However, in this case, performing an analysis helped me to establish macrostructure and look closer into the ways conscious choice was introduced into the organization of mostly improvised parts.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Between two worlds: imagining identity

Among various standpoints regarding music identity is the notion that identity is always being constructed in relation to something else, in relation to the 'other' [Rice 2007: 24]. For example, if a person tries to describe a music piece to another, the main characteristics of the music will inevitably be communicated through 'similarities' and 'differences' to some other music. Labeling certain attributes as 'similar' or 'different' means automatically positioning the piece 'in relation to' something, therefore helping the person to determine its context. Usually, there are just two contexts to be referred to: musical (positioning the piece or composer within a genre or certain tradition) or cultural (connecting it to the cultural context or social group). This is the *confirmative* way for music to acquire identity. However, in the case of denial of any possible similarities or connections to the genre, style, tradition, culture, or social group, can music acquire identity? I would argue that it can, as in this case to deny is simply a *negative* way of positioning oneself in relation to something else. When examining the Balkan itself, Balkan music and some of the ways it is perceived, the words 'in between' or 'the bridge' are often employed. Yet, how well and does any of them truly reflects the state of the matter?

'West' and 'East' over the decades became enormously rich and powerful discourses that can only survive and define themselves in relation to one another – and, as it is, often define as opposites. Within the European context, The Balkans are often perceived as the 'East'. In the Balkans, former Yugoslavian republics are considering Turkey as 'East'; within the territory of former Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia perceive themselves as 'West' in comparison to other republics which are the 'Balkans' therefore 'East'. There is no end to self-construction of identity within this 'West'/positive – 'East'/ negative axis both on the levels of nation and individual. This

duality and some kind of positive/negative perception of 'West' and 'East' exist within every individual, and is perceived differently depending of the person's origin, cultural background and political orientation.

The other type of opposite positioning is found in the relationship between marginality and centre, especially in the countries of former Yugoslavia, where the 'West' is perceived as the centre and the 'East' as being on the margin. This relationship translates into the smallest public creative practices within the countries themselves. In Serbia, music practices that have similarities to Turkish music, or further 'East', like Syria or Iran, are considered not to be a part of the pure national heritage (as it was spoiled by five centuries of Ottoman rule), and though the 'turbo folk' is still the most influential music genre in Serbia, it is still perceived as a cultural 'cancer' and its success attributed to huge media coverage this music has, and not to the attractiveness of its attributes to the listeners. Therefore, this music is marginalized by the elite, and while there are attempts to study it, there are mostly focused on the political engagement of the music rather than on examining the purely musical reasons for this genre's attraction to the public and how it relates to our heritage. In Serbia, we find that practices of 'authentic' traditional music have slowly declined and died out among people, and are barely keeping alive through rare music festivals and enthusiasts that are learning to play the traditional instruments from the few remaining teachers (for example, panpipe and *gusle* playing). Another pair of oppositions, rural – urban, was partly responsible for this decline, as these practices very quickly became 'rural', and in time (and the advent of the radio) had to give way to the wave of urban folk music coming from the towns. They remained as material for ethnomusicological research, but as a live music practice they lost their battle with the new music that replaced it at weddings and celebrations, as well as in everyday life and work.

As an author, and within the limitations of my own creative practice that involved traditional music, I became aware how difficult it is to escape these divisions in perception among not only scholars, but also the people of the region in general. The notions such as 'culture', 'tradition', became even less clear as they became misused in the constant battle of ideologies. Having the opportunity to conduct this research outside the Balkan region gave me a fresh perspective and insight into this issue as I

was exposed to reactions to my works from audiences coming from completely different cultural backgrounds. These differences in impressions proved to be of utmost importance, especially among the audience coming from countries traditionally considered 'Eastern', like India, Pakistan and Iran. The elements of the music that bore similarities to 'Oriental' scales were appreciated and recognized as valuable. These experiences helped making of the works considered in this research to be a journey towards positive, creative engagement with the Ottoman heritage and my own vision of the Balkans.

'Meaning as use makes it possible to understand communication in music. It is not (not even in linguistic communication) to transmit ideas from head to head but rather to share common practices, norms and habits'
[Määttänen 2003:9].

