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SOCIALIST STAGE: POLITICS OF PLACE IN MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Abstract: The article addresses the visual and spatial aspects of musical performance not just as makers of already structured discourses, but elements which have a strong formative role in constructing new conceptualizations of the musical performance itself. Staging, which was introduced as a part of the new socialist cultural politics, is investigated as a spatial process, by which the power relations are performed and new discourses of musicking are reproduced. By focusing on the politics of staging and concepts of publicity and rituality, the article discusses the ways local musical practices started to be conceptualized as specific kinds of cultural artefacts, 'local tradition' or 'historical past.' It further investigates how these new conceptualizations synchronized/contested various discourses of musical performance, simultaneously negotiating among various actors in the local environment – performers, local organizers, professionals, policy makers and community.

Key words: staging, musical performance, socialism, politics, publicity, rituality.

The scenic representation of traditional music has been considered rather problematic in scholarly accounts. That stance is grounded in the conceptualization

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of the scene as the place of standardization, purification and homogenization,¹ dominated by strict rules and patterns. The processes of institutionalization, professionalization and formalization associated with the scene are considered as the polluting elements in the non-institutional, amateur and spontaneous traditional performing context. These discourses are particularly connected to the staging of traditional music, which became prominent in the socialist period. Many scholars (ethnomusicologists, folklorists, ethnologists) in the 1970's and 1980's criticized the so-called 'stage folklore' and concept of public manifestations,² emphasizing their significant role in the transformation of traditional music. To them, the 'folklore adapted for the stage' was performed beyond the traditional context,³ as an artificial form of cultural production. Stage performance was interpreted through an array of binary oppositions such as collective/individual, global/local, traditional/arranged or spontaneous/fixed. Researchers mainly analyzed the ways the process of staging changed – 'improved' or 'spoilt' – authentic musical practices and were primarily concerned with the question of the value of stage stylizations, which were assessed as worthy or less worthy.⁴

The main goal of this article is to question the notion of the scene as a fixed, rigid and static concept. Instead of being interpreted through the above-mentioned tensions and binaries, the stage tends to be understood as a discursive place that negotiates among the various actors involved in the performance. The research material consists of archival sources, literature (such as debates and reports of the Federal Congress of Yugoslav Folklorists⁵ and other leading publications during socialism) and field-research conducted in South-Eastern Serbia (the area of Niško Polje),⁶ which enables a dialogue between the personal accounts of

1 Ivana, Katarinčić, Iva, Niemčić, and Tvrtko Zebec. 'The stage as a place of challenging integration,' *Narodna umjetnost*, 2009, vol. 46, no. 1, 77-107, 77.

2 Lit. translation of the term *javne manifestacije* refers to public stage events of various kinds.

3 It is important to stress that they were positioned between so-called preservistic approaches which demand 'purity' of folklore and the socialistic ideology of development (concept which includes changing). The scholars approved of some level of interaction between the neighbouring musical traditions, as a result of 'togetherness' – *zajedništvo* (glorified during socialism as a potential confirmation of the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' – *bratstva in jedinstva*), but emphasized the importance of local musical identity and its authenticity.

4 The critical questions of the value and evaluation of the quality of the manifestations' programs were a crucial part of scholarly interests. See Slobodan Zečević, 'Uloga smotri i festivala u razvitku našeg narodnog stvaralaštva', *Rad XIII kongresa Saveza Udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije*, 1968, 219-224; Radmila, Petrović, Slobodan Zečević, 'Narodna muzika i igra na smotrama u Srbiji', *Rad XXIII kongresa Saveza Udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije*, 1981, 283-285; Miroslava Fulanović-Šošić, 'O tendencijama koje se kod nas u novije doba ispoljavaju u prikazivanju narodnog stvaralaštva', *Rad XXIII kongresa Saveza udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije*, 1981, 267-268.

5 *Kongresi Saveza Udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije*.

