

**STRATEGIES OF APPLIED  
ETHNOMUSICOLOGY FOR BETTERMENT  
OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS: CASE  
STUDY OF CONCERT 'TRADITIONAL  
MUSIC OF MULTICULTURAL BELGRADE'**

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On this occasion I will try to present a framework of applied ethnomusicology by giving an example of a concert organized for improvement of cultural representations of ethnic minorities in Belgrade, the capitol of Serbia.<sup>1</sup>

Applied ethnomusicology, in wider terms, includes almost every ethnomusicological activity: fieldwork, archiving of recorded material, publishing of papers, education of future ethnomusicologists, organization of parades, festivals and concerts, being a part of judging panel on music competitions, organization of music workshops with a specific purpose. Of course, not all of aforementioned activities define applied ethnomusicology in narrower terms, though their material dimension and a certain impact they have is undeniable. However, this can rather be understood as practical, empirical side of ethnomusicology, a side which exists in every realm of human acting and behavior. This paper deals with applied ethnomusicology in narrower sense. Before its official establishing, this discipline was practiced by scientists as well as the amateurs, but not under that name yet.<sup>2</sup> Today 'applied ethnomusicology' means some acting of ethnomusicologists on people and situations which were up to this moment only observed, consequently, this young discipline deals with problems which were not familiar to earlier ethnomusicology.

Although ethnomusicology exists for almost one and the half century, its application has been explicitly discussed for the past fifteen years, but not everywhere and not in large part (see Pettan 2009:63). The need for separating applied ethnomusicology from ethnomusicology, precisely –so called 'academic', or theoretic, distanced from research subject and unengaged ethnomusicology (Titon 1992b:315), has appeared along with postmodern (in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), and evidence of its conformity to the postmodern discourse are characteristics such as relativistic observing, bottom-up approach in acting, eclecticism in choosing of musical objects, tendency towards intervention, openness in the results, interdisciplinarity, criticism of academism, and also its existence in the context of ethnomusicology – it is one of its possible directions which are numerous in contemporary science. It is possible to make a parallel with engaged art: its goal and purpose is realization of political or ethical ideal or program, and that is in fact way to oppose to the autonomy of discipline (Šuvaković 2005:52). Even it is noticeable that applied ethnomusicology has so far distanced from rigorous definition, i.e. from conceptualization of history and methodologies, which is also in accordance with the mentioned postmodern trend.<sup>3</sup> Of course, it has many similarities in its methodologies and goals with its originate discipline, applied anthropology (cf. Bennet 1996). Establishing of this discipline is a live issue now, and it should be mentioned that it gives many creative and useful possibilities for the development of ethnomusicology, music and the society.

1 This paper is based on my Master work which is the first comprehensive study about applied ethnomusicology – Dumnić 2010.

2 For example, very important project which is model for many later project is 'The Resonant Community' organized by Kjell Skyllstad in 1989 (see Skyllstad 1993).

3 For example, see explanations of applied ethnomusicology which gave members of its very first society – Applied Ethnomusicology Network 2005.

In literature, the term 'applied ethnomusicology' include socially engaged, responsible and utile ethnomusicology (see Titon 2003), which means that that ethnomusicology is activist (see Araújo 2009), related with the public sector (see Hutchinson 2003), and advocacy (Helbig 2010). Also is possible existing of medical ethnomusicology (see Barz 2006). This discipline can be also called 'applied musicology' (see Tokumaru 2006), 'applied sociomusicology' (see Keil 1998), and similar. There are also ethnomusicological papers that do not name such acting of ethnomusicologists in some specific way, but they certainly belong to mentioned category (see Reyes Schramm 1990).

Because of completing the image about applied ethnomusicology, I will just mention one approach, which is not completely acknowledged. In 1983, Bruno Nettl characterized 'applied' ethnomusicology<sup>4</sup> as various activities of ethnomusicologists that contribute to the preservation of folk heritage (going on rural fields, archiving, teaching, popularization of folklore), which is in accordance with principles of the urgent anthropology (Nettl 1983:273-274). Although this approach has been controversial