Within the Western cultural sphere, especially in art and education, music is often perceived as something produced by the individual for the consummation of the collective [Cross 2006: 2]. The resulting idolatry of 'authorship' is an exact opposite of the practice of the bards of oral tradition and the meaning of their work, and I always felt this positioning of the author to be somewhat unnatural – employing technology helped me to build another bridge towards the audience. Similarly to oral tradition practice, there is no 'final' or 'perfect' version of the work; composition truly exists only when performed.

Every individual is influenced by the other and in a multitude of ways, so there is no real isolation. Within any communicative discourse the speaker shapes his or her discourse in response to the other. Similarly, the listener makes sense of another's discourse by taking a responsive/interactive stance towards the speaker/text [Kent 1998]. Bakhtin argued that no meaningful communication can occur without a response from the other.

'In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are others' [Bakhtin 1986:7].

Music and music perception can be comprehended as being analogue to culture, and

is often one of the ways of approaching and decoding the particular culture. Listener is an *active* agent. Listening to the piece of music for the first time means employing one's memory, cognitive skills, culturally acquired tastes - and all that in order to make a judgment, and position the experience within and in relation to previous ones. There are plenty of frameworks for investigation of music meaning and identity; some were suggested by Elizabeth Tolbert and Ian Cross [2008:11], which applied Peircean semiotic systems of icon, index and symbol to musical meaning⁶⁵. Following the same line of thought, there is possible application of Wittgenstein notion of language-game to music, or in Määttänen's words:

'the basic principle of this approach is the following: meaning is use. To understand the meaning of a linguistic expression is to understand how to use it' [Määttänen 2003: 3].

If we replace 'linguistic' with 'music' expression, it opens an interesting perspective to meaning in music especially considering different 'roles' music can have in socio-cultural context and in individual's life. The notion of music identity as something that is constructed leads naturally to questions about who is doing the constructing. Can we claim that individuals themselves, by their sense of belonging to groups and their self-understanding, are actively constructing their own identities? And what is the nature of this process, especially in the conditions of modernity?

This research and music compositions it focused on both inevitably reflected my own particular position within the given cultural frame, including my own perception and understanding of that frame. However, while I was composing and during the writing of this paper I was placed *outside* the actual cultural, social and musical sphere on which this paper mostly refers to. The nature of the removal was only physical at the beginning, as mental habits and ways of thinking remained the same. However, things and perceptions whose existence we do not notice - as they are taken for granted being usually embedded in our everyday cultural experience, had to change in order for myself as an individual and musician to develop a relationship with the new cultural environment. The differences in ways of thinking became more obvious, starting from the norm for 'accepted' behavior, to the relationship with music. The new territories of music technology and electroacoustic music become linked with

⁶⁵ Symbol/index/icon is a completely abstract system, the symbol/index/icon triad can be applied equally to all forms of communication. See <http://www.peirce.org> accessed 02/07/2014

new experiences I had as a musician, and the awareness of the nature of the research was deeply affected by fact that the certain perspective and level of observation could have never been possible without the change of cultural circumstances.

The approach to Balkan music tradition in this paper was therefore, two-fold; firstly, it involved the necessary construction and awareness of multitudes of existing perceptive habits towards the cultural region that generated most of the sonic material; secondly, the individualized approach to re-contextualization of that material through the vocal improvisation and application of sound manipulation techniques was the main result of the both compositional and analytical process that was not bound by the very cultural environment it sprung from. It became possible to use the music resources that are (being a part of national heritage) usually highly emotionally charged. As regarding to result there is hope that, through the individualized treatment of the vocal and its interactions with all of traditional elements new, positive context had been established, one that might be safely called 'Imaginary Balkans' without having the consequence of relating to any political or ideological stand of either the author or particular country.

The notions of the Western European Art Music, which I adopted through undertaking the training of the classical composer, were insisting on abstract thinking both in regard to music and music analysis. However, at the same time they presented a handicap – it was hard, almost impossible to determine, truly comprehend and **value** the music identity formed under influence of the Balkan region music traditions from the stand point of notions and values promoted by Western European Art Music. As Lawson points out,

'in virtually every culture outside of Western European Arts Music, music is not easily separable from other forms of humanistic expression [Lawson 2010: 431].