6 The research was conducted as part of my PhD project, as a long-term type of research, consisting of many short-term trips during the period from February 2005 to March 2007. Preliminary research was carried out by the research team of the Center for Balkan Music Research in 2004 within the project *Research and Presentation of the Traditional Music and Dance Heritage of Niš Surroundings*. In the course of the research I talked with people from 21 villages.

my interlocutors (including my personal voice, as well) and the official (state and scholarly) narratives. The article addresses the 'folklorization' of village music and dance through the staging of the local repertoire during socialism, though not as 'static,' 'rigid', and 'homogenous', as it is usually presented in scholarly narratives. On the contrary, it aims to present socialist staging politics as a multidimensional phenomenon and highlights the dialogical, dynamic and multimodal nature of the scene. With the particular focus on spatiality, the main idea is to present *how* instead of *what*, i.e. to focus on the politics of staging as a process which influenced new perceptions of local repertoires and the notion of musical performance.

Stage as a public place

Performance studies comprehend performing as a part of everyday life, at home, in the workplace, in sports and games, in the arts, and in sacred and secular rituals,⁷ defining it as cultural performance: 'To perform is to carry into effect – whether it be a story, an identity, an artistic artefact, a historical memory, or an ethnography.'⁸ Performance theory is directed toward the social aspects of performance, as a wider social field which includes 'not only the physical sounds, but also the actions, thoughts, and feelings of those involved in the conception, performance, and reception of music in a particular context.'⁹ The ethnography of musical performance, apart from focusing on musical content, includes the examination of the wider performance settings as an inseparable whole. Therefore, it involves the analyses of the techniques of visualization of the musical content, which are strongly connected to the discourses and politics of place, best described by Stokes, Feld and Basso, or Solomon and the current research of place-oriented ethnomusicology.¹⁰ For them, the visual and spatial aspects of musical performance do not simply reflect the social and cultural structures or are markers of already structured discourses, but have a strong formative role in constructing the new conceptualizations of the musical content itself.

According to the ethnographical paradigm of a musical performance, it is very difficult to define a 'true performance situation'. Charlotte J. Frisbie claims that the definition of a performance cannot be applied in cross-cultural analyses

7 Henry Bial, *The Performance Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 183.

8 Deborah A. Kapchan, 'Performance,' *The Journal of American Folklore*, Autumn, 1995, Vol. 108, No. 430, 479-508, 479.

9 Norma, McLeod, Marcia Herndon (eds.) *The Ethnography of Musical Performance*, Norwood Pa, Norwood Edition, 1980, 6.

10 Steven Feld, Keith Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place*, Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, 1996; Thomas Solomon, 'Dueling Landscapes: Singing Places and Identities in Highland Bolivia,' in: *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, Jennifer C. Post (ed.), New York/London, Routledge, 2006, 311-328; Martin Stokes, 'Imagining "the South": Hybridity, Heterotopias and Arabesk on the Turkish-Syrian Border,' in: *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 263-289.

since that depends on every particular society.¹¹ Furthermore, Frank Dubinskas, in his PhD thesis *Performing Slavonian Folklore: The Politics of Reminiscence and Recreating the Past*, introduces a debate about the definition of a staged, organized cultural performance, presented outside of the 'local' audiences.¹² He argues that the central point of demarcation lies in the difference between everyday and special symbolic actions, where a person performing publicly steps out of the regular daily life routine.¹³

As mentioned before, scholars during socialism criticized the stage representation of traditional music, seeing it as being extricated from its 'natural' context.¹⁴ In their opinion, the spatial dimensions of performance appeared to be crucial in the perception of 'real' and 'authentic' performance contexts. For them, performing within informal settings ('private' places), among well-known people (within small groups), and without a strong division between the performers and the audience, was seen as the 'natural' context for the traditional musical performance. In contrast to the notion of non-stage performance as 'pure', 'spontaneous' and 'naturally developed', the stage performance was considered 'adapted', 'non-spontaneous' and 'canalized' while the stage was seen as an artificial space for traditional music performance.

It is important to take into account that the stage/non-stage performance distinction in scholarly discourse was created in the particular historical period of socialism, referring to an extension of state control to activities, spaces and relations considered 'private'. These stances are particularly visible in understanding the stage performances as institutionalized 'public practice' (*javna praksa*) and 'public performance' (*javni nastup*), which emphasizes specific institutional arrangements associated with it. Consequently, the notion of the stage/non-stage performance remained closely connected to a public/private distinction in the light of socialist cultural policy,¹⁵ and the creation of the new state-supervised village cultural life. The new socialist notion of public and private incorporated in the stage performance, rearticulated existing relations such as performers/spectators, community/officials, insiders/outsideers.

Changes in the conceptualization of 'publicity' were visible in the accounts of my interlocutors, who employed the categories of public and private mainly

11 Charlotte J. Frisbie, 'An Approach to the Ethnography of Navajo Ceremonial Performance,' in: *The Ethnography of Musical Performance*, Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon (eds.), Norwood Pa, Norwood Edition, 1980, 75-104, 80.

12 Frank Dubinskas, *Performing Slavonian Folklore: The Politics of Reminiscence and Recreating the Past* (doctoral dissertation), Stanford University, 1983, 13.

13 *ibid.* 18.

14 See *op. cit.* 4.

15 Marc Garcelon suggests that the division official/unofficial is more appropriate for understanding everyday life under socialism than public/private. Marc Garcelon, 'The Shadow of the Leviathan: Public and Private in Communist and Post-Communist Society,' in: *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on Grand Dichotomy*, Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds.), Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1997, 303-332, 317.

to demarcate other important distinctions and boundaries in the field of musical practices, such as informal/formal or professional/unprofessional.¹⁶ For them, stage performance had a different meaning in comparison with other performances unrecognized by community members as a 'real musical performance'. Community celebrations and parties associated with the annual and life cycle and informal festivities, even though performed in the public spaces of a village square or a road were not seen by the community members as a public act *par excellence*. For example, singing accompanying dances at local gatherings such as *sabori* or *vašari* was seen in a completely different light in comparison to stage performance.¹⁷ In that view, state sponsored stage performances, which occurred in different cultural contexts of space exclusively dedicated to the cultural event (such as a hall or stage) and where the performers are displayed outside the local community, were perceived by the villagers in Niško Polje as a 'real music event'. That confirms that the local notion of publicity was not related to the real physical landscape, but is closer to the Foucault concept of 'site' as a space where power relations are played out¹⁸ and Susan Gal's definition of the public/private distinction as a product of a semiotic process.¹⁹ Although the performers and audience for the stage events mainly belonged to the same social milieu, the attendance of 'real' spectators embodied in the presence of a jury, the regional organizers and party officials added new elements to the usual structure of the musical performances.²⁰ Performing music restricted to local customs and internal gatherings in front of a wider public and within a formal framework, introduced a 'new way of culture consuming' in the rural environment.²¹ The 'publicity' of the scene, which enabled their exposure to a wider audience, brought the local performers closer to

16 As many scholars emphasize, the public/private distinction stands out as one of the 'grand dichotomies' of Western thought. Recent research has successfully shown the mistake of assuming that the boundaries between public and private are stable. Despite the presumption of 'separated spheres', most social practices, relations, and transactions are not limited to the principles associated with one or the other sphere. They emphasize that historical changes in the 'content' of what is officially or conventionally meant by public and private largely affected this discursive distinction in social theory. The conceptual vocabulary of 'public' and 'private' often generates as much confusion as illumination, as the very different meanings can be associated with them and very often sometimes mean several things at once. Jeff Weintraub, Krishan Kumar (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on Grand Dichotomy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago press, 1997, 1.

17 *Sabori* (sing. *sabor*) were organized on important religious holidays (Easter or some other spring holiday), and villagers usually visited *sabori* in all the neighbouring villages. The one of the main purposes of these informal public gatherings was the initiation of young girls and boys into the social status of marriageable persons.

18 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, 51-52.

19 Susan Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,' in: *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, and Debra Keates (eds.), New York, Routledge, 1997, 261-276, 261.

20 The role of audience and performance-audience interactional dynamics is broadly discussed by Anthony Seeger and Charlotte J. Frisbie, op. cit 9, 24.

21 Naila Ceribašić, *Hrvatsko, seljačko, starinsko i domaće: Povijest i etnografija javne prakse narodne glazbe u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb, Biblioteka Etnografija, 2003, 18.

professional musicians, even though they were not professionally trained and did not receive any wages for their activities. This gave a different meaning to the music performed on stage and provided a specific agency and position of the musical authority of performers: 'Performing at manifestations, particularly at the big ones, the members of the group became important persons, and the first known experts, artists and tourists from their environments.'²² In this respect, socialist stage performance challenged the local notion of public and private, and introduced new understandings of musicking in local settings.

