

INTRODUCTION

Jim Samson

In Chapter 1 of this volume, Katy Romanou refers to the emergence of a global music historiography in recent years, citing several exemplary writings and projects. The message is that the age of national histories of music (initiated in Germany in the nineteenth century), like the similarly motivated, all-powerful and all-pervasive folklore movement, is finally on the wane. Yet neither will recede quickly or gracefully. Witness the continuing folklore projects – scholarly and performative – around the edges of Europe today. And witness too the institutionalized pedagogies that still place the nation at the heart of cultural histories. ‘Nationalism and the properties that created it are disintegrating’, are Romanou’s words. Well, it will be a lengthy process.

My own contribution to the symposium of which this book is a partial record was well attuned to Romanou’s argument. It was a polemical call for a denationalization of music histories, referring not just to Serbia but to the wider meta-region of southeastern Europe. I cited there the pioneering multi-volume literary history edited by Cornis-Pope and Neubauer as a possible exemplary model for musicology,¹ and I went on to propose a historiography of this region that recognized the commonalities stemming from shared cultural substrata, from common imperial legacies (both Habsburg and Ottoman), and, more recently, from the lure of modern Europe. I suggested too that even the so-called national schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not exempt, in the sense that each nation displayed in practice a variant of a single bourgeois culture, while at the same time competitively elevating, asserting and promoting its uniqueness. In other words, there was a divorce between practice and discourse.

For long enough commentaries on cultural nationalism, whether by historical musicologists or ethnomusicologists, have recognized this divorce. If I were to cite just two seminal, influential texts along these lines,

¹ M. Cornis-Pope and J. Neubauer (eds.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. 4 vols. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004).

I would opt for an essay on nationalism and music by Carl Dahlhaus and a book on the music of European nationalism by Philip Bohlman.² Historical musicologists today, even when working within the boundaries of national projects, are alive in the main to Dahlhaus's central insight: that nationalism is by no means a material category of music history, but rather a receptional category, albeit one that had material consequences (on those consequences, note that Dahlhaus's larger agenda was to demonstrate that, *pace* Marxist historians, ideas can change history). Likewise, even those ethnomusicologists actively involved in folklore movements today are usually careful to acknowledge, with Bohlman, that the folklore movement was ideologically freighted right from the start, differentiating 'folk music' (the scare quotes are now inescapable) from traditional music.

Yet the full implications of this divorce for the writing of music histories have not always been fully drawn. For long enough the discourses of music history were frankly chauvinistic. There were lands 'without music', after all, as Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz announced to the world in 1904, and note that his book ran to no fewer than eight editions.³ And it was precisely the persistence of such chauvinism at self-defined centres (Dahlhaus himself was not exempt here) that gave continuing life to nationalist discourses on their peripheries. It is time, then, to look more closely at the nature of the discourses.

Heidegger reminds us in *The Concept of Time* that historical references can really only function within discourses, and that we therefore need to start at the discourse level rather than with the references themselves; we need, in other words, to understand the nature of the discourse before we 'do' history.⁴ Here we might note that ideologies of nationhood (segmenting space) have been welded to the wider ideology of structural history (segmenting time), whose shadow still falls on so much historiography today. Structural history effectively freezes the present, so that the present takes on something like an autonomy character rather than a dependency character. A line is drawn between past and present, enabling an autonomous present to appropriate the past, rather than to assimilate it. From this self-absorbed present, synonymous with the modern, his-

² Carl Dahlhaus, 'Nationalism and Music', in *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, trans. M. Whittall (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1980); Philip Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC – CLIO, 2004).

³ Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschafts-probleme*. 3rd edn. (Munich: G. Müller, 1914).

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* (New York: Wiley, 1992).

torical references then become points in a picture, and one has the illusion that this picture is rather stable. For cultural histories, it has often been configured as so-called national traditions with which the modern can negotiate.

At risk of obfuscation, I want to emphasize that while discourses of modernism and nationalism were often at odds (the nation and the new were represented as alternative options in a good deal of interwar journalism in Yugoslavia), there is a deeper sense in which structural history – of which national histories are a kind of sub-set – actually relates rather closely to the creative praxes of modernism as a cultural movement, where the modern self-consciously crafts an image of its own past. This is an important association, and it helps us locate structural history within the field of an evolving human consciousness, embodied in significant musical works, and with the modern privileged as a kind of spearhead. One result is that history can easily become fetishized in the ways Hayden White has written about, so that, in his words, ‘the events seem to tell themselves’.⁵ Another result is that it can tend towards grand narratives (including national narratives), and also towards stable structures. In contrast, many music historians these days seem more interested in locating their subject within the field of human communication rather than human consciousness, stressing agencies, events (with their evental sites) and practices, rather than significant, innovatory, musical works. The effect is very often to privilege little stories rather than grand narratives.

