

NOTES ON THE MEDITERRANEAN MUSIC HERITAGE IN SLOVENIA: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *Historians are familiar with different processes of transfer in music history. Three forms of transfer are especially important: a transfer of meanings through music (the foundation of musicology as a discipline), an economic transfer of musical goods (from instruments and scores to recordings and performances), and a transfer of musical culture through different practices of what Christopher Small calls “musicking” (from school to media and social networks). Some music crosses borders easily, while other music remains more attractive on a local level. The relationship of identity to music, explored by Jules Combarieu in 1907 in a pseudo-Bach Sonata, and which Simon Frith (2004) calls the concept of “homology” in the context of popular music, can have a broad set of variables. This article discusses the question of a transfer of the Mediterranean to music from the perspective of a Slovene musicologist, or, more precisely, the transfer of the concept of the Mediterranean with regard to the music in Slovenia of the last fin de siècle.*

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING THE RANGE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MUSICALLY

One of Tullia Magrini’s seminal papers is entitled: “Where does Mediterranean Music Begin?” The Mediterranean is addressed here not as a geographic location, but in terms of the historic connection of this space with a specific heritage. In 1992 Magrini initiated a study group within the International Council for Traditional Music devoted to an anthropological approach to Mediterranean music. Her work found several noteworthy reverberations in ethnomusicology.¹ Yet in spite of the geographical delineation of the territory, what she described as a “mosaic of

1 Goffredo Plastino (ed.): *Mediterranean Mosaic: Popular Music and Global Sounds*. London: Routledge (Perspectives on Global Pop), 2003; David Cooper and Kevin Dawe (eds.): *The Mediterranean in Music: Critical Perspectives, Common Concerns, Cultural Differences*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press (Europea: Ethnomusicologies and Modernities), 2005; Philip V. Bohlman, Marcello Sorce Keller and Loris Azzaroni (eds.). *Antropologia della musica nelle culture mediterranee. Interpretazione, performance, identità Musical Anthropology in Mediterranean Cultures. Interpretation, Performance, Identity*. Bologna: Clueb, 2008.

profoundly localized realities”² is present in the use of the Mediterranean concept to characterize aesthetically incomparable phenomena with no attention to analysis of the relations between musical and social variables:

we can conclude that the term “Mediterranean” can actually have a much deeper meaning than its merely geographical one. When we study musical realities whose multiple facets demonstrate that this sea has been the instrument of an intense cultural interaction between countries of Europe, of Asia Minor and of Northern Africa, and that it has been the instrument for the circulation of ideas and values that cross the boundaries of nations and continents, then it can be agreed that, rather than to speak, for instance, of Italian, Tunisian or Turkish music, it is actually appropriate to use the term “Mediterranean”. In this case we have the advantage of being able to allude with only one word to that collection of historical and cultural relations that has produced complex musical phenomena, phenomena that it would not be possible to analyse if not in the light of such relations.³

The Mediterranean engenders heterogeneous imagery: as a compilation of different aesthetics; as an ethical space with a number of stories about its “coherence” and “greatness”,⁴ in both positive as well as negative terms; and as a historical place with complexes of stories within stories. Magrini’s “mosaic of profoundly localized realities” seems to hold true also for the epistemology of the Mediterranean, ranging from clearly demarcated aesthetic and social phenomena to the evasive and complex processes emerging from the past and comparable to other, geographically more distant facts. One of the most important issues for both musical practice and the cultural economy is that of identity: the relation between the musical poetics and the reception of the musical fact.

What does the Mediterranean mean locally, from the perspective of a Slovene musicologist?

MARE NOSTRUM

Almost thirty years ago, Marija Bergamo formulated her view of the Mediterranean:

Mediterranski vidik, ne samo kot splošna, trajno plodna civilizacijska osnova evropske kulture, marveč tudi kot občasno izpostavljeno zaledje, navdih in

2 Tullia Magrini: “Where does Mediterranean music begin?”, *Narodna umjetnost: Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research*, 36/1 (1999), p. 175.