The same is true for oral tradition, actually to understand oral tradition is to **contextualize** it within society and culture. Lawson noticed that exclusiveness of musicological approach to music investigation presented a problem to other researchers, anthropologists in particular – as their main object is to perceive culture

as a whole, where no activity is completely independent from its context. However, music education creates a context and cultural (and political) context of its own. As an example, one of the side effects of exposure to 17 years long classical education were my great difficulties, and sometimes complete inability to sing any melodies that could not be reduced to twelve-note chromatic scale, that is, standard tempered system. Notated music was necessary and responsible for the complex of ideas like authorship, originality, and evolution in music to be developed and sequentially, for any notions that originated from and are closely bound to them. Yet, in order to discover (or rediscover?) one's music identity in relation to oral tradition (as was my intention), notation and values that came with it had to be left out. Technology then became more than a medium or a tool: it became the bridge; it enabled direct creative approach to the issues of opposition between the ideas of 'ethnicity' and 'traditional' music (as expressions of collective) and the individuality of composer as an active agent in compositional process. In his paper about Art music and Ethnicity, Harry White brings forward these problems in interesting manner:

'...the 'ethnicity' in Slavic music, certainly insofar as Smetana, Dvořák and Janáček are concerned, is not a question of redeeming the lost remnants of a destroyed culture. It is not even a matter of limiting the word 'ethnicity' to those indigenous features of Slavic folk music, which Smetana borrowed to construct a national musical discourse for Bohemia. It is rather a matter of understanding 'ethnicity' as a composite of musical and historical ideas which collectively permit this music to be 'about' Bohemia to the extent that it becomes Czech music through the international medium of German romanticism' [White 2004: 29-46].

In the same manner, what the works discussed in this paper tried to achieve were the establishment of similar approach to 'ethnicity' of Balkan music and its use in compositional work. What this paper emphasizes through creative practice is to recognize the use of 'ethnic' sound material as equally relevant in foundation of a personal style as any other influence that could be imagined, yet without it being perceived as an obstacle, 'common place' or politically engaged action in any way. The very fact that these pieces have not being created within the cultural sphere of their origin was immensely helpful: the current cultural climate in the world of contemporary music in Serbia shows the symptoms of disregarding the traditional music as a serious and valuable artistic interest. At this moment, this may have been a consequence of the general preference of these countries to be perceived as a part

of Europe inasmuch culturally as geographically, and leading towards stigmatizing any attempts of artistic engagement with tradition as being of 'nationalistic', 'conservative', and 'backward' nature. Or it is simply a natural result of the change in artistic interests: 'national' schools of composition are yet fresh in music history of the former Yugoslav countries, and not enough time has passed for this interest to be revived without reflecting and associating it with the conditions of the 19th century when they were flourishing. Whatever the reason, history of music clearly shows that engagement of composers with the tradition was not always a simple matter of current artistic fashion or politically feasible; I hope that these works with fall into the same category.

Appendix I

Interview with Jelena Ćurčić

You are a storyteller, and specifically - Serbian fairy tales storyteller. Can you tell me a bit more about your background and what motivates you to engage with Serbian oral tradition in this way?

Storytelling is at the core of everything I do, and oral storytelling is, perhaps, the most accessible of all art forms, both at an audience and at a participatory level: it forges a strong bond and sense of community between the teller and the listener, a solid bridge, a two-way street. That sense of community, the shared experience, is really what I'm interested in.

*I started out as a performer, then moved on to work behind the scenes, writing and directing, and finally slowly began making my way back to the stage in recent years, through experimenting directly with storytelling modes, making bespoke generative performances. (My intimate storytelling project: **Four Seasons Story-Box: Portals, Microcosms and The Art of Storytelling**, saw me perform a series of 10-minute stories in monthly installments, in broom cupboards around town, for two members of the audience at a time).*

When reading about your work, I was strongly reminded of Vuk Karadžić, Serbian philologist and linguist who was the major reformer of the Serbian language and pioneer collector of fairy tales, folk songs and riddles. How do you see yourself in relation to his work?

Well, one might say that, in a way – a very small way – I am continuing Vuk Karadžić's legacy. As you say, he travelled extensively across the Balkan region collecting and recording poems and songs, folk tales, fables and fairy tales, customs, riddles and proverbs from Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia and other areas, transcribing, encouraging, fostering and championing literature that came 'from the mouths of the people', and thus preserving it for posterity.

*The main aims of my **Serbian Fairy Tales** project have been to introduce Serbian culture, language and literature (currently under-represented in English) not only to the second and third generations of Serbian immigrants in the UK, but to a wider audience in an interesting and innovative way, by combining live performances, online content and an illustrated book version. The project also strives to present and promote the unique, traditional, ethnic heritage and cultural legacy of the Balkans and to celebrate and enhance British Serb identity.*

So, in terms of preserving the cultural heritage, the parallels are there. However, where Vuk created a mountain of work in the process, I am but scratching the surface. I hope to have an opportunity in the future to select, translate and present more of his body of work.

But more than anything else, during the making of my project, I have to say I felt a strong parallel in terms of our personal stories and experiences. We both moved away from our modest origins to European metropolises (Vienna in his case, London in mine), in a (perhaps crazy) attempt to make a living out of writing. He struggled greatly during his years of collecting and transcribing, trying to get the books published, trying to survive. It was very much a labour of love, and his mentors (Jacob Grimm and Jernej Kopitar) spurred him on to persevere in the face of difficulties. And in my times of struggle, I often drew solace from this, from the knowledge of his struggles, and his perseverance, and felt spurred on by his spirit.

How is this world of digitised data and fast flow and sharing of information influencing the practice of storytelling?

Good question. Well, the way I see it, storytelling is everything – and everywhere. 'Walk where we will, we tread upon some story' – that's my favourite quote, from Cicero, and it can be applied to our modern age as well as the ancient one. On the one hand, digitised world and fast-flow information sharing create new platforms for storytelling – a different kind of storytelling, a quick, 140-character-long kind (there are some trends for short-story writing via Twitter feeds!). News feeds do the same – they cramp a whole story into a headline, or a tag-line. Everything is moving so fast, we are bombarded with information and our concentration spans, as a result, have shrunk considerably. But while the emergence of new platforms and new ways of sharing our stories is a positive thing, what's lost in the process is the art of story-

telling. *The telling has shifted to almost bullet-pointing a story. That's why I do what I do – I believe that it's important to revive the good old art of storytelling, of telling and, even more importantly, listening – to stop and to listen for more than the average 4 minutes a person allocates to reading a, say, news story – to encourage people to stop and to listen for 10 minutes, at least, an hour, preferably!*

According to your experience, are there any similarities to be found between Serbian fairy tales and oral tradition from other countries in the Balkans? Or even wider?

Numerous! In fact, my book focuses as much on presenting the selected tales, giving an insight into the world of Serbian folklore and its historical and cultural context, as on drawing similarities and making connections between them and the folk tales of other cultures. But, as I mentioned earlier, I am but scratching the surface here, too. I do continuous research in this field, and a lot of it has informed this particular piece of work – I have found many connections between Serbian tales and, say, Russian (most prominently) and other Slavic nations; but there are also similarities with the traditions of our neighbouring nations such as Greece, Italy, Romania and Albania, then some Irish and other Celtic nations' tales, German, English, then Asian – the Middle East, as you know, has had a major influence on the Serbian culture in many ways, via the Ottoman Empire. And further afield, some of the tales contain elements found in Northern African, Oriental – China and Japan, and Aboriginal Australian folk traditions, even! The links and similarities abound.

Stories and tales used to be passed from one person to the other, generation to generation. Is there a storytelling model you follow, or some sort of traditional practice?

*Oh, tricky question. I try to bring a rich story-telling and narrative 'feel' to all my work; but although I have done a lot of research and developed my own practice over the years, i.e. it is all largely of my own making, I do truly believe that it has also been passed down through the family genes and the rich Balkan tradition of storytelling. My grandmother, who is the real star of my **Serbian Fairy Tales** show, **Vila's Mountain**, was a great storyteller; so is my mother and pretty much all the women I was surrounded by in my childhood – but so was my father. It's in my blood, I dare say. Then again, although I used a very traditional, classic model of story-telling in*