By and large, the authors in this volume approach their task in this latter spirit. Their wish to give visibility to music in Serbia, perfectly understandable in light of the chauvinism I mentioned earlier, should on no account be equated with narrow nationalisms. For one thing, a central aim of the book, explicit in its title, is to interrogate precisely how the sense of belonging that we associate with nationalism was problematized by the non-congruence of nation and state during the lifetime of Yugoslavia. In other words, the spirit of the nation is interrogated here rather than crudely affirmed. For another thing, the focus is very often on discourse, not just where we might reasonably expect this, i.e. where historians are the principal actors, but also where composers, performers and consumers take centre stage. And for yet another thing, our authors prefer in the main to look behind the scenes of the national history, exploring some of the mini-histories unfolding in the wings. Or, to change the

⁵ Hayden White, ‘The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality’, *Critical Inquiry* vii/1 (Autumn 1980), 7.

metaphor, they seek to unravel some of the threads that make up a seemingly uniform national fabric.

Taking her starting point from the landmark history of Yugoslav music published in 1962, Melita Milin reflects on the singular failure of music historians to meet the challenge of Yugoslavia, and this despite the pervasiveness of Yugoslavism as a political ideology from the 1830s onwards. Yet, as Milin points out, the alternative (effectively the default) position – separate national histories unfolding under a state umbrella – posed its own set of challenges, and it is hard not to interpret some of these as mirroring the challenges faced by political actors during the later stages of Yugoslavia, with consequences we all know.

Interestingly, leading composers seemed more able and willing to break out of the narrow national frame, and to do so as part of an active political project. Thus, as Biljana Milanović demonstrates in a wide-ranging essay in symbolic geography, Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, by any reckoning the pioneering figure in modern Serbian music, extended the frame from Serbia to a proto Yugoslavia (he died in 1914), not only through the expanding ‘regions’ of his *rukoveti*, but through his concert tours with the Belgrade Choral Society. And Petar Konjović, much of whose characteristic output dates from the years of the first Yugoslavia, extended it yet further. The ‘shifting homelands’ identified by Katarina Tomašević finally come to rest with a *Moderna* movement that can only be emblematic of the new Europe. Nor was this unique to Konjović. By offering us a glimpse behind the scenes of Yugoslav *Moderna*, Jernej Weiss’s study of correspondence between the Serbian composer Miloje Milojević and the Slovenian Slavko Osterc during the 1930s and early 1940s throws the association of Yugoslavia with modern Europe into sharp relief.

Although the official line of Tito’s administration was to recognize individual national cultures within a supranational state, a position at variance with the Yugoslavism of the inter-war state, there remained a central tension between nation and state throughout the lifetimes of both Yugoslavias. To oversimplify the picture, we might say that politics and imaginative culture tended to move somewhat in step during the first Yugoslavia, but were increasingly in counterpoint during the second, the politics ever more divisive, the culture ever more unified. As to the culture, it seems to me that under state socialism in Yugoslavia, tensions between nation and state were less crucial to creative artists than tensions between two wider master narratives, which we might label respectively narratives of emancipation and of homecoming. The first (broadly modernist) narrative would see Yugoslav composers slipping seamlessly into the mainstreams of European music, while the second (broadly postmodern) narrative saw

rather a quest for roots – regional or meta-regional rather than national – very often expressed through a kind of poeticized archaism.

In Serbia this latter response was associated above all with Ljubica Marić, one of the most powerful creative voices to emerge from Yugoslavia. On the few occasions when Marić turned to traditional music in the 1950s, as in her *Passacaglia for Orchestra*, it was a very far cry from the paper-cut folklore pastiche of socialist realism. More often, as in works such as *Octoïcha 1*, *Byzantine Concerto* and *Threshold of Dream*, she turned to yet another inheritance, one that Ivan Moody labels ‘Serbo-Byzantinism’. The very term, with its hint of oxymoronic play, invites a reflection on antonyms: nation-empire, particular-universal, art-liturgy. It resonates widely, and in ways that cannot really be explored fully here, but Moody makes a start by relating Marić’s essays in ‘Serbo-Byzantinism’ to earlier achievements in Serbia, bearing in mind that liturgical music, as distinct from appropriations of Serbian chant by art music, was not acceptable politically during the second Yugoslavia.

By the time Marić came to write her later Octoechos-inspired works (including *Monodia octoïcha* and *Asymptote*, both from the 1980s), our two narratives had been largely conflated. Another way of saying this is that it was becoming hard to say what constituted ‘modern’ music any more. Poeticized archaism might now be perceived as an avant-garde, just as spectral music might be labelled a throwback to an outmoded ‘high’ modernism. It was likewise becoming hard to say what constituted ‘east’ and ‘west’ in the sphere of imaginative culture. There was now a west in the east and an east in the west. This was as true of popular music, however this may be defined, as of art music (the ambiguities have been discussed at length by Catherine Baker in relation to Croatia).⁶ And it was as true of receptional communities as of creative strategies. Something of this emerges from Ana Petrov’s account of Yugoslav concert tours in the Soviet Union. We learn here some of the reasons that Yugoslav popular music could become such a cult in Russia; through all the nuances, one point stands out: Yugoslav pop-rock could constitute an acceptable face of the west in the east; or as Petrov puts it, it could represent an ‘eastern version’ of the West.

In the end all such categories were thrown into question by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, at which point there was a further separation of, and re-investment in, our two

⁶ Catherine Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

narratives. As to 'homecoming', the resurgence of liturgical settings (discussed by Moody), and of spirituality more generally, in Former Yugoslavia was in part politically motivated (here the key point is that Serbian Orthodox chant was an already nationalized repertory), but it was also a more general reaction to years of spiritual repression. This was not a story confined to Former Yugoslavia. Spiritual revivals, like narratives of nostalgia in art music, were widespread if not fashionable in the 'nineties and 'noughties, and right across the Balkans; indeed right across the former Soviet bloc. As to 'emancipation', we need only cite the economic and cultural lure of modern Europe, with the European Union now represented as the Shangri La of Yugoslav successor states. As Andrew Baruch Wachtel put it, the Balkans was transmuting into South East Europe.⁷

Such were the dilemmas of identity in a transitional world, and nowhere were they felt more acutely than by the many Yugoslav composers who, for obvious pragmatic reasons, went into exile from the 1990s onwards, accelerating a practice (of study abroad) that might be considered a *Leitmotif* of Yugoslav music history. It has been the task of Ivana Medić to record the story of those from Serbia, and as she demonstrates the game could be played two ways. Composers could merge with local environments and leave the Balkans behind (was this acculturation really equivalent to emancipation?). Or they could invest in roots, and in doing so create a distinctive brand within a competitive market (was this branding really equivalent to homecoming?). The truth is that exile changes the parameters of national identity and likewise of cosmopolitanism. An absent culture may be studiously preserved or inadvertently caricatured, notably through idealization. Likewise, a host culture may be a source of creative transformation or an object of facile imitation.

From the 1970s onwards a number of historians developed a conception of historiography that can best be labelled 'everyday history' [Alltagsgeschichte].⁸ One way or another, this has penetrated music historiography at several levels. As already noted, most of our authors here are concerned with what happened behind the (musical) scenes

⁷ Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *The Balkans in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio dell '500* (Turin: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1976). Eng. trans. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982); Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebenswelten* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Lang, 1999); Richard van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit*. 3 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990-94).

during the lifetime of Yugoslavia and beyond: with contexts and motivations, with agency. However, our final chapter takes a step closer to the true spirit of *Alltagsgeschichte*, a genre whose full implications for musicology were spelt out in an important essay by Nicole Schwindt.⁹ Srđan Atanasovski places the spotlight firmly on the consumer, in a close study of extant custom-made music albums assembled in domestic contexts in Serbia. Since most of these were compiled prior to the First World War, our final chapter brings us back full circle to the pre-Yugoslav era explored in a very different way by Biljana Milanović. Atanasovski's essay in material history, comparable in methodology to Martin Loeser's study of Hamburg in the early eighteenth century,¹⁰ allows the documentation to generate a bottom-up conception of nationalism (Serbian and Yugoslav); he refers to an 'everyday Yugoslavism', a term apparently coined by Du-bravka Stojanović. Romanou's global historiography is one way to challenge pedigreed national narratives. Everyday history is another.

⁹ Nicole Schwindt, 'Konzepte der Alltagsgeschichte und die Musikalischen Alltage in der beginnenden Neuzeit', in N. Schwindt (ed.), *Musikalische Alltag im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Trossinger Jahrbuch für Renaissancemusik, 1) (Kassel: Birenreiter, 2001), 9-18.

¹⁰ Martin Loeser, "'Kleinmeister", Dance Masters, Women and Everyday Life. What are the Foundations of Music History'. Unpublished paper given at the conference *New Music in History Writing and New Approaches to Writing Music History*, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, February 2012. I am grateful to Martin Loeser for making this text available to me. It has informed much of the last paragraph of this introduction.