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## REVIEWS

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Article received on 21 October 2013  
Article accepted on 30 November 2013  
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**Identities: The World of Music in  
Relation to Itself**  
**Tilman Seebass, Mirjana  
Veselinović-Hofman and Tijana  
Popović Mladenović (eds.)**  
**Belgrade, Faculty of Music in Belgrade,  
2012, 163**  
**ISBN 978-86-88619-21-9**

In recent years, the phenomenon of identity has made it not only to the centre of a “veritable discursive explosion,” as Stuart Hall has noted, but also to the repertoire of key ‘operational notions’ of contemporary musicological discourse. Attesting to this is the fact that the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Musicological Society, titled *Musics, Cultures, Identities* (2012),<sup>1</sup> was dedicated precisely to the ways in which music reflects, shapes and

regulates cultural and social identities. It was this Congress that gave the initial impetus for publishing the book *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself*, edited by musicologists Tilman Seebass, Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman and Tijana Popović Mladenović. The nine studies contained in it mark some of the crucial subjects and directions in this exciting and, apparently, constantly growing research field, stimulating for the application of the most diverse methodologies. The volume, written in the English language, includes works by five musicologists from the Department of Musicology of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade – Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, Tijana Popović Mladenović, Tatjana Marković, Ivana Ilić and Marija Masnikosa – written specifically to be presented at the Congress, but its content is ‘enriched’, i.e. ‘extended’ by related studies in which the authors, employing the whole range of contemporary musicological and theoretical approaches – from semiological and post-structuralist, to cognitivist and psychoanalyst, to culturological and historical – have dealt with different aspects of the ‘world of music’, urged by the concepts of identity and (self-)identification.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the authors in their

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<sup>1</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Musicological Society was held in Rome, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> July 2012. At that time, the president of the International Musicological Society was Tilman Seebass. <http://www.ims-online.ch>

<sup>2</sup> The studies collected in this book are a partial result of a research within a scientific project *Identiteti srpske muzike u svetskom kulturnom kontekstu* [*Identities of Serbian Music in the World's Cultural Context*], supervised by

independent interpretational discourses have used relational and categorical ways of identifying certain musical practices and phenomena, according to their position within a specific 'relational network', but also according to affiliation to a particular cultural, national or ethnic identity. In such a procedure, they have discovered, on the one hand, in what way music represents/constructs individual or collective identities, and on the other, how social circumstances reflect on the formation of specific musical practices, thus gaining a more appropriate insight into the dynamic nature of musical culture as the area of negotiating with the Other, about power relations, differences, one's own / somebody else's, central/marginal...

The book *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself* fills many gaps in the research on musical identities in one more way too: the authors approach the subject with a latent 'coordinated relationship' between the diachronic and synchronic axes of positioning and interpretation of this complex phenomenon. The first part of the book – "Transculture of Musical Identities" – is dedicated to subjects of a more general nature, to the examination of whether the (de)construction of musical identities is (im)possible, and to the position of marginal musical cultures and the articulation of cultural identities through music in contemporary, globalized society, while the six contributions in the second part – "Identification Card of Serbian Music in a Global Cultural Exchange" – give a chronological insight into the het-

erogeneous and dynamic nature, manifestations and transformations of the identity of Serbian musical culture, which has emerged and changed in the complex and contradictory, social and political circumstances, from the 1850s to the late 1900s.

In the opening study, "The Culture of Musical Identities," Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman establishes a thematic and notional framework as the tool for breaking a musical identity down into components, emphasizing that "the aspects of the *purely* musical and *institutionally* musical are mutually caused and essentially connected in the shaping and the existence of musical identities".<sup>3</sup> Although a separate thematic entity, this chapter is also a kind of 'gateway' leading to the next problem areas, since the author indirectly suggests the possible ways of deliberation on the relationship between music and identity – *music in identities*, i.e. musical identity as the component of a particular collective or individual identity, and *identity in music*, which involves relations and changes in music *itself*. The author focuses her investigative attention mostly on policies of identity in postmodern times, stating that due to the de(con)struction of great metanarratives and establishing of "the universe without the universality," the musical identity of a particular social or ethnic community is no longer a singular or fixed category: what develops is a "multifaceted, 'mixed' and plural nature of musical identity, which means that it comprises the *identities* of different phenomena within a *musical culture*, such as those related also to ethnicity,