3 Ibidem, p. 180.

4 Fernand Braudel: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1., trans. Sian Reynolds. London: Collins, 1972, p. 14.

podnet ustvarjalnega snovanja, postaja v novejšem času tako v politično-ekonomskem kot v kulturološkem smislu [...] spet izhodišče upanja. Upanja, da je mogoče prostor okrog nekdanjega “Mare nostrum”, ki že dolgo ni več “središče sveta” in ne omike, ohraniti, znova povezati, utrditi in ponuditi za veljavno, življenjsko alternativo današnjemu univerzalizmu pa tudi okrepljenemu združevanju znotraj Evrope in ponovnemu preverjanju pojmov kot so “Centralna Evropa”, “Srednja Evropa”, “Vzhodna Evropa”. [...] Ne gre le za ohranitev prvobitnih temeljev evropske identitete, ampak tudi za novo umetnostno opredelitev pojmov “periferije” in “province” ter razvrstitev posameznih nacionalnih kultur z ozirom na sprejete definicije.⁵

Calling attention to the indefinability of the concept of ‘Mediterraneanness’, like many before her, Bergamo claims that ‘Mediterranisms’ in music are extremely inconvenient to outline; she hesitates to accept the substantialist argument pointing to stylistic features as identifiers of the Mediterranean. Instead, she references the Braudelian view that the ‘Mediterranean’ is a place of frictions between

Zahod[om] in Orient[om]. Usoda jugoslovanskega prostora je, da mu je prav ta os stoletja določala življenje in snovanje. Na tem koščku sveta se križajo in spopadajo tri kulture, tri omike, trije načini mišljenja: krščanski, torej rimski svet, središče starega rimskega univerzuma, ki je postal katoliški in je segal do protestantskega sveta, nadalje islamski svet, tako zelo, v vsem svojem bistvu nasproten Zahodu, ter grški univerzum pravoslavja, v katerem se še na razne načine oglašča Helada.⁶

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- 5 “The Mediterranean perspective – not only as a general, enduringly fruitful civilizational foundation of European culture but also as an exposed background, inspiration and a tinderbox of creativity – is becoming lately in a culturological sense [...] again the starting-point for a hope. A hope that it is possible for the place around the former ‘Mare nostrum’ that has ceased to represent a “centre of the world” and of cultural accomplishments to be reconnected again, strengthened and offered as a valid, vital alternative to today’s predominant universalism, also to the invigorated unification within Europe and for a renewed verification of the concepts of ‘Central Europe’, ‘Middle Europe’, and ‘Eastern Europe’ [...] This is not a matter of keeping the primeval foundations of European identity, but about finding new artistic definitions for the notions of ‘periphery’ and ‘province’ and the positions of individual national cultures with regard to the newly adopted definitions”. (Translations are by the author). Marija Bergamo: “Mediterranski vidiki jugoslovanskega glasbenega prostora”, *Muzikološki zbornik*, 23 (1987), p. 5. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-67Y41PPM> (accessed on October 15, 2015).
- 6 “West and Orient. The destiny of Yugoslav space has been defined along this axis for centuries. In this part of the world three cultures are crossing, three etiquettes, three ways of thinking: the Roman world, the old Roman universe that became Catholic and continued through Protestantism; the Islamic world that is in its very essence different from the West; and the Greek universe of Orthodoxy which still echoes Hellas”. *Ibidem*, p. 9.

In such a broad perspective one can say that momentarily it seems “windy” also in Slovenia. The whole culture is typically Mediterranean, although the concept is rarely mentioned in connection with music, and studied even more rarely. The respected academician Lojze Lebič (b. 1934) warns against the share of ‘otherness’ in today’s musical culture: “How to open up and yet to some degree remain yourself will be one of the fundamental judgements in the future.”⁷

He addresses the Slovene musical culture from the perspective of a cultural ecologist and recommends ‘alertness’ regarding the strong foreign cultural currents: “Slovenia should remain musically a widely open national state in the heart of Europe, but it may not be allowed to become a garbage dump for auditory-musical trash [*glasbenozvočnih odpadkov*].”⁸ He suggests also the formation of a “music-cultural parliament”, a “music museum”, even a “music arbitration court”.⁹ These views seem at first glance rather ordinary. They are far from the radical position of Anton Lajovic (1878–1960), the omnipresent factotum of Slovene musical life between the wars and after 1940 a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, who in his infamous reflection “On the everlasting beauties and the poison of Beethoven’s, Bach’s and Wagner’s works”¹⁰ opted, without general assent, to ‘leave aside’ German music because of its too strong influence on the national. However, it is difficult to ignore the political connotations resounding from culturally engaged statements like these, and the message is clear in both cases: whatever music is officially favoured, it should be kept in harmony with the qualities pertaining to the nation.