Stage as a political place

Staging is always a political act and therefore the instrument of both social and cultural control and change, used for the production and representation of meaning, social legitimization and power re-negotiation.²³ Particularly the socialist practice of the scenic representation of 'folk heritage' is interpreted as an ideological reproduction of the socialist state for hegemonic purposes.²⁴ What was called 'arranged folklore' (staged representation of local musical practices) is seen as a set of practices which contributed to the demise of old cultural patterns and traditional music in socialist societies.²⁵ The common interpretation is that socialist folk culture was an ideological category used by the authorities to showcase modernization, or 'a deceptive façade of a happy and prosperous rural life, which helped to disguise the poor reality of peasant life.'²⁶ Furthermore, it is seen as a prime tool employed in the building a concept of shared supra-national identity (such as in the cases of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union) or the nation-building process in socialist societies (for instance in neighbouring Romania and Bulgaria).

In Yugoslavia, party leaders asserted that the 'new folk culture'²⁷ should be represented in a 'cultured way' as confirmation of the society's overall development and the 'natural process of the development of folk heritage in the future improvement of the nation'.²⁸ The imperative was to present folk heritage on the stage in the most 'artistic' way, intended to improve traditional culture and society as a whole. Among the main protagonists in policy-making and bearers of amateur cultural activities were the state-sponsored KUDs – *Kulturno-umetnička*

22 Ibid. 20.

23 Owe Ronström, 'Concepts and Festivals: Public Performances of Folk Music in Sweden,' *The World of Music*, 2001, Vol. 43, No. 2, 3, 49–64, 62.

24 Deema Kaneff, *Who Owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a 'Model' Bulgarian Village*, New York/Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2004, 7.

25 Timothy Rice, *May It Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1994, 170.

26 Deema Kaneff, op. cit. 25, 141.

27 The concept of the national/folk culture discursively changed, being substituted by the 'new folk culture' (*narodna* or *pučka kultura*), which included all people (all working masses).

28 Slobodan Zečević, op. cit. 4, 219.

društva or Cultural-Artistic Societies, established or reconstituted across Yugoslavia after WWII.²⁹ These usually consisted of junior and senior dance groups, singing groups and folk music orchestras. Depending on the level of a KUD's ranking, it performed at various state (Federal), Republic or local events, but also travelled to international festivals.³⁰ The ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) was advocated through the KUDs' repertoires based on the folk songs and dances of all nations and nationalities (*naroda i narodnosti*) of Yugoslavia, apart from the local (national) repertoire. By practicing each other's folk songs and dances, a sense of unity and a first-hand experience of multiculturalism were provided, and diversity was displayed as a positive aspect of Yugoslav society.³¹ Apart from presenting the equality of all Yugoslav national cultures, KUD performances were considered the most 'artistic' representation of cultural heritage.³² They represented each nation or ethnic group by its most characteristic folk pieces, creating a highly standardized version of folk culture. These 'stylized performances' were used as the main elements in the battle against 'backwardness' associated with the old forms of folklore performance. Creating the 'highest quality of interpretation', in the opinion of the policy makers, would affect the further development of folk dances and music.³³

However, Yugoslav controversial culture policy and the officials' ambivalent attitude towards the concept of tradition as a category to be modernized but not banned,³⁴ was reflected in the stage performances which negotiate between old and new patterns of representations. The above-mentioned general idea of representing new folk culture as a 'natural continuation' and 'development of the existing traditional genres', was particularly visible in less formal events,³⁵ where the stage representations of local music were kept close to the local style, without major changes in the repertoire. Unlike in Bulgaria, where professional compos-

29 Professional state KUDs were established in the capitals of each of the six Yugoslav Republics. The most prominent ensembles in Serbia were the KUD *Branko Krsmanović*, KUD *Žikica Jovanović Španac* and KUD *Kolo* from Belgrade. These top-ranking ensembles, led by professional choreographers and experts in the field of folk heritage, were and still are considered to be 'folk-ballet' ensembles (http://www.krsmanovic.org/files/main_en.php).

30 For instance, the KUD *Kolo*, founded in 1948, gave concerts in more than thirty countries in their first twenty years of work: Switzerland, Austria, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Monaco, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Germany, Soviet Union, China, Burma, Canada, USA, Israel, Poland, Tunisia, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, India, Egypt, Morocco, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Ireland, Hungary, Finland etc. (www.kolo.rs)

31 Mirjana Laušević, 'The *Ilahiya* as a Symbol of Bosnian Muslim National Identity,' in: *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, Mark Slobin (ed.), Durham /London, Duke University Press, 1996, 117-135, 119.