*this show, I also like to experiment with storytelling modes – the 10-minute stories I mentioned earlier are a good example. Here you literally had to sink to your knees, pass through a tiny door at the foot of a wall and, squeezing into the space, encounter your very own storyteller. The idea was to enhance the intimacy of the experience, but also to emphasise and showcase the two basic, tried and true tools of storytelling and theatre itself: story and performance. I do similar experiments with my theatre work – **Good Morning, Mr Rabbit**, a play by the Serbian playwright Milan Marković, which I translated and directed for **Flying Fish Theatriks'** London Tour in 2008/09, was conceived as a multi-media 'story' set within one large performance space but consisting of a number of locations to which the audience moved to hear and watch discrete narratives. As the stories unfolded characters and their lives began to link across to each other, breaking out of their own physical boundaries to appear on each other's sets; interweaving to form a final united narrative in one place and time. Here I used storytelling, puppetry, digital media and lighting to draw the audience into a shared experience in an immersive way; they shared something more than the experience of most theatre audiences; they were to some degree part of the narrative as well as its audience.*

Is there a formulae in the stories - the way they are structured for example?

Though there are many formulae, structurally, the stories in my collection are varied. Some are short and sweet, no longer than a page; others are long-winded and contain tale-with-a-tale, feats of epic proportions. From the mountain of narratives in Karadžić's collections, where some stories have several versions and variants, I have chosen the most characteristic ones to represent a particular type of tales – 'female', as Karadžić classified them, i.e. tales that 'tell of wonders that cannot be', in other words: 'fairy tales', as opposed to 'male', or 'legends', which are a kind of catalogue of potential destinies of men and women, telling about things that could actually occur. Many of the tales in my selection contain themes, motifs and formulae present in the folk tales of other nations, though with typically Serbian elements, such as the Aždaja (dragon), for example. And almost all contain elements of the Slavic pagan mythology, thus distinguishing them from the classic stories of kings of imprecise realms. I guess one could say that the tales also represent the tellers – as Vuk transcribed these tales directly 'from the mouths of the people' – some make good use of repetition (a popular tool in storytelling), others link one story to the back

of another, or make a whole new one half-way through! – like in my favourite tale, **The Bear's Son** – a kind of Serbian **Alice in Wonderland**, one might say...

Are there any characters that might be described as archetypal (invincible warrior, beautiful maidens etc)?

Well, as Milan Mihailović points out in the television series **The Mysteries of Serbia**, at the top of the Serbian mythological pantheon sit two royalties: His Majesty The Zmaj (Dragon), and Her Majesty The Vila (Fairy). Many of the tales in my collection are focused around these two characters; others feature Animal Heroes, Witches, Giants or, even ordinary folk who, either through some magical intervention or, often, through 'outsmarting' (this seems to be a highly popular theme in Serbian folklore), overcome evil adversaries and rise to glory. The classic hero journey narrative arc is often there – but so is the less common strong heroine and tales that don't end with the typical 'happily ever after': **The Maiden Who Was Faster Than a Horse**. As a 21st century woman, I enjoy a good old tale where the female character leads the action and has the last laugh, instead of being a passive heroine withering away at the top of some tower waiting to be rescued by some Prince Valiant. The tale is also featured in my storytelling performance for adults which accompanies this book, **Vila's Mountain**. On many occasions when I have performed the show, this particular tale has provoked the most comments and questions, as the modern audiences do not seem to find it easy to comprehend a fairy tale where the hero does not get to ride off into the sunset with his lady on the back; I've had to explain that it is the ultimate story of chase and that the fair maiden simply one-ups the men! So, yes – archetypal characters abound, though with a typically Serbian flavour and twist to the tale...

What do you think storytelling, as part of oral tradition, brings to people of modern age?

This question ties in nicely with some of the previous ones. In our image-satiated, news-bombarded, short-attention-span age, storytelling, I believe, provides a kind of haven. I believe in and am dedicated to the positive impact of the arts, and storytelling has the power to educate, to inspire and to change lives. It reminds of the things that bind us together as human beings, it provides a safe environment for sharing, and for connecting, and for enhancing our lives through re-imagining and re-

structuring the narratives we tell our selves, as well as the ones we hear. It also helps preserve the language and emphasise its beauty and the use of spoken communication – it is no secret that a deficit in oracy among school children exists, directly as a result of the tech-oriented age we live in. I see storytelling as a direct contribution to addressing this deficit. In the beginning, there was word, if you ask me...Word.

Do you find the stories to communicate universal values, and if yes which ones would it be?