Of course, the details of this ‘Sloveneness’ are changing; they are ‘sailing’ permanently on the sea of culture, as Rijavec (1991) noted. The irony is not in the fact that they both strive toward a certain quality, but in the mechanisms through which this quality is distilled. It would be difficult to imagine today something like the thirteenth (and the last) of the committees at work in the Reichsmusikkammer, the Arbeitsausschuss für Auslandsgastspiele; but the Slovene cultural administration offered a rather tragicomic story about defining the national music. The Ministry of Culture initiated a clumsy juridical formulation of Slovene music in spring 2015. Although momentarily still under discussion, the Ministry of Culture offered a “preparatory” formulation of Slovene music that, still unofficially, reads:

music that is entirely or at least primarily in the Slovene language or in the Romani, Italian, or Hungarian languages, if the authors or performers are

7 Jože Kert (ed.): *Lojze Lebič. Od blizu in daleč*, vol. 2. Prevalje: Kulturno društvo Mohorjan, 2014, p. 14.

8 Ibidem, p. 15.

9 Ibidem, p. 21.

10 Anton Lajovic: “O večnih krasotah in o strupu Beethovnovih, Bachovih in Wagnerjevih del”, *Slovenec*, 6 April 1924, p. 5.

members of the Romani minority in the Republic of Slovenia, or the Italian or Hungarian minority in the Republic of Slovenia, with the exception of radio and TV programmes with predominantly instrumental music.¹¹

It is not difficult to imagine, as one of the satirical commentators noted, that a juridical problem may arise if “one of ‘our’ coastal bands sang *Se bastasse una canzone* [by Eros Ramazzotti]”,¹² or if a guest performer were to sing Verdi in Slovene. It seems as if the sole wish to define juridically all the variables of Slovene music and to find a proper place for each within the modern (national) cultural policy spreads a deep shadow around the national music, although this pragmatic conundrum came disguised as a facet of an erratic national interest.

The elusive national identity is certainly not elusive for those who may wish to point to concrete examples, or types, of Slovene music: the Oberkrainermusik of the Avsenik brothers, the avant-garde semi-formal group *Pro musica viva*, Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, the group Laibach, trombonist and composer Vinko Globokar, the popular electronic music ensign DJ Umek, or the practice of choral singing as an entire segment of Slovenian musical culture, leaving the line open to eventual additions. However, the intention of the ongoing debate over the definition of Slovene music seems to fuel the historical opposition in defining national identity in music – the opposition between the contextual and the substantial argumentation of the national – instead of bringing a juridically pragmatic solution that would satisfy both sides as the very foundation of the national music concept. It is as if both poles could, or should, be equated. It seems actually that the social idea regarding the national resembles the debate over quality in aesthetics: they both have grown pale as more and more segments of musical practice have stood in the row for the medal. The idea of a Slovene music and the axiology of styles have both lost their meanings in a dense wood with a lot of (positively or negatively) outstanding trees.

In this rather contemporary sense in which the Mediterranean Basin is filled with Southern fugitives heading North, modern Slovene musical culture seems to fit into the line of Mediterranean heritage as a cultural space of tensions among a set of cultural issues connected with national identity and an axiological set of aesthetic variables. Some of these tensions are typically Mediterranean.

11 G. C.: “Obvezno predvajanje novejših slovenskih skladb, ki jih izvajajo mladi glasbeniki”, *Delo*, 9 July 2015.

12 Gregor Hrovatin: “Kaj je to: slovenska glasba”, *Za-misli*, 1 June 2015, <http://za-misli.si/kolumne/gregor-hrovatin/2315-kaj-je-to-slovenska-glasba> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