32 Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988 (treća knjiga)*, Beograd, Nolit, 1988, 319.

33 Archive of Yugoslavia - AJ, 507, Materials of the Commission for Ideological-Educational Work, 47-165.

34 AJ-142, The report from the plenum of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia 1959, F-616.

35 Local village cultural events were quite different from state spectacles at the Republican or Federal level, with their highly formalized structure and supervision by party leaders and policymakers, such as the Celebration of 25th May - Marshal Tito's Birthday, and 29th November - Republic Day.

ers, conductors and choreographers retuned village music,³⁶ the amateur groups in Niško Polje did not have trained leaders (or directors) to exert greater control over the repertoire. The village groups were focused on local practices and singers' personal repertoires and were not forced to learn new songs or write 'new, politically conscious folklore'.³⁷

From the late 1960's and beginning of 1970's, a relatively new phase in cultural policy in Yugoslavia began, where rural culture was presented as a key issue in cultural policy, in general. With the revived interest in village culture and increasing scholarly work in the field of traditional heritage, different courses of action for the preservation of traditional musical genres were undertaken, not only at state level, but also in local settings.³⁸ This shift in the official policy resulted in the foundation of new, state-supported cultural events dedicated to rural culture at the Republic level, and one of them was *Susreti sela* (Village Gatherings). This event was established in 1973 by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and organized as an annual cultural activity.³⁹ The formal leader was the KPZ (*Kulturno-prosvetna zajednica*, Cultural-Educational Union) of Serbia situated in Belgrade, but the real organizers, as well as the last link in the bureaucratic chain, were the KPZs and the Houses of Culture at the local level. These institutions were established as part of the above-mentioned overall project of the 'enlightenment of villages', with the function of educating the village population and developing the culture of rural areas after WWII.⁴⁰ Competitions were organized at four levels of territorial governance: the local (*lokalni-seoski*), the municipal (*opštinski*), the regional (*regionalni*) and the Republican (*republički*). Local competitions were organized within one region as specific gatherings of villages, where one village hosted its rival. Local winners were given the opportunity to compete

36 Op. cit. 25, 170.

37 This was the case for instance in Romania and Bulgaria, where, in the first years after WWII, the rural people were highly involved in the creation of new folk songs with an explicit political content. New texts mainly concerned agricultural collectivization (see Speranta Radulescu, 'Musique traditionnelles et ethnomusicology sous pression politique: le cas de la Roumanie', in: *Pom pom pom pom: musique et caetera*, François Borel (ed.), Neuchâtel, Musée d'ethnographie, 1997, 203-226, 208; Anca Stere, 'The Social Dimension of the Folkloric Text in the Postwar Totalitarianism.' *Symposia. Journal for Studies in Ethnology and Anthropology*, 2003, 83-93, 85; Donna Buchanan, *Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2006, 135. In Bulgaria these songs were called 'songs for the new socialist village' (Donna Buchanan, *ibid.* 136).

38 According to recent studies, in all the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the specific 'folk revival' started during the 1960's, with a clear peak in the 1970's and 1980's. Jennifer R. Cash, 'Why Folklore? Folk Movements, Identity, and Protest in Eastern Europe', paper presented at the conference *Beyond East and West: Two Decades of Media Transformation*, Central European University, Budapest. Simultaneously, the movement started in Western countries as well.

39 The official name for the event was 'The Competition of Serbian Villages' (*Takmičenje sela Srbije*) but in a local variation in Niško Polje as well as in colloquial language, it was called Village Gatherings. There were some corresponding events in other Yugoslav republics, but overall it was focused predominantly on Serbia and its two provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo.

40 AJ-142, The status of women in villages, materials from 1959-1962, F-616.

at the regional level, and, if successful, at the final show organized at the Republic level.⁴¹ All activities were assessed by a jury appointed by the Regional Board, comprising five to seven qualified cultural and educational workers, medical doctors, agricultural experts, architects, ethnologists, music teachers and journalists (from the event's Regulation).

