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**Laurent Aubert, *The Music of The Other*.  
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If one wished to express the essence of *The Music of The Other* in a single sentence, it would probably suffice to say that it deals with traditional folk music in the current, i.e., present moment. Thus, in the foreword to his compilation of eleven experiments written over several years and successfully translated by Ana A. Jovanović, Laurent Aubert<sup>1</sup> says that all the experiments were written from the same perspective. Specifically, they were written for the purpose of expanding the field of musicology into areas not generally tackled by specialists, namely, ‘our own society, a society already multi-ethnic and multicultural’. How interesting this must sound to a Serbian ethnomusicologist, who had always studied our music, which is often multi-ethnic and multicultural!). Aubert points out that his book deals with certain musical traditions and their (possible) development in the urban environment, traditions which are outside national contexts. His claim, interesting and undoubtedly anthropological, that the true ‘recipe’ for one’s own musical culture is ‘delving’ into another musical culture, finds support from many other contemporary ethnomusicologists. It was also the ‘credo’ of Czech folklorist Ludwig Kuba who explored the folk music of Montenegro at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, claiming that he came there in search of the roots of his own music.

It is undoubtedly important that in *The Music of The Other* the author addresses not only experts, but also music lovers from all over the world. He states that his book proposes a certain conceptual frame, offering several lines of thought about the important cultural phenomenon of folk music. Thus, in the introduction he tackles the problematic definition of music as a ‘universal language’ which has very often been used, one might even say abused, in science and other fields. Aubert says ‘In addition, it brings us to consider such notions as universality and otherness from a

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent Aubert is the director of Musical workshops and the conservateur in the Ethnographic Museum in Geneva. He is the chief editor of the ethno-musicological newspaper Notebooks for traditional music, as well as of a number of CDs of traditional world music, released by Ethnographic Museum. He is the author of many scientific works, books, and CDs.

new angle: indeed if, as one hears, music is a universal language, of what music do we speak, wherein lies its universality, and under which conditions does it emerge?’

Aubert points out that one of the main aims of ethnomusicology is to approach the relationship between music and society, to consider the complex networks of interdependence which exist in any society and appear between the ‘nature and modalities of the musical act’ and the environment; that is, the circumstances in which that musical act emerges. In that context, the author also observes world music, mentioning the ‘market’ wherein it exists, and wondering whether increasing migratory movements and communicative freeways deny the ‘principles of identity’ in the name of integration, or, on the contrary, allow the more tolerant and human ‘perception of each other’. Here the author points out the question of so-called cultural hybrids, which, in a way, refer to everything which emerges in culture, since there is no culture which has not been influenced by others. However, Aubert also claims that such a ‘generalisation all over planet of the cultural hybridisation process observed today is a phenomenon without precedent’. As the most widespread example of cultural hybridity, he mentions the (inter)national entertainment music industry, which is gaining in popularity in both urban and rural areas, threatening to flood the entire sound environment of those settings. He argues that this music, constantly disseminated by the media, tends to become the musical norm everywhere, transgressing all political, social and even language barriers, but it is unclear whether he is actually talking about ‘our’ new commercial folk music.

The book also deals with the controversial issues associated with the ‘renewal’ of some ancient cultural traditions, and in particular the problems that occur when such renewal is performed by strangers. In this way, some musical forms were heavily commercialized, mostly those which appealed to the broadest public taste. Certainly, this singling out of some forms at the expense of others caused the suppression of others, because it made even the folk artists turn to those forms, despite not being particularly well acquainted with them or fond of them. Various expert institutions represent a certain resistance to this practice, having turned to a more comprehensive exploration of traditional music and, inevitably, to the evaluation of its particular forms. Therefore, as Aubert points out, it is necessary to provide conditions not only for existence, but also for further development, and even the rehabilitation of certain musical forms in contemporary society. The institutions he mentions support traditionalism. Therefore, they consider the three main qualities of the artist to be as follows: *the criterion of authenticity*, *the criterion of quality* (the virtuosity of the

performer) and *the criterion of exportability* (retaining of full significance, regardless of the site of the performance).

One of the most important points of Aubert's book is his contemplation of ethnomusicology as a science, and ethnomusicologists as people who deal with traditional folk music. In that respect Aubert gives a very advanced opinion, pointing out the subjectivity of science, which can have a negative impact on the 'object of study'. He mentions the connection of certain scientists with certain institutions, which influence the scientists' output. Even academic education can be seen to be burdened by certain 'ballast'. (As the saying goes, bad habits are easier to form than good ones.) As for the researcher's education, Aubert claims, without elaboration, that it is often 'neither better nor worse' than the subject's, reminding the ethnomusicologist from these parts of the world that minorities often have to fight for their own 'right' to deal with their own culture. In essence, the 'big ones' never expect the 'final product' from the 'small ones', only taking the 'raw material' and returning (meaning, selling) it back to the small after it has been processed.

This book also deals with the subject of modern ethnomusicology, pointing out that the science does not deal with a problem of vital importance, namely, the preservation of musical forms in an indifferent or hostile environment, as well as their continuation and further development in current conditions. Aubert stresses that in the evaluation of the role of traditional folk music, it becomes 'the banner of national identity' on the one hand, and the 'communication bridge' between separate communities on the other.