MEDITERRANEAN MUSICS IN SLOVENIA

It is one of the central quandaries of twentieth-century musical Europe that the musical poetics (the means through which composers operate) and the aesthetic functions often have complex relations. The very concept of modernity is an idea of “commonalities and continuities”, even “the extrusion of tensions latent in the Classical”, as Julian Johnson suggests in his “sensible history of musical modernity”.¹³ As for the Mediterranean variables within our modernity and its “extrusion of tensions latent in the Classical”, they may be sought on different levels of musical practice. As Marija Bergamo suggested, an approach to the ‘Mediterranean tradition’ could be expected “from at least three directions: from a perspective of musical material, from a position of the doctrine of the beautiful, and from the role of a game for creative processes and perception of music of the Mediterranean”.¹⁴ Maria Papapoulou has proposed a complementary three-part approach to the Mediterranean music, examining “the methods of construction of the musical style of ‘Mediterranean music’ from three points of view: science (anthropology of the Mediterranean), music production, and arts management in the broader context of globalization”.¹⁵

If we confine ourselves at first to the level of music production and accept Bergamo’s suggestion that there are two directions in which to search for “musical ‘Mediterranisms’” – in the “ancient music-folklore segments” and “in the potent layer of the conscience (or sub-conscience) where the (pre)processed musical material articulates mentality without being founded on folklore, in an historic-cultural ‘intussusception’ or ‘socio-historical constellation’ that reaches for the ‘cultural sediment of the descent’”¹⁶ – there are two interesting examples to offer.

Mediterranean culture and music have also recently inspired musicological interest.¹⁷ In its wide semantic meaning, Mediterranean music is nicely exemplified by the popular Slovene singers, Saša Lendero.¹⁸ As one local reviewer noted:

13 Julian Johnson: *Out of Time: Music and the Making of Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 4, 7, 10.

14 Bergamo: “Mediteranski vidiki”, p. 14.

15 Maria Papapoulou. “Μεσογειακή μουσική’ ή ‘μουσικές της Μεσογείου’; Εθνομουσικολογικοί προβληματισμοί στην εποχή της παγκοσμιοποίησης”, in: Συμβολή στη μνήμη Γεωργίου Στ. Αμαργιανάκη (1936–2003). Athens: Tmīma Mousikōn Spoudōn Panepistīmiou Athīnōn, 2013, p. 73.

16 Bergamo: “Mediteranski vidiki”, p. 14.

17 Cf. Primož Kuret (ed.): *The Mediterranean – source of music and longing of European romanticism and modernism*. Ljubljana: Festival Ljubljana, 2010.

18 An example of her music may be found at <http://24ur.com/ekskluziv/glasba/plagiati-saske-lendero.html> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

Saša Lendero, one of the most popular and most often played singers in Slovenia, often encounters complaints that she has cleverly stolen some of her hits, or rather, that she plagiarizes them. This happened with the song *I am not going down to my knees* and *The Lioness* and her last hit *I will get over it on my feet*. [She replies to similar accusations:] “Of course I’m already accustomed to those complaints, but my songs are not plagiarism. I always state the authors of the original music, lyrics, and arrangements. Such speculations claiming that I have appropriated a song unfairly are unfounded. I see no controversy in arranging good songs. The vast majority of the Slovene musical hits are adaptations,” says Lendero, and she’s right. ... It is clear that modern musical reproduction worldwide has proven that recycling old hits pays off – the pop queen Madonna has chosen Abba’s legendary phrase for her hit *Hang up*.¹⁹

Similar phenomena are ubiquitous: a piece from one milieu may find its way into another milieu either through time (as the classical music heritage indicates) or else geographically and culturally (as the world music movement testifies and recently the concept of *translation* in music tries to explore in more detail, as may be concluded from <http://translatingmusic.com>). However, there are important differences in such transfers. If Saša Lendero translates the lyrics, or rearranges the music for different ensemble, she literally *transplants* a piece, and addresses a circle of what may be called intuitively common listeners – she literally transfers the geographically and culturally as yet unfamiliar into a more attractive content in another, different geographical and cultural milieu – and such processes can be found in many works related to traditional music. For instance, the composer Aldo Kumar (b. 1954) sometimes reaches toward Istrian musical idioms and incorporates them into his music, just as many composers have done with various elements of their musical heritage. The reviewer of Kumar’s CD in which an ‘Istrian connection’ can be found described this relation in the following words:

All the pieces on Kumar’s CD are in a certain inspirational – or as [the writer] Milan Dekleva phrases it – even an erotic relation to Istria. Istria for Kumar is not only a musical quotation – some archaically sounding melody or odd set of rhythms. Istria is a mysterious landscape filled with the ecstatic spirituality of people who have lived there for centuries, in the raw sensuality of nature, where the greyness of the continent is mixed with the hot sun of the Mediterranean. In some older compositions on the

19 Jakob Kapus: “Tatica Saška Lendero?”, *24ur.com (POP TV)*, 10 October 2008, <http://24ur.com/ekskluziv/glasba/plagiati-saske-lendero.html> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

album, such as *Istrian suite* and *Istralia*, Kumar's attitude towards Istria is still idealized, garnished with some naivety and unnecessary pathos that keeps us from trusting his sincerity. The music is simple, transparent in design for its short sentences. The music plays smoothly with folk tunes and, at least in *Istralia*, is effectively orchestrated. Here Kumar turns out to be a true master, yet something similar – Slovene folk music in symphonic garb – can be heard since Bojan Adamič, Jani Golob, and other Slovene composers.²⁰

The folk and folk-like tunes of the orchestral garment might easily be replaced with whatever identities one has in mind: with a 'foreign', 'lowbrow', 'elitist', 'old', or in a certain way 'embeddable' musical gesture capable of catching the attention of listeners as a sign, or even a symbol (of any kind). Here the overall procedure of transferring the Istrian tradition is obviously more confined than in Lendero's case: Kumar does not transfer, he reshapes only a segment of the culturally and geographically specific content and remoulds it according to his artistic volition. The 'original' has certain aesthetic values; there is hardly any cultural transfer in it: he remains within the confines of Western art music. His interpretation of the Istrian musical heritage is more a transfer from the folkloristic tradition to the classical concert environment, addressing what one could intuitively call a culturally informed listener.

It seems that the Mediterranean has in recent decades become quite a fashionable cultural attraction for Slovenia, with the Mediterranean Festival for music in Izola since 2006, the Mediterranean International Folklore Festival (MIFF) since 2003 in Piran, or with the disc *Mediterran: Songs from the Mediterranean* (2013) by Klarisa Jovanović & Della Segodba, the newly established (2015) *Marjan Zgonc in klapa Mediteran*, the klezmer repertoire of *Kvartet Akord*, or the jazz ensemble Vid Jamnik & the Mediterranean Connection. Except for this last ensemble, the listeners to these performers may be said intuitively to enjoy their music as a very direct aesthetical imprint of the 'melos from Milos', music from the Aegean Sea often connected with pleasurable leisure experiences for many throughout Europe. The list could be prolonged in yet another aesthetic direction with a number of classical music examples incorporating certain segments of music that may be epitomized as Mediterranean, such as *Two Istrian Etudes*, *Ballabili in modo Istriano*, or *Sinfonia da Camera in Modo Istriano* by Danilo Švara (1902–1980); *Istrianka* for piano or *Three Istrian Preludes – Concert Etudes* by Karol Pahor (1896–1974); or the

20 Peter Kus, "TOLPA BUMOV / April 19, 2003, at 19:00 / ALDO KUMAR: Strastra (Edicije Društva slovenskih skladateljev, 2002)," Radio Študent 89,3 MHz, <http://www.radiostudent.si/article.php?sid=1716> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

symphonic poems *Mar Saba* and *Jamal* by Marko Mihevc (b. 1957). Their listeners, intuitively speaking, enjoy an experience of highly elaborated aesthetic pleasure resembling the Mediterranean esprit, yet still imbued with a certain artistic ‘Middle-European Initiative’.

The differences among these examples range from the direct dispersion of a certain style practiced in the Mediterranean region (folklore festivals, Klarisa Jovanović, *Marjan Zgonc and klapa Mediteran*), or a *reframing* of the key stylistic features of a folk-music tradition from the Levant (Marko Mihevc), to a more thorough *transfer* of specific segments of folk-music into a different genre (as with Karol Pahor, Danilo Švara, or Vid Jamnik & the Mediterranean Connection).

The question of art management, as well as perception, should be added to the discussion at this point: why accuse Lendero of ‘intellectual theft’ when she does not even pretend to be doing something original? And does the listener of Kumar really accept his *Istrialia* as an interpretation of Istrian tunes? Moreover, what exactly is ‘Mediterranean’ in the jazz sessions of Vid Jamnik & the Mediterranean Connection? The differences between Lendero’s and Kumar’s work points to a difference between the cultural and aesthetic elements of interpreting, or rather transferring a certain musical practice (or segments thereof) from one place to another. On a general level, the process of musical transfer is ancient. Bela Bartók’s concept of composing with folklore from 1931 is but one example of the typology of the processes through which an ‘initial musical material’ finds its way into different individual voices.²¹ The various aesthetic idea(l)s indicating the other’s voice can be found primarily in culturology and in philology-rooted discourses on intertextuality and music,²² especially on post/modern, stylistically heterogeneous and heteronomous music and quotation in music. It is not the differences but the similarities – the fundamental compositional features and the perception thereof – on the basis of which differences between styles and genres may be studied, as

21 “The question is, what are the ways in which peasant music is taken over and becomes transmuted into modern music? We may, for instance, take over a peasant melody unchanged or only slightly varied, write an accompaniment to it and possibly some opening and concluding phrases. This kind of work would show a certain analogy with Bach’s treatment of chorales”. The second method is “the following: the composer does not make use of a real peasant melody but invents his own imitation of such melodies. There is no true difference between this method and the one described above”. An the third way: “Neither peasant melodies nor imitations of peasant melodies can be found [...] but it is pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music. In this case we may say, he has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music which has become his musical mother tongue”. Bela Bartók: “The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music”, in: Béla Bartók Essays, ed. Benjamin Suchoff. *Béla Bartók Essays*. Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 341–344.

22 Cf. Peter J. Burkholder: “Intertextuality”, in: *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.nukweb.nuk.uni-lj.si/subscriber/article/grove/music/52853> (accessed on November 3, 2015).

indicated by the research on musical universals that is oriented more toward the cognitive sciences.²³

MEDITERRANEAN AS AESTHETICS – MEDITERRANEAN AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPT

The question of the relation between the ‘original’ and the ‘transferred’ – one of the central questions of intertextuality as well as the discourse on musical universals – seems to be fairly dispersed through different research vocabularies of music scholarship. There is no systematic survey of the methodologies through which meanings are ascribed to music except that they waver between culturological and cognitive variables. Speaking generally in elemental aesthetic terms, there are four different relations between the idea(l)s and their appearance in a given composition. Saška Lendero *adopts* rather literally a whole genre of music from Greek culture into Slovene pop musical culture. Aldo Kumar creates from chosen tunes new pieces that are often unmistakably connected to their source; he *transfers* one specific idiom into another. Mihevc, on the other hand, successfully *reshapes* what seems to be the classical popular aesthetic heritage into concert pieces. To a certain degree, the folk-idiom seems for Švara a rather abstract structural *gesture* that undergoes certain *metamorphoses*. The question of the ‘base’ and the ‘superstructure’ – the question of *originality* and *authorial* surplus – indicates an identity issue with two sets of variables: the cultural and the aesthetic. If for Lendero the cultural question regarding copyrights and plagiarism is not an important artistic issue – her *performances* of the songs are all that she considers musically important – aesthetic capital is, for both Švara and Mihevc, to the contrary, deeply rooted in the cultural issues of the classical musical tradition.

There is an obvious methodological difficulty in advocating such a classification of different layers in terms of *adaptation*, *transfer*, *reshaping* and *metamorphosing*, since any concept of translation poses delicate issues given “the fuzzy boundaries between translation, adaptation and rewriting”.²⁴ Moreover, it is difficult to leave aside the whole issue of a typically modernist quandary involving – and this holds true also for the examples given above – the many different tokens of a type called “contemporary hybrid music”.²⁵ The ‘Mediterranean’ concept within Slovenia raises the same issue of postmodernity understood as a shopping list of heteronomous aesthetic features, or as a “maddeningly imprecise musical

23 Jean-Luc Leroy (ed.): *Topicality of musical universals / actualités des univers musicaux*. Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2013.

24 Sebnem Susam-Saraeva (ed.): *Translation and Music, The Translator*, 2 (2008), p 187.

25 Amy Horowitz: “Israeli Mediterranean Music: Straddling Disputed Territories”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 7 (1999), p. 450.

concept”.²⁶ Yet these distinctions are proposed for the sake of a generic positioning of phenomena, and they are far from an exhaustive systematic analysis of the music in question and the epistemology involved. They merely serve to indicate the scope within which such ‘links’ between different Mediterranean aesthetics are conditioned by differing sets of aesthetic preferences, and by a rule of thumb that is also social. The social layer emerges as soon as one adds the concept of the “Mediterranean-Slavic variant of avant-gardism” as Andrej Rijavec and Ivan Klemenčič have labelled the work of Primož Ramovš (1921–2015).²⁷ Ramovš is a notoriously abstract, *textural*, *sonoristic* composer known for his numerous symphonic and concert works; he is reckoned as one of the central figures in non-programmatic instrumental music. The scope of ‘Mediterranean-ness’ in Slovene music today ranges from direct aesthetic (and textual) *translation*, through a set of *transfers* (adaptations, reshapings, metamorphosings, and similar cognitive transformations) to a rather abstract, global re/contextualization signalling certain ‘spiritual’ *qualia* in a music that has aesthetically rather sparse connections with the widespread traditional musical practices in the Mediterranean geographical areas. In this case, ‘Mediterranean’ serves as an interphase between ‘modernism proper’ (occidental, northern, German?) and ‘southern’ (oriental, popular?) music. It is as if the ‘rational’ and reflective North and the ‘exuberant’ and emotive South had once again found the right geographical coordinates for an encounter.

The musical examples cited above hopefully offer sufficient evidence to show clearly that composition is a process of transferring certain geographically and culturally relevant phenomena into a new aesthetic outfit, as it were. Although not many listeners in Slovenia know much about Greek traditional musical practices, Lendero’s art of ‘transplanting’ musical pieces seems to be fairly acceptable as a commonly understood ‘message’. To a certain extent, Kumar also composes with a similarly definable aesthetic: his ‘source’ is geographically closer to the Slovenes (Istria is partly within the Republic of Slovenia), and his own idiom belongs to the genre of what is today often described as a mixture of classical orchestral jazz and light music aesthetics. Mihevc’s music widens the horizon toward the Orient, yet it does not change the perspective – just as the jazz ensemble Vid Jamnik & the Mediterranean Connection extend the possible connotations toward the Western and Southern regions of the Mediterranean Basin. For Primož Ramovš, however, it would be difficult to persuade a listener to grasp his music as an example of Mediterranean culture without substantial further explanation.

26 Jonathan D. Kramer: “The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism”, *Current Musicology*, 66 (1999), p. 7.

27 Andrej Rijavec: “K vprašanju slovenskosti slovenske instrumentalne glasbe”, *Muzikološki zbornik*, 15 (1979), p. 11. Ivan Klemenčič: “Ljudska glasba znotraj umetne”, *Traditiones*, 28 (1999), p. 278.

Even if in such cases a typology of ‘cultural entities’ may seem possible in music, it would be difficult to find any substantial relation between the poetological idea(l)s and the aesthetic appearances. It remains a cultural, case-specific, and contingent issue whether, for instance, the accordion has certain European, Russian, Balkan, or Mediterranean connotations.

If Lendero, Kumar, and Mihevc testify to the ubiquity of the common, age-old musical transfers between different geographical places and stylistic levels, Švara’s and especially Ramovš’s music remains a kind of aesthetical meta-space of elemental cognitive phenomena with a much smaller number of culturally devised ‘signs’. It seems to resist the concept of ‘transfer’ if not observed within a historically informed context. It is itself a kind of a translation without the original. It pushes the geographically and culturally well-contextualized aesthetic narrativity toward an edge where music becomes an even more elusive phenomena of human narration than it is within the historically and culturally informed polystylism of Marko Mihevc or Kumar. In Švara and Ramovš the places and spaces from which their music sends its ‘messages in the bottle’ seem dispersed through issues of cognition as well as perception of music, through historical layers of comprehending music as an autonomous art as well as through the idea of music as a primeval, meta-cultural artistic medium.

The difference involved is an important one. Lendero, among others, exemplifies what may be described as Mediterranean music in its ability to reach aesthetic sympathies in a geographically and culturally somewhat different Central European milieu. Yet Ramovš’s music seems to allow the concept of Mediterranean in music to be defined primarily, if not only, through an idea of the *inspirational, even mythically archetypal freedom* to combine different sounds; the aesthetic vicinity entirely replaces the strictly geographical. His musical poetics and aesthetics have hardly any apparent connections with the Balkan, yet they are obviously a part of it as well.

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