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MUSIC WITHOUT BORDERS WORKSHOP, BALCHIK
JUNE 21-22, 2003

The magnificent architectural complex of the Palace of Romanian Princess Maria, situated on the Black Sea coast, in the immediate vicinity of the Bulgarian town of Balchik, provided accommodation for the participants of an international World Music workshop symbolically entitled *Music Without Borders*. Conceived as a meeting place for artists and managers-promoters of ethno music (whatever that might mean!), the Workshop was organized for the first time in June this year, with the organizers expressing the desire that it should grow into a regular annual gathering. Moreover, their plan is to establish a broadly conceived festival. Participants from nine countries¹ gathered with the common aim of creating a network of institutions (radio stations, record companies, public and private concert agencies...) which would work together on promoting select performers of traditional music, but also of those who engage in the artistic transposition of folklore, meeting the criteria of quality and invention without yielding to the laws of the trash market. Therefore, the aim of the Workshop was not to work on an attempt to define theoretically the various terms which are used today to characterize music practices that draw, to a greater or lesser extent, on certain heritages of musical folklore of one or more peoples, but on the contrary – to exchange concrete experiences from practice and establish a working platform for the more successful promotion of certain artists and groups that are – once again in practice! – identified and labelled as performers of “folk”, “ethno”, “traditional music”, that is, *world music*, *world fusion* and the like. An organizational team consisting of the Palace Park and Architectural Complex, the Industrial Association and the *Club Ethno&Art* agency of Varna, offered participation first of all to their “neighbours”, the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula, thus forming a “starting point” for future work. However, the presence of participants from other, more remote regions of the world opened up new “links” with whose help the network should expand further.

The programme of the Workshop took place during the course of two days, June 21st and 22nd, and consisted of a dynamic series of discussions, lectures and live music performances. On the first day, during the morning session, all eighteen participants of the Workshop introduced themselves. In the discussion, particular stress was laid on the constructive exchange of methods that the artists had applied up to then with

¹ Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, the United States, Serbia and Montenegro, Cyprus, Macedonia, the Russian Federation, and Mongolia.

regard to the publication, promotion and distribution of the aforementioned music, given such issues as uncertain financing sources, piracy, unclear criteria for evaluating concrete music “products” and other problems which cultural workers in the Balkans are faced with every day. The majority of participants were managers and promoters. In presenting their work, the participants of the workshop at the same time gave various concrete examples of what was labelled as “ethno”, “folk”, “world” music in their environments, what their experiences concerning the reception of these music genres in local cultural milieus were like and which strategies had proven efficient in their promotion. Danzanvaanchigiin Uhnaa, the director general of the Mongolian Philharmonic Society of Ulan Bator, presented details from his vast forty-year-long experience during which he had organized 48 festivals of classical and 20 festivals of pop music, as well as 125 music contests in Mongolia, and sent artists from his country to 44 countries worldwide.

Personal interest in the music of the Balkans and Eastern Europe prompted the American Rudolph Carrera to move to Macedonia and found the record company *Falcata-Galia Records* in Skopje, with the aim of publishing the music of these regions. Carrera also represents two Macedonian musicians in the United States. He talked in particular about the need to improve the channels of distribution of traditional music from the creator to the store, to the audience, that is, from the creator to radio/TV stations, to the audience. Eugenia Braescu, the producer and artistic director of the International Jazz Festival in Brasovo, began to work as a promoter of jazz music in Romania 25 years ago, first as the author of television and radio programmes. She is the manager of a private jazz club in Brasovo in which bands from Poland, Hungary and Germany have made guest appearances. At the Festival of which she is the artistic director all kinds of jazz are present, from mainstream to free, to ethno jazz. She pointed to the fact that, thanks to festivals, the record industry and media exposure, jazz is today an equally important promoter of globalization as pop and rock music. Mircea Nancha, a private manager and founder of an agency with the nongovernmental organization *Phoenix* of Bucharest, applies in his new work the experiences he has acquired from working in marketing.

Jelena Janković, programme editor of the Jugokonzert concert agency of Belgrade, talked about the attitude of the city cultural institution, which in terms of programme is oriented primarily to classical music, towards the promotion of not only Serbian folk music, but *world music* as well.

Jasen Kazandzhiev, the manager and founder of the Etno-Art agency of Varna, spoke on behalf of the Workshop organizers and presented plans to establish a festival of “ethno-art” music in Balchik starting the following year, 2004.