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Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, PhD, and financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

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<sup>3</sup> *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself*, Tilman Seebass, Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman and Tijana Popović Mladenović (eds.), Belgrade, Faculty of Music in Belgrade, 2012, 16.

gender, social or occupational groups, media favored identities".<sup>4</sup> The author's wondering about identities in the Postmodern deepens in the next study, titled "Music at the Periphery under Conditions of Degraded Hierarchy between the Centre and the Margins in the Space of the Internet," focusing on the question of how the music industry and the electronic media, as a new kind of public sphere, initiate the deconstruction of the "hierarchical relation between the centre and the margins in the *world of music*".<sup>5</sup> Among other things, the author concludes that the Internet, as "the centre of meta-media connections of world music," provides legitimacy and visibility to marginal musical cultures "so the periphery with 'industrial ease' changes its status from subordinate *towards* foremost,"<sup>6</sup> and consequently, "perhaps paradoxically, the electronic media by which the music industry and the uniformity it advocates are spread, are at the same time the media which *potentially* protect individual music identities".<sup>7</sup>

In Tijana Popović Mladenović's text "Music has a Vision: Listening to Others and Oneself Through It," which concludes the first part of the book, the author argues about the complex process of acquiring a new cultural identity through music, and which is in fact always constituted in relation to the Other. Using the case study of *Concert for viola and orchestra* (2003) by Benjamin Yusupov (1962) – a contemporary composer who 'acknowledges' the hybrid character of his music and carefully nurtures the concept of 'difference' by

using culturally, stylistically and ethnically marked patterns – the author considers "the *simultaneity* of those multiple musical identities".<sup>8</sup> Based on the analysis of a postmodern "game" with the genre and stylistic identity of a work, the treatment of heterogeneous procedures taken from the domain of artistic and popular music, as well as traditional and marginalized musical practices, the author concludes that "the compositional procedures and processes, on the basis of which the heterogeneous elements of different cultures and musics can exist, coexist, communicate or, better said, become amalgamated in the same musical work, are those on the basis of which music/related *states of affairs* are interlinked and are the same for all stylistically, historically, religiously, ideologically and culturally specific musics".<sup>9</sup>

An interdisciplinary analysis of performance, (in)stability, and variability of the identity of Serbian music was carried out in the second part of the book, through case studies, i.e. by reading and analysing concrete musical discursive practices and their positions within specific narratives, which is to say, within historical, ideological, institutional, social, stylistic and/or poetical frameworks.

Hence, in the text "Identity under Construction: The Foundation of Serbian Music Historiography," Tatjana Marković examines the roots of establishing the identity of Serbian music historiography in the first professional musical journal *Gudalo [Bow]* (Nova Kikinda, 1886–1887). The author explains that the written word about music, as a cultural text, also functioned as a repre-

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 48.

sentative of national unity and an active factor in the construction of the national identity, which Serbian music built recognizing it within Europe, i.e. “in relation to the German Other [...] in the intertextual relations with Viennese cultural and music magazines, and were accepted as a canon until nowadays, with recent definitions”.<sup>10</sup>

Perceiving the dynamics of the relationship between musicology, music theory and analysis, Ivana Ilić in the text “The Identities of Music Theory in Serbia: Two ‘Historical Accords’ on its Disciplinary Autonomy/1958–1973 and 2009–” considers the institutional place where the discourse of music theory, as a separate scientific discourse in Serbia, had formed (the Study Department of Music Theory at the Music Academy and the Study Program of Music Theory at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade), the location of its legitimate ‘origin’ and the field of application. Building from the presumption that the disciplinary autonomy of music theory “was not only the consequence of its ‘internal’ developments, but also of the whole network of ‘external’ social factors and processes,” Ivana Ilić uses the Foucaultian methodology and analyses the dispositive of music theory on three levels of disciplinary identifications: “academic constellations, program orientations and institutionalization”.<sup>11</sup>