*I'm a great fan of Joseph Cambell, and his work is dedicated to championing this very idea. Myth and legend, fairy tales and folk lore form an integral part of many cultures and are universal to human experience. Campbell believes – and so do I – that the reappearance of certain themes, time and again, in different mythologies, portrays universal and eternal truths about mankind. I guess, above and beyond introducing the Serbian storytelling tradition or anything relating to the specific, Serbian context, a key aim of my **Serbian Fairy Tales** project has been exactly this: to show, through storytelling, how deep down, on the level of myth and legend, fairy tales and folklore, which many (if not all) cultures have at their foundation and which form an integral part of their heritage, we are all the same. All our stories, no matter where we come from, share the same core elements, albeit presented in culture-specific outer form: all our heroes, time and again, are called to adventure, follow a quest, face dangers, are presented with moral choices, receive boons and supernatural aid, become worthy of eternal love. Dragons of some kind or another are always there; so are the ways to defeat them – that is the key. Love, death, living and dreaming – that's what makes us human...[January 2013, London].*

Appendix II

Using Ableton Live – advantages and limitations

In order to comprehend the creative action enabled or influenced by the employment of a particular device, it is necessary to be acquainted with the range of the device itself. In past decades, software developers have created numerous tools to facilitate the music creation, the first group aiding music notation (eg. Finale, Sibelius) and the other that operated directly with sound material (like Cubase, Nuendo, Logic, ProTools). However, most developers have focused on improving the functionality of existing technology without altering the role that technology plays in the creative process. To put it simply, the most common use of software usually means that it replaces hardware (acoustic instruments or devices) in the terms of function and utilization. There are a number of computer programs available today that have been designed both for composing and performing. Among them, the most used is Ableton Live⁶⁶ that emerged as a response to the growing demands of musicians belonging to DJ culture. As a result of this, it has all the features DJs would consider necessary and is essentially a software version of a loop-based music sequencer. It is widely used for the mixing of tracks by DJ's as it offers a suite of controls for beat-matching, cross-fading, and other effects used by turntablists, and was one of the first music applications capable of automatically matching the beat of different songs. As it is made for musicians that usually work with prerecorded sounds, it does not support standard notation.

For the work *The Balkanites* I used Logic as the main software for sound manipulation and arrangement of the whole piece. Shorter works with fewer parts are all recorded and processed in Audacity, then exported into Ableton for live performance and further live sound manipulation.

As with any device created for a particular purpose and to address specific music culture, Ableton has its limitations. It was created in regard to the needs of musicians

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<http://www.ableton.com>

whose primary concern is 'beat', and matching different beats to a preferred tempo. However, this device enables the incorporation of prerecorded sounds with the utilization of midi and audio/video in live performance, and real-time processing of both. However, Ableton Live is manufactured with a limited range of audio processing devices, since it was designed for the live performance of music belonging to DJ culture. Therefore, more subtle manipulation of prerecorded sound objects is difficult and has to be performed using other devices (Logic, Audacity). This problem has been reduced with the development of newer versions of this software (Ableton Live 8) that have an extension for Max/MSP allowing the composer to create his own sound processing units and manipulate the way they apply to sound objects. Whole performances can still be operated using just one controlling device, the APC40⁶⁷ (Plate 1. Ableton Performance Controller) developed by AKAI to be compatible with Ableton Live.

Plate 9 - APC40, Ableton live controller



The communication channel between the APC40 and Ableton Live is two-directional. APC receives feedback from the software and display it on its clip matrix of 40 triggers and on LED rings surrounding each knob. The APC40 has 16 knobs, each surrounded by an LED ring that makes it possible for a performer to see the settings on dark stages, indicating the currently selected parameters' values.

The clip matrix gives a performer an instant insight into the clip status: what is loaded, what is playing, and what is being recorded. The eight "global" knobs situated

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<http://www.ableton.com/apc40>

in the upper right corner can access four banks of controls; the eight “track” knobs on the lower right control nine different track parameters each. This makes a total of 72 controllers that can be (theoretically) applied onto a single sound object and that can be dynamically reassigned each time a track is switched to another one.