The programme requirements usually comprised one dance performance (so-called *folklor*), a stage enactment of one custom, a performance of 'genuine' songs and an instrumentalist playing a traditional instrument.⁴² According to the local organizers, the party officials were not interested in the programme content, and their function was merely to attend in order to underline the show's formal nature. They did not insist on socialist or political content for the programme (e.g. revolutionary songs) and the village groups performed the traditional repertoire they had performed previously in annual or life-cycle celebrations, now with the new purpose of displaying them on stage. Therefore, the repertoire mainly reflected the choice of local cultural workers in villages, but they were given formal propositions and programme requirements by the deputies of the regional KPZ: every year they held a meeting with the regional organizers, who forwarded to them instructions concerning the content of the programme. According to statements from the field, the regional organizers' demands were based on a concept of authenticity in repertoire selection and a more 'original' style of performance. Local organizers confirmed that regional deputies and the jury generally insisted on the local (village) heritage and its presentation within the traditional framework. The jury's assessments were directed toward a more 'authentic' performance, folk costume (*nošnja*) or custom of performing:

We had original costumes. For example, these yellow scarves. They were, as folk say, folded, not under the chin, but around the head. Well, we looked for that. Old traditional peasant footwear, we even made them of pigskin. (Velibor Stanković, Prosek village)

Regarding music, the jury's imperative was to display local music on stage, without significantly violating the traditional style. Following the jury's guidelines, local organizers and amateur group leaders strived to create the most im-

41 The so-called final parade was organized in the village that had won the final competition. The programme of the final competition was broadcast by the media (usually the National Television's Second Channel), and the winners at all levels were awarded various prizes (which were given to the village and ranged from books for the local library to television sets for the local House of Culture).

42 It is important to emphasize that Village Gatherings represented the rural social milieu but also an attempt to reconcile the 'old' with the 'contemporary' which was a feature of the socialist lifestyle, in general. Diverse elements in the programme of the Village Gatherings enabled this perfect relationship, for instance, a music school student's performance or modern dance apart from the traditional repertoire. This concept offered the equal significance and desired harmony between rural and urban cultures, as an integrating process of all social subjects in building a classless, socialist society.

pressive performance. Amateur groups practiced for several months in advance with rehearsals at the village's House of Culture or in group members' houses. They tried to create a distinctive programme for each year. In the aim of presenting an attractive programme and getting better assessments at the gatherings, local organizers employed professional musicians (instrumentalists, singers), music teachers, choreographers or directors. That practice facilitated a specific form of interaction between experts, professional musicians and local performers, but also the mixing of repertoire and performance styles from various villages and regions. The important changes in the local repertoire influenced by participation in this event were visible in the practice of 'borrowing' the repertoire from other villages and regions. Organizers confirmed that they included songs from neighbouring villages which they had heard from individuals, groups or at informal parties, after the official programme. As a result, apart from the village repertoire, the programme also contained some 'neighbouring songs', which resulted in both the mixing of local repertoires and styles of performance, and their unification.

Besides, because of the programme's rules and timetable, for the organizers it was extremely difficult to organize a good quality programme that would not overrun its allotted time. The vocal groups usually performed three songs in accordance with the jury's requirements.⁴³ The time limit was three minutes for each performance, so songs had to be shortened and the text pattern was usually adjusted to two or three stanzas. As a result, one of the most significant characteristics of the two-part style in this area, the antiphonal style,⁴⁴ was abandoned in stage performance. Because of the time limits, these songs were reduced, and each stanza was performed only once.

These dynamics between the official politics of staging and local practices, illustrates the ways staging impacted the dominant discourses of local repertoire, involving various actors – performers, local and regional cultural workers, professionals, party officials and villagers. It was the general orientation toward 'local heritage and its authentic performance' which actually initiated its transformation. Seeking the most original local performance, local cultural workers often looked for the opinion of experts who usually were not familiar with the local culture. Therefore, the ways in which local musical heritage was reinterpreted, perceived, and negotiated did not strictly follow the prescribed dominant (elite) design. Spectators as well as organizers and participants created together the performative structure of stage representation, which confirms the active participation of local actors in the staging politics. That further challenges the attitude

43 Sometimes the jury even chose the songs and dances that would be performed, to avoid repetition and to make the overall programme more attractive.