The author mentions the problem of tradition and its relationship to music, concluding that tradition helps in comprehending every music form, since it is based on 'experiences from the past, from which it draws lessons adapted to its own language, to its own reality'. On the other hand, Aubert also claims that traditional music, contrary to conventional opinion, represents 'living forms, endowed of an inexhaustible creative potential', possessing a set of values as the basis of its 'identity, originality and symbolic scope'. Furthermore, he says 'An opposition between consciousness of progress and traditional mentality is thus inaccurate. It mistakes the latter for a tendency towards un-changeability, immobility and arbitrarily maintenance of forms that often become deprived of content and *raison d'être*, frozen and fossilized.'

Aubert addresses the problems of presentation or existence of traditional music in contemporary conditions. It necessarily involves considering the question of its purport, thus singling out the existence of the *authentic music genres*, which he names as

*academic/scholar/learned, religious, ritual, popular* and *'ethnical'*. The book also deals with ways of presenting religious rituals on stage, stating particular methods in use: *sampling, filtering, time reduction, space reduction, interaction issues* and *de-ritualization*.

He pays considerable attention to the problems outlined as *Artist's life, or, the Challenge of Representation*, and also to the listener as an important factor in creating music. Aubert establishes the typology of listeners, based on Adorno's typology (*expert, a good listener, entertainment listener...*), which he 'enriches' in his own way, considering world music as the object of his interest (*Apollonian* and *Dionysian type*).

In one of his experiments Aubert deals with the problem of creation, or invention of folklore, interpreting it as a certain nostalgia of origin, which is, in practice, usually constructed in such a way to comply completely with the expectations of the broadest public. That causes the 'birth' of the *official artists*, qualified to perform the music in various national styles, which, in time, brings about their distancing from tradition.

Aubert dedicates the eighth chapter of the book to world music, one of the most popular spheres of contemporary popular music, examining it through two subchapters entitled *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. There he outlines one of the most convincing definitions of world music to date, namely, that 'world music is maybe the only original expression that could arise at the end of the twentieth century; it is the summing up of all "heres" and "elsewheres" which have woven our lives'. Aubert stresses the disappointment of the supporters of so-called ethnical traditional music with this genre (hence the significance of the subtitle *Paradise Lost*), but also the pleasure of those who find in it something which offers everybody 'citizen rights' and where everybody, emphasizing the differences, contributes to the wealth of all (*Paradise Regained*). However, this music is not as idyllic as it may initially seem. Aubert says it has been turned into a dogma, which means that it conditions its performers to 'succumb openly to the intercultural dictate', meaning that they must throw away anything too specific in their music and always explore and promote music elements which are common and acceptable to everybody. Therefore, unlike traditional music, which tends to affirm the specific qualities of various nations, world music's main premises are the merging and integration of genres. At the end of this chapter Aubert asks an important question, which extends this problem into the 'out-musical' sphere: 'Is it necessary to sacrifice signs of identity at the altar of integration, or to insist on retaining them, in the face of exclusion from all world developments?'

The ninth chapter, is also dedicated to world music, dealing with its subtypes (*roots*, *world beat* and *world mix*), and especially, with some famous names from the music world, or show business, who promoted the development of this music style. Here Aubert also mentions the great world music market, where, like in any other business, anything can happen, even cheating or abuse. Nonetheless, at the end of this chapter Aubert speaks about world music affirmatively, pointing out that it should not be judged according to its market value, but according to human values, also stating that the ‘pure and simple dismissal of all kinds of arbitrary hybridisation... in the name of preserving of the individual identity’, while ‘extolling the brotherly relationship between cultures’, is also unadvisable.

The penultimate chapter Aubert dedicates to the problems of learning foreign music, pointing out many useful facts known only to a man with practical experience. Thus he claims that the methods of learning music worldwide are so diversified that no model is ‘universally applicable’. When it comes to learning, in the traditional practice of many countries music knowledge is acquired gradually and imperceptibly, similar to language learning. A foreigner who wants to acquire this knowledge must apply a completely different method. On the other hand, the forms of so-called artistic music of various nations comply to very strict rules, so that the methods of their learning are quite definite and, therefore, available to a foreigner. As one of the teaching aids, Aubert mentions the tape recorder, since the authentic musical recording directly follows the practice of learning music by oral tradition. However, he also emphasizes the shortcomings of this device, since the invariability of the music played on it negatively influences the authenticity, as variability is one of its most important qualities. In this chapter Aubert also refers to the importance of the selection of teachers and learning conditions.

The last chapter is a short autobiographical note, which deals with Aubert’s experience of learning Indian music in India. He points out that Indian music was the first ‘world music’ to make a breakthrough to the ‘Western music universe’, contributing to a substantial change in the western concept of music, mainly with regards to ‘disproving the prejudice about Western superiority in all creative spheres’, including art. According to Aubert, love for Indian music led to exploring other music worlds, to even greater new sound universes, and ‘permitted us to explore, through their diversity, the reality of that marvellous and universal talent which is musicality’.

Special praise is due to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Library, which, with this edition (together with those already published, and those forthcoming), becomes our most important publisher of ethnomusicological literature.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović