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WORLD MUSIC

World Music. I wrote down the title of the paper and instantly dreaded the pretentiousness it might suggest. Someone will perhaps find mention of dreading pretentiousness strange,¹ especially as it comes from me – a person to whom such fear is quite alien. However, in the case of *World Music* (hereinafter *W.M.*) it is justified. The reason for this lies both in the heterogeneity that is characteristic of the forms of music pertaining to this “genre” and in the complexity of the interpretation of the term *W.M.*, which at the same time arises from the said heterogeneity and, understandably, from the diversity of approaches, that is, methodologies employed in its interpretation... I had a similar feeling last autumn when I undertook to organize a review on *The Balkans: From Traditional Folk Music To World Music*. Initiated by the Administration of the University of Arts in Belgrade and realized by the Music Information Centre of the Union of Yugoslav Composers’ Organizations (SOKOJ), this review, in which as many as six people of different profiles took part,² received much attention from the audience and the press alike, which definitely testifies to the great interest for this kind of music in our midst. As I prepared the review, I read various texts dedicated to this problem, and partly when the review was under way, I became aware of the difference in understanding and interpreting the term and characteristics of *W.M.*, a difference that was so great that at times I wondered if it were the same phenomenon. For that reason I felt compelled to write something on the subject, naturally not in order to “have the last say”, but to highlight, as much as possible, some of its features I find important, particularly considering the forms of *W.M.* that exist in our midst.

Seeing as this is a relatively new phenomenon, we are familiar with the origin of the term *W.M.* and, interestingly enough, it is intrinsically practical. Namely, towards the end of the 1980’s, a group of English music publishers became inundated by new “titles”, especially those coming from the territories of South America and Africa. Aiming to distinguish them from other “sound media” and so bring them closer to potential buyers, these publishers classified them into a special group for

¹ Particularly those who are familiar with the works I have written in the last ten years or, perhaps, with some of the subjects in the series of lectures I held at the Music Information Center of the Union of Yugoslav Composers’ Organizations (SOKOJ) in the cycle “Čovek kao ljudsko biće” (*Man as a Human Being*) (September 2002 – June 2004). The first lecture from this cycle was entitled “Kako se rodila muzika” (*How Music Was Born*), the second – “Čudo zvano refren” (*A Phenomenon Called the Refrain*), the third – “Narodni muzički instrument kao čovekova produžena ruka” (*Folk Music Instrument as Man’s Extended Arm*), etc.

² The review was held on November 6, 2003, with the following participants: Vesna Mikić, musicologist, Miško Šuvaković, aesthetician, Selena Rakočević and Mladen Marković, ethnomusicologists, Ivan Čolović, anthropologist, and Bojan Djordjević, attorney but also a music publisher and, as he calls himself, a promoter of national music abroad and foreign music in our country.

which they came up with the name *W.M.*³ In time *W.M.* became one of the most popular kinds of music, extending to undreamed-of boundaries both quantitatively and qualitatively, incorporating an incredible abundance of world music production. According to Bojan Djordjević, *W.M.* can encompass practically anything, both traditional music and “all sorts of fusions”, along with “afropop”, and, as far as the Balkans are concerned, various local forms, including the ones pertaining to neo-folk music, even what is known as turbo-folk music (?!).⁴ However, there are authors who approach the issue of defining *W.M.* more carefully, introducing other terms into the “story”, such as, for example, *World Music Fusion* (hereinafter *W.F.*), in order to draw a line between defining music that is traditional (albeit not entirely original, which means that it is already to a certain extent modified), which they regard as *W.M.*, and the other kind, characterized by a conscious creation of forms, during which traditional “samples” are combined with the latest technological achievements in the shaping of music – *W.F.*⁵

Without engaging more extensively in the problems of terminology, inasmuch as it seems to me that the result of analyzing the said phenomenon would not be any more complete, I opt for the term most commonly used in practice, and that is *W.M.* In order to start analyzing its forms in our country, one should point out some of its most distinct features – in general, which is not an easy task, particularly due to the diversity that is prevalent in this music sphere. However, if an effort is made to value more relevant features rather than irrelevant ones, a feature that could be termed “traditional basis” will come out into the foreground. It is characteristic of *W.M.* forms to have a traditional, that is, folkloric basis, be it either a particular “original sample” or a folkloric inspiration, which is also typical of the forms of artistic music created in the last few centuries. Therefore, it can be concluded that **there is no *W.M.* that is not based on folklore**. This basis does not always have to be evident or direct in practice, so that, for example, music that is not basically folkloric but is performed on some of the traditional folk music instruments can also be classified as *W.M.*

One of the most common, as well as most important, characteristics displayed by *W.M.* is **music production arrangement**. The process in which “technology meets tradition”⁶ enables transferring traditional music into a contemporary context, thus bringing it closer to a wider audience. An important fact with regard to *W.M.* is that it **represents a form of urban culture**, which is at particular variance with its mostly rural (country) basis; still, its production arrangement helps to

³ V. Andree-Zaimović, “Muzika svijeta i svjetska muzika (od kulturnog altruizma ka profitu i nazad”, 2nd *International Symposium “Music in Society”*, Muzikološko društvo FBiH, Muzička akademija Sarajevo, 2001, p. 285.

⁴ From B. Djordjević’s presentation at the said review.

⁵ This process most probably arose from the need to create something that could be termed cross-cultural, that is, cross-temporal music (A. Ramović, “World Fusion – jedan prilog diskusiji o globalizaciji muzike”, 2nd *International Symposium “Music in Society”*, Muzikološko društvo FBiH, Muzička akademija Sarajevo, 2001, p. 280).

⁶ The expression adopted from A. Ramović (ibid, p. 281).

bridge that once insurmountable gap. Music production as one of its features was also very important in overcoming the boundaries between different cultures. Consequently, numerous folkloric creations, “dressed in contemporary music”, were raised from the level of the specifically regional to the universal.⁷

Speaking of *W.M.* on our territory, and bearing in mind all its forms, as well as the forms in which it appears, it would be appropriate to point out that interest for this music dates from the mid-1970's. Having become aware of the fact that music based on traditional – rural grounds experienced a real boom in the world, domestic authors turned to it more or less successfully, engaging in it to the best of their abilities.⁸ That is how various forms and styles of domestic *W.M.* were created, some of which were popular with only a part of the domestic population, while others became “common good”. This depended on a number of factors, both on the origin of music-making and the developments in our region – the disintegration of the country, its impoverishment and major demographic changes that brought about cultural changes as well, often manifested as a specific decline in the cultural level. Therefore it comes as no surprise that in many of our surroundings rock music, in the past on a par with world trends in terms of its quality, was replaced by neo-folk or even “turbo folk” music, a surrogate of neo-folk music created by crossing neo-folk with pop music in a specific way, using a process by which neo-folk music is produced in the same way as pop music.

As previously mentioned, **domestic *W.M.* has several forms.** The simplest forms are clearly those appearing in the form of an **original “folkloric sample”**. They tend to best deliver an authentic illustration of traditional song or music-making, thus representing a unique **traditional sonic museum**. Because they are not modernized by music arrangement, these forms of music-making are not very popular with the audience. Still, the audience occasionally listens to them considering there are an increasing number of groups performing this music, and that they often perform both at concerts and on the radio and television. A typical example of such music-making is the band “Moba”, which performs songs from various parts of Serbia (sound example no. 1), and many others as well.⁹ This form of fostering traditional folk music is but a step away from a form where traditional

⁷ The term universal should be taken tentatively, since it concerns techniques that belong to the music of the West, which nevertheless, in a way, became commonly accepted owing to their popularity. Incidentally, this phenomenon is not a novelty in music production, not even in the traditional, domestic one. Suffice it to remember the ritual Christmas (*koledarska*) or rain songs (*dodolska*) that transformed from one-part to two-part songs, performed in the manner of the newer rural singing (singing “in bass”), which came to Serbia from Slavonia sometime during World War I, bringing along with it the chord of the third as the basic musical symbol of Central, that is, Western Europe, as distinct from the second which was up to then the most common chordal interval.

⁸ Interestingly enough, the compositions inspired by folklore have existed in our popular “light” music since the mid-1970's, but they never were that popular with the wider audience (compositions of the bands “Rani mraz”, “Bijelo dugme”, etc.)...