The second group of participants consisted of music journalists, working in newspapers and radio stations. Marjan Kostadinovski, a DJ at Skoplje’s Radio 103, plays ambient experimental music, *world fusion* and the like in his programmes, and he is also the manager of Skoplje’s *String Forces* band. Aleksandar Temkov, a journalist working for *Forum* newspaper of Skopje, believes that ethno music is more a matter of the policy of living than of a cultural policy, which is particularly noticeable in cross-cultural societies such

as Macedonia, but also in the Balkans at large. Gergana Lazarova, a DJ with the Bulgarian National Radio of Sofia, pointed to the fact that nowadays music from the former Eastern Bloc countries was least popular on Bulgarian radio! Together with Toma Sprostranov, author and anchor of programmes on this radio station, she has been doing the show *world music* within the programme *Horizont (Horizon)*, which is top-rated by the younger generations. Georgi Petrov, a journalist working for the private radio network Veselina headquartered in Plovdiv, creates a *world music* programme based on the principle “the more variety, the better!” A project of this radio network is the female vocal group *Anteja* – five trained singers who perform authentic Bulgarian music, dressed in national costume (similar to the Belgrade ensemble *Moba*). Slavcho Sprostran, a Radio Orhid journalist and anchor, talked about his station’s programme.

Particularly interesting were the experiences of those Workshop participants who perform traditional music and its derivatives. Alfrida Tozieva, violinist in the group *String Forces* of Skopje, talked about the need to be “your own master” as a prerequisite for undisturbed work. The members of this group have formed their own studio and record company *Profundus*, for which they have published their two compact discs and a number of videos, in their own production. Young, still unknown Macedonian bands also record in their studio. Latif Bolat, a Sufi² singer from Turkey, graduated in vocal art from the University in Ankara, but has dedicated himself to Turkish traditional music. He worked with different genres of Turkish music (the classical, spiritual, folk), and in the past 15 years he dedicated himself exclusively to the Sufi tradition. In addition to giving concerts, he composes to the texts of Turkish 14th and 15th century poets. Roman Stolyar, composer and multi-instrumentalist from Novosibirsk, believes the essential element of music is improvisation, which brings together different genres of music. He is, therefore, familiar with both jazz and contemporary music and folklore, and not only Russian folklore at that. For instance, he has published three compact discs in Russia with his ensemble *Trigrafica*, one of which is entitled *Music of the Unexisting Nations!* The music in question is completely improvised music which could best be defined as “imaginary folklore”. He has initiated a subject called the Theory of Improvisation at the college in Novosibirsk and he also plans to establish a festival dedicated exclusively to improvised music. Giorgis Karvelos, composer and ethnomusicologist, and Koulis Theodorou, singer of folk music, both from Cyprus, talked about their long-standing collaboration. Their second joint compact disc was realized in collaboration with the *Cyprus State Philharmonic Orchestra* and represents a blend of folk and classical music. Despite the fact that Cyprus is a small country, the two of them are very active, primarily in the field of applied music for film and theatre, but also at concerts. They believe the admission of Cyprus into the European Union will open the door to a wider promotion of this country’s traditional music, which is often mistakenly thought to have originated exclusively under Greek influence. Gordana Šuković, dancer and performer from Belgrade, talked about the

² Sufi – mystical Muslim tradition, connected with the dervish ceremonies. Sufi music belongs to the Turkish art music genre (and not folk music, as it is sometimes mistakenly believed). It is performed on traditional instruments of the Arab world, the most important of which is *nej*, a vertical flute.

connection between nature, life and art which is the basis of Japanese Butô dance philosophy. She also presented the work *Alice in the Wonderband*, an artistic family group from Mt. Fruška gora, which composes and performs music inspired by various folklore practices and which is the founder of a festival symbolically entitled *Motherland*.

The participants of the workshop had the opportunity to attend two lectures which cast a different light on the topics that were discussed in the presentations of the participants. On June 21st, Toma Sprostranov held a lecture on the topic “The Development of *World Music* and *World Fusion*: Bulgaria’s Contribution”, in which he presented some of the currently most active and most prominent Bulgarian performers of ethno music. On the other hand, Latif Bolat’s experiences concerning his life in the United States, in San Francisco, and the reception of traditional Turkish art in that environment, were the subject of his lecture entitled “*World Beat* Versus Folk Music, Globalization Versus Traditional Culture and Music”, held during the morning session on June 22nd. Namely, despite the fact that the Sufi tradition belongs to art music, in the United States Bolat is a member of the Association of Folk Musicians, together with country and bluegrass musicians! This musician has declared himself to be an opponent of globalization, but also of commercial “ethno” products such as *Buddha Bar*, because he feels they do not succeed in drawing listeners to authentic traditional music, but merely satisfy the market’s need for instant consumer goods.

The workshop ended with a round-table discussion on the subject: “Possible Contributions of Workshop Participants to the Future Festival in Balchik”. What was not planned by the programme, but nonetheless took place spontaneously every day, were improvised joint performances of Workshop participants, which confirmed in the best possible way the thesis presented in the title of the gathering – that music knows no borders.

Translated by Jelena Nikezić