44 The singing style where two groups repeat verses without a break (*Jedna peva, druga raspojuje*).

which the socialistic staging imposed, and the rigid way of cultural presentation which differed very much from 'real life'.⁴⁵

Stage as a ritual place

Since the jury insisted on a 'pure, traditional style', amateur groups' leaders tried to adjust their requirements: 'They asked for traditional customs or rituals. Yes, all that, but to be adapted for the stage.' (Dragan Todorović, Vukmanovo village) Even though strong censorship of the repertoire did not exist, and officials did not insist on ideological content, a certain degree of (self)censorship was present: local organizers mentioned that some villages (they mentioned Hum) prepared plays based on the adaptation of important events from the revolutionary past, which always won the highest assessment grades. Furthermore, it was not appropriate to adapt old customs with a religious content, such as the *slava* or the ones connected with religious holidays and the Orthodox Church, for example *Krstonoše*.⁴⁶ These kinds of performances were not explicitly forbidden but received extremely low assessments. On the other hand, certain customs were more appropriate for stage adaptation (e.g. the wedding ceremony, *sedanjka*, *Đurđevdan*, and *lazarice*). In this way, amateur groups were encouraged to perform certain songs, while others were considered to lack the proper content to be included in the repertoire. The staging of rituals and ritual songs thus offered a dominant understanding of the local customs and cultural heritage at large, attempting to constitute a 'valid' version of history. In general, the staging of rituals was conceptualized as a specific kind of theatrical enactment of the 'local tradition' or 'local historical past'. Therefore, the relocation of ritual music on stage brought a new differentiation between ritual actors, spectators or community, and the synchronized/contested discourses of local musical heritage.

45 As claimed by Julia L. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity*. New York/London, Routledge, 2004, 13; Deema Kaneff op. cit. 25, 141 or Otto Joachim Habeck, 'Neighbourhood, Ethno-culture, and Social Recognition: Community-related Functions of the House of Culture in Siberia' (unpublished article), 11.

46 Similarly, the custom *kraljice*, the name of which was reminiscent of royalty, was also strictly proscribed. In some villages, people tried to rename this custom *Titovke* (instead of saying *Kralj* [King], they used 'Tito' in the refrain of the songs), but that practice did not last long.



Photograph 1: Enactment of the *sedenjka*, Trupale village in 1990⁴⁷

The main sources of the ritual songs were the memories of the oldest population in villages (predominantly women),⁴⁸ who recollected the songs they had performed in their childhood and youth (mainly before World War II). Since the practicing of customs was no longer a part of everyday life and there was no possibility of refreshing the memory through practice, mixed-generation ensembles, where younger singers learned old songs from the older ones, enabled the handing down of the local repertoire. However, since these women often came from various villages (many of them changed their village after marrying), they combined different memories about the song repertoire. This resulted in a process of adjusting their individual repertoires to a common sound. Dobrisavka Janković from the village of Hum told me that she had learned songs from other women in the amateur group, since she came from a distant village. Other women retold the songs' lyrics to her: 'They recited the songs to me – and then they would tell me

⁴⁷ The photograph was borrowed from the archive of the Culture Centre of the village of Trupale, thanks to Vukašin Mitić.

⁴⁸ About socialist gender politics and musical practices see Ana Hofman, 'When We Were Walking down the Road and Singing: Rural Women's Memories of Socialism in Serbia', in: *Gender Politics and Everyday Life under State Socialism in East and Central Europe*, Shana Penn and Jill Massino (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 185-198.

to sing this word here, that word there.' Her village repertoire was performed differently in style and melody, and she affirmed that now she knows neither which ones are theirs, nor which songs are from her village. For Jagodinka Mitrović, who moved from the distant village of Kravlje to Rujnik, it was particularly difficult to sing in a different style, so she had problems when it came to stage performance:

Here, they have different tunes. Completely different. As if they distort the tune a little bit. We sing differently. When we went to the gatherings, I could not sing, even if you killed me, I could not.