⁹ Bands like these are numerous in Serbia, and are especially present in certain cultural clubs. What is of particular importance is the fostering of folk songs by the pupils of the “Mokranjac” Music School in Belgrade, as well as by the students of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade.

music is upgraded through arrangement in accordance with contemporary music production, which could be formulated as **traditional music numbers in a contemporary – studio arrangement**. Such, for example, is the “groktalica” (*grunting song*), a traditional song of the Kninska krajina region, which in one composition was provided with a studio arrangement consisting of music, which was electronic in sound, combined with the music of the double flute, “borrowed” from the record library of the Faculty of Music (sound example no. 2). This principle, which incidentally is one of the most commonly used in *W.M.* (recall the music-making of the band “Deep Forest”), produces different results in practice, starting from the ones where a modern music arrangement is put to a folkloric melody to make up a harmonious whole, to the ones where the arranger (composer) failed in his attempt, so that the folkloric “sample” and the accompaniment are separated the whole time, or as one would put it: “like oil and water”.

Interesting examples of **music arrangement** are made by some composers who enrich their music-making only to a certain degree, letting it sound as close to the original as possible. However, behind this intention of theirs there is a risk of this originality being seriously disturbed. One such example is “Putnička svirka” (*A Travelling Gig*), where the cow horn is accompanied by a continuous – bourdon tone, which contradicts the monophonic tradition of eastern Serbia. Not to mention the oriental undertone that such music-making acquires because of both the bourdon tone and the presence of the augmented second and a very developed improvisation in the line of the leading instrument (sound example no. 3). A similar stylistic “slip” occurs when a traditional Serbian song is accompanied by instruments of oriental origin, šargija and tapan, which is a very common occurrence in the process of creating *W.M.* forms on our territory (sound example no. 4).

The reconstruction of the former type of music-making is a path chosen by some musicians, as with the ensemble “Beogradska čalgija”, who do this in terms of both the selection of music numbers and the choice of instruments that ought to represent the oriental music style – a plucked instrument (tambur), a string instrument (violin), a rhythmic instrument (Arabian drum, tambourine), etc. (sound example no. 5).

It seems that the greatest achievement of our authors in the series of “techniques” used in shaping *W.M.* is **the use of folkloric inspiration in creating an original music number**. As may be expected, the results of this practice are considerably different. We will cite only a few of them. The “Feliks kolo” (*The Feliks Round Dance*), a composition by Lajko Feliks and Boban Marković, combines the music styles of the “traditional *dvojka*” (music that has a very expressive “duple” rhythm) and popular “light” music, all of which is performed in a bold combination of the violin and wind – brass orchestra (sound example no. 6). “Violet Saz”, a composition by Sanja Ilić, is a genuine example of *W.M.* creators’ favourite technique, which is to combine musical “samples” irrespective of their genre and stylistic distinction. Hence a popular “light” melody (in a characteristic “tango” rhythm) that sounds familiar becomes “enriched” with oriental elements in this composition, all of

which is performed by an ensemble with the following scoring: vocal, kaval, violin, percussion, ut, saz (types of oriental tamburs) and electronic keyboard (sound example no. 7). Unlike compositions that generally represent works created as a kind of mosaic, which often leaves an impression of disharmony and incompleteness, our *W.M.* “market” also offers compositions in which folklore is used only as an inspiration, which makes them original and valuable. Such, for example, is a composition boldly entitled “Prva frula” (*The First Pipe*) by the group “Zar” (sound example no. 8).