In the next theoretical treatise, titled “The Potentials of Self-Representation in the Serbian Music of Romanticism – Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856–1914) – In the Past and Now,” Tijana Popović Mladenović deals with an intriguing issue of self-identification and self-representa-

tion in Serbian music, clearly stressing that a musicologist needs to be introspective and responsible in order to ‘decode’ and uncover the ideological and social meanings produced by music as the subject and object of historical events. Exemplifying the responses to Mokranjac’s works that have been going on for over a hundred years, the author perceives a change of paradigm – from the Romanticist myth of originality to a Postmodern view that “the value of Mokranjac’s works lies in their *impressiveness* and the need for the continuity of memories, for an indefinite period, if possible...”<sup>12</sup> – and concludes that Mokranjac’s music can be interpreted “from the current perspectives [...] as a specified *auto(re)description* that presents a specific self-approach, one’s own pre-description, self-understanding and self-representation *relative to, at a distance from and together with* (‘unoriginal’, ‘someone else’s’) folklore material”.<sup>13</sup>

In the following text, “The Cultural Context and Modernist Identity of Belgrade’s Musical Environment of the Mid-1960s,” this author contours the modernist identity of Serbian art in the 1960s, i.e. various ‘ideospheres’ and ways of expression (socialist aestheticism, Informel, New Figuration), as well as the “differentia specifica of modernist achievements in Belgrade’s musical environment”. In the author’s opinion, the key characteristic of compositional practice in Belgrade – “the second onslaught” of Serbian musical avant-garde – which, using European musical accomplishments, strived to emancipate and define its own artistic space, was “*the*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 63, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 81.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 108.

*exploration of the new*,” which also implied “the creation of a musical entity that is separated from current music ‘trends’ which also imparts to it the quality of being new with a specific creative meaning in the development of modern music in that period in general”.<sup>14</sup>

The book ends with studies by Marija Masnikosa about the identities of Serbian Postminimalist music, striving to examine not only individual poetics, but also cultural factors which are intentionally linked with the issues of the devastation and fragmentation of identity in the Postmodern. In the text “Postminimalism in Contemporary Serbian Music as Part of the Global Postmodern Culture,” the author considers the discourse of folklore, established in the works by Vuk Kulenović (1946) and Jasna Veličković (1974) as a simulacrum, a virtual image of ‘real’ musical folklore, while in the concluding study, titled “The ‘Saturated Self’ of Serbian Postminimalist Music. The Case of Zoran Erić’s *Konzertstück*,” she examines the particular compositional poetics and there finds confirmation of the postmodern cancellation of binary logic in identity construction. Using compositions by Zoran Erić (1950) as an example, Masnikosa reflects upon the ‘hybrid’ identity of a postmodern musical work, enabled by linguistic pluralism, as well as “the specific nature of its complex postmodern fragmented subjectivity”<sup>15</sup> which is made of a multiple *self*, established through social interactions and relations. The author also emphasizes the change in the cultural and artistic/musical map of the world under the influence of globalization,

the drawbacks of the postmodern and post-historic world such as the “ghettoization and gradual fading of (autochthonous cultures of local communities),” but also the aesthetic (ideological) affiliation of Serbian Postminimalism to all the transformations taking hold of art in Europe, or even the world. “The postminimalist works [...] cannot be understood as a part of specific national musical heritage of certain (here Serbian) musical culture, but as a part of the international and universal postmodern culture production influenced by the great ‘project’ of *world music*”.<sup>16</sup>

New analytical strategies and theoretical approaches in the book *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself* shed light on the multiform statuses and identities of (Serbian) musical culture, putting many phenomena and subjects disregarded by musicological practice on the map, while previously treated subjects (such as the response to Mokranjac’s work and the Serbian musical avant-garde of the 1960s) are considered from a specific standpoint. The interpretative profile of the authors, as well as the visual design of the covers, based on the stylized reproduction of a painting by Georges Braque (*The Violin*, 1914), rounded off the striking identity of this edition, which is an example of an exceptional scientific contribution and an important reference point for every serious musicological research of identity – a phenomenon which is, as Erik Erikson claimed, “all-pervasive,” but also “vague” and “unfathomable”.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 146.