This also affected the process of the 'individualization of performance', the practice where one woman (usually a leading singer with the best vocal abilities and the best knowledge of songs) became the main source for the songs. A particular song was often considered to be part of the repertoire of that one woman (e.g. Vera's song). Almost all the female singers remembered which woman in the village sang the 'old songs' and who continued to sing them after she had died. This individualization of performance became exemplary for the ideal performance style, especially to younger performers, and a pattern to follow when passing the song on. For Grozdana Zlatković from Vukmanovo village, her cousin Anđa was the main source of the songs: 'Anđa sang these songs. Anđa, and after her Mara, but no one could sing as Anđa sang it.'⁴⁹ In addition, since the songs previously connected to customs were re-contextualized by stage performance, women transgressed social taboos connected with certain genres of song, performing them regardless of the ritual prohibitions that had existed when they were performed in everyday practice. For example, the *lazarice* or *Đurđevdan*, which were forbidden to some categories of women (e.g. the performing of the *lazarice* custom excluding older girls, married or old women), were challenged. Therefore, the boundaries between song genres became blurred and affected the new inter-genre relations.⁵⁰

Did the staging practice influence new discourses of 'rituality' in local settings? How did theatrical representations of local heritage affect the changes in the understanding of customs? Did the ritual songs lose their 'authenticity' since their stage performance's only authority was just the performance itself? Essentialist rhetoric suggests the stage performance as the echo of meaning and not its production. Stage representation is usually not perceived as the true, authentic event, but as the reconstruction. From the point of view of performance theory, both stage and non-stage performance settings are performative and conceptualized as discursive practices. Rituals, regardless of being performed within a community or on stage, refer to a communal activity set apart from the everyday settings

49 Here, it is important to bear in mind that when the ritual is performed within the community, the girls who participated in the ritual also learned the songs from an old woman, recognized as having the best knowledge of the songs. They usually practiced for a few weeks before participating in the custom.

50 For instance, I found that singers who were active members of the vocal groups in the villages of Donja Studena and Gornja Studena had created their own terminology in the classification of songs. They divided the songs into four groups depending on the season – spring, summer, autumn and winter songs. To them, the main parameter for classification was the song's textual content (if the theme dealt with winter, cold weather or fire, they considered it to be a winter song).

with a high degree of formalism and performativity.⁵¹ It is necessary to emphasize that rituals are not a 'natural' reflection of the social environment, but discursive practices through which social relations themselves are constantly reproduced. Ritual music thus is the site of the reproduction, enforcement and maintenance of power relations. In the same way, the stage performance of rituals is a part of the production of dominant meaning and contesting social action, ethnic identity, resistance or political authority and control.

By relocating local rituals of stage, traditional music started to be reframed as a cultural artefact and national heritage, while village singers and players, as the embodiment of local culture. Staging thus reframed the self-perception of the local performers, who, by being active in the organized cultural activities, engaged with the questions of cultural heritage and preservation, and the issues of culture policy, in general. Displayed as important protagonists in the preservation, continuation and development of village musical practices, they changed their perception not only towards village musical practices, but also towards their artistic potentials. In that respect, the replacement of the local repertoire on stage during socialism produced new discourses of musical performance in local settings. However, that is not to say that traditional music was simply appropriated for political goals, as a superficial 'cultural product'. Stage, as a dynamic space, provided new ways of the conceptualization of local musical practices simultaneously negotiating among political, community and personal levels of musicking in local settings.

51 According to authors such as Parkin and Cooley, ritual considers both secular and sacred activities - David J. Parkin, Lionel Caplan, Humphrey J. Fisher, *The Politics of Cultural Performance*, Berghahn Books, 1996; Timothy J. Cooley, *Making Music in the Polish Tatras: Tourists, Ethnographers, and Mountain Musicians*, Indiana University Press, 2005.

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СОЦИЈАЛИСТИЧКА СЦЕНА: ПОЛИТИКА МЕСТА У МУЗИЧКОМ ПЕРФОРМАНСУ

РЕЗИМЕ

Визуелни и просторни аспекти музичког извођења не представљају само означитеље већ утемељених дискурса, већ имају и снажну формативну улогу у конструкцији нових концептуализација самог музичког догађаја. Чланак се фокусира на сцену као динамичан простор, а на сценску репрезентацију локалних музичких пракси као процес релокације. Кроз категорије политичког, јавног и ритуалног, покушава да осветли промене у разумевању традиционалних музичких жанрова као 'културних актефакта' и 'локалног културног наслеђа'. Рад испитује како социјалистичка политика сценске репрезентације конструише нове дискурсе о извођењу традиционалне музике у локалним оквирима и доноси нова позиционирања и корелације између актера укључених у процес очувања локалних музичких пракси: сеоских извођача, културних радника, стручњака, партијских функционера и заједнице.

Кључне речи: сценска презентација, музичко извођење, социјализам, политика, публицитет, ритуалност.