However, with the complex compositions that have more than eight tracks and incorporate many sound processes, it is very hard to follow visually the actual change of tracks in the MIDI controller, as it is obviously limited to just eight – and is made for 4 bar music thinking both in the 'arrangement' and 'clip' view. There is a possibility of reassigning tracks, yet some of parameters (like volume) have to stay where the actual knob was when the track was reassigned, which often presents a problem, unless the track was previously automated. As I noticed from practice with the device, it is possible to control parameters assigned to different tracks at the same time, without necessarily switching from one to another, yet again for more than two processes in the same time it becomes hard to follow when the tracks have to be reassigned. For live performance, the score consisted mostly from written instructions: where to reassign the track, when to turn on/off the process, and which part of the MIDI controller is responsible for which process.

In this particular creative practice, ‘tracks’ on the APC40 are identified with different sound objects that create multiple layers of music. Until now (in short length pieces) sound sequences, the order of sound objects and the processes applied to them were either confined to memory or recorded (Ableton Live records whole pieces with the possibility of seeing where parameters are changing during a performance). However, storing significantly longer and more complex pieces to memory in the case of works like *The Balkanites* will not be possible. For performances, I could commit short-length pieces to memory and/or short written comments that could be stored in the software itself or on paper, as the sound objects used and processes applied to them are less numerous. Some form of the score will be inevitable for more complex compositions, which, for example, have a total length of approximately one hour. Therefore, one of the challenges imposed by the length of a piece to be performed will be to develop alternate notation that is easy to use while performing using Ableton Live.

In the context of improvised music, APC40 and Ableton Live are the tools that can facilitate the central tasks of the improvising musician. Facilitation can take several forms. As Pardo puts it:

‘a *perceptual aid* highlights elements of the musical scene so the improviser can better understand the musical context. A *cognitive aid* facilitates the selection of musical ideas to perform in reference to the current musical context. A *performance aid* may make it easier for the improviser to execute a response to the existing musical context’ [Pardo 2007:4].

Creative and performance practice related to this text were conducted using the software and hardware mentioned above. In the live performance, scenes in Ableton were identified with the micro-form (subsections), individual tracks belonging to scenes were identified with sonic segments that were manipulated live, and there were 5 audio input tracks that all had different vocal processing devices applied to it and activated according to the each micro-form/subsection/scene. What was performed live was: vocal improvisation/ processing; processing of the prerecorded sonic elements; *tarabuka*⁶⁸ (goblet drum very common for the Balkan region) playing and processing. The written commentary on the live performance and sound manipulation done live is noted in graphic score on figure 15.

The first difficulty in transferring the music material from Logic Pro to Ableton was the necessity to create one track that will serve as a ‘conducting’ track, the main indicator for passage of time and cue for changing from one subsection of the composition to another. In order to do that, the first necessity was to determine the sonic elements whose length will not considerably change during performance. yet, as enabling the vocal improvisation to be as free as possible was a must, this ‘conducting track’ were cut in several parts allowing the voice or some other individual sonic element (clip in the table no 2 below) to carry the music flow in between parts as long as the performer felt the urge to do so. These parts were then put in scene 1 with note on the graphic score (figure 15) detailing when approximately should the next one start. Scenes 2,3,4,5 contain individual sonic samples that are started and processed live. Again, on the graphic score (Figure 15) that reflects the composition timeline approximate time of starting each audio unit is written as a verbal commentary, as

68 Also pronounced as darbuka, debuka, kratom, doumbek, dumbec, dumbeg, dumbelek, toumperleki

Ableton, as any other software, shows the passage of time in the usual manner without the pause as long as there are active audio clips. The reason audio units/clips are organized as a 8x5 table cell is because it is the easiest way to visually grasp the whole composition on the controller. Ableton allows as many scenes and tracks as we want, yet on the APC40 controller once we pass the fifth scene and eighth audio track we are forced to move up/down and left/right – and therefore lose sight of the first scene and/or audio track.

It is easy to orientate if we need to start only clip 2 from scene 3. But if we need to start a clip from a scene 6 and at the same time one from a scene 1, it is impossible to do it just using the controller itself since the visual range covers scenes 1-5. yet, In the case of *The Balkanites*, 40 audio units that this 8 x 5 operating space allows, was more than enough for all the sonic material used in the composition so it was organized accordingly. Each clip bears a unique number, which indicates their consecutive order in the composition timeline. Where possible, they are organized according to the sound processes applied, as each process (reverberation, filtering, delay, change of pitch) were dedicated a channel. Below is the table no. 2 that is visual representation of the composition *The Balkanites* and its organization within the available controls on APC40:

Table 2

approx. representation of clips in A APC40

					Part A1	Part B	Part A1	Scene 1
					Clip 1	Clip 5	Clip 8	Scene 2
					Clip 2	Clip 6	Clip 9	Scene 3
					Clip 3	Clip 7	Clip 10	Scene 4
					Clip 4			Scene 5
Audio channel 1	Audio channel 2	Audio channel 3	Audio channel 4	Audio channel 5	Clip channel 6	Clip channel 7	Clip Channel 8	Audio channels dedicated to vocal processing 1-5

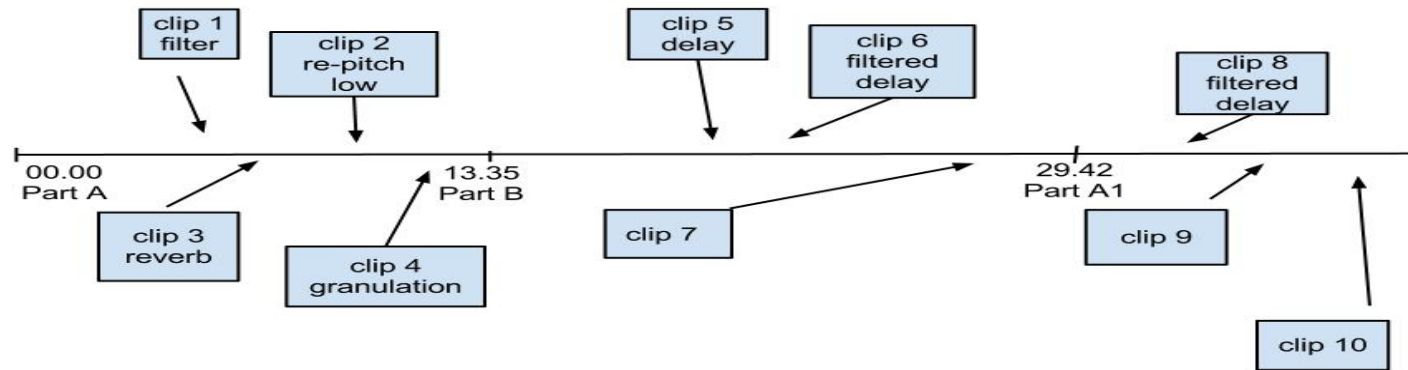
As for the vocal improvisation parts, vocal input is simultaneously put through 5 audio channels that all have different sound-processing device(s) dedicated to each of them. In the live performance they are placed on channels 1-5 and can be activated or de-activated according to need (see above table no. 2). Processes are controlled by knobs on the right hand side of APC40 (plate no.9). All the clips that need to be started in order to interact with the voice are placed on channels 6,7,8 so they can be in visual range while the vocal improvisation is predominant and various processes are applied (live pitch transposition, duplication in parallel fourths and fifths). In the visual representation below (figure 15) that served as an alternate score, clips belonging to Scene 1 are serving as a continuous sound reference, and are represented in consecutive line (part A, part B, part A1). Below and above the main line representing the temporal organization of the piece are the clips that are connected to their relative positions in composition's timeline, with the verbal note indicating some of the sound manipulating process that have to be applied.

In the scheme below, the clips are visually positioned on the graphic score in such a manner as to allow their introduction to be relative in regard to the composition's overall timeline. Also, only the main sound processes are noted down, still enabling the performer to change them during the performance by activating another sound manipulation device that is available on the same channel. APC40 enables the musician to switch from detailed view of one channel to another, thus one can quickly activate or deactivate the particular device, which all becomes easier if all the channels are in the visual range of 8 x 5 buttons available.

If there is no verbal indication on the score considering the individual clip treatment, that leaves the performer with two options: to manipulate only the time of introducing the new material/clip; or to apply some of the sound alternation processes as well. For example, clip 1 indicates there should be a filter applied to it. Yet, as there are at least two other sound-alternating devices on the same channel, it is possible to comfortably combine up to three of those in the same time, leaving far more than just one option for subtle sound transformation.

Figure 15

The Balkanites – approx. representation of the graphic score used for performance



Above figure represents approximation of the graphic score I use for longer performances as a guide only, since there are usually plenty of improvisation – so times, clips and processing devices used can vary quite a lot.

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