A special place in the “story” about domestic *W.M.*, as pointed out by B. Djordjević, is occupied by **forms originating in what is known as subculture**, which belong to neo-folk or popular music. What appears as an important representative of that music practice is an ensemble with traditional scoring, known as the **brass band**, which has been in existence since as early as the mid-nineteenth century, and more intensely so since the “Dragačevski sabor trubača” (Dragačevo Brass Band Festival) was established in 1961, while its use in the films of director Emir Kusturica has resulted in the fact that the music-making of brass bands in our country, and likewise the world over, became one of the most expressive forms of *W.M.* If we carefully observe this practice, we notice musical forms of different origin, and therefore of different form, appearing in it. Hence country round dances and *čoček*, as well as numbers created “in the spirit of country music-making” appear as the simplest forms. This also includes the so-called original numbers that were not “originally” created for the brass band, but rather subsequently “rearranged”. These are followed by compositions created as a result of folkloric inspiration, as well as those that have nothing folkloric in their basis, but nonetheless belong to *W.M.* as they are performed by a traditional folk orchestra, such as, for instance, the composition “Džipsi trik” (*Gypsy Trick*) (sound example no. 9). Brass bands also perform well-known compositions taken from film music or other sources. One of the most popular compositions is undoubtedly Goran Bregović’s “Djurdjevdan” (*St. George’s Day*) from Emir Kusturica’s film “Dom za vešanje” (*Time of the Gypsies*), a composition that for years has been a most popular one as far as brass band music-making practice is concerned (sound example no. 10).

Still in subculture, happenings on the level of **neo-folk music** are also particularly significant, alongside brass band production. Here, too, we can speak of different song forms that are created, the simplest and closest to the “original inspiration” being songs sung in a characteristic two-four time, the already mentioned “*dvojka*”, which is very popular among our people. They appear in many “production forms”, the simplest of which has a traditional song structure as its basis. Such, for example, is the song “Gori Njujork, Pentagon se pali” (*New York Is On Fire, The Pentagon Is Set Ablaze*), performed by the group “Srpski talibani” (*Serbian Taliban*), characteristic for having a text shaped into rhyming couplets. In terms of its form, this song belongs to a specific, recent, rural two-part singing – “in bass”, and it is accompanied in “*dvojka*” in a typically “café style” – an ensemble consisting of a violin, accordion and bass guitar (sound example no. 11).

One of the most important elements in the production of neo-folk songs is surely the “oriental sound”, expressed in various aspects, of which the song “Dragana” is an obvious example (sound example no. 12). Many of these songs belong to the so-called turbo folk style, characteristic for incorporating elements of neo-folk and rock music. This was brought about by a specific modernization of neo-folk music, yet not because the population consuming neo-folk music eventually advanced to the middle class, but because many former rock musicians who “switched sides” for existential reasons were among the musicians who performed it. One of the most striking examples of turbo folk is the song “Plava ciganko” (*Blonde Gypsy Woman*) (sound example no. 13). Within neo-folk music there are songs which, according to their characteristics, represent a unique blend of this kind of music and urban – pop music. Whether it is merely a result of an “encounter” between two genres or perhaps a transformation of one, basically rural, into the other – urban genre, is hard to tell at present, insofar as an analysis that ought to be carried out should be sociological rather than musical. Examples like these are becoming increasingly numerous; we shall mention only the composition “Jugoslavija” (*Yugoslavia*) by Šaban Bajramović (sound example no. 14).

From the aspect of *W.M.*, the domestic production is very heterogeneous and abundant in forms. It is too soon to speak about their quality, given that it is a case of contemporary production, but what is evident at first sight is that there are few examples that we could designate as representing unique artistic achievements. Our *W.M.* is characterized by constant searching and experimenting which, seeing as it has no solid base in understanding the traditional model upon which *W.M.* rests, often creates examples of dubious quality. The “creative principle” of freely combining music elements – irrespective of their kind and origin – is so prevalent in our music practice that it may be said to be often misused...

In conclusion, I believe that it would be appropriate to raise the question of the purpose of creating *W.M.* forms. As an ethnomusicologist, a scholar who deals with the studies of traditional folk music, I would ask myself whether it is a desire to entertain or something else, for instance to preserve or, perhaps, reconstruct traditional folk music that lies in its foundations. For, at the moment when traditional folk music barely exists in our country (except in some far-off areas or among the refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia) the responsibility that lies with the individuals who foster, and often cultivate it, is great because their performances and recordings published in sound media become the only image of our traditional music and, by extension, specific cultural “models” according to which traditional music is taught. In that case, entertainment as the basic motive for engaging in traditional music cannot be the “excuse” of those who do it poorly. Let us remember the words of famous ethnomusicologist and composer Béla Bartók, who said that the arrangement of a folk melody is one of the most serious tasks a composer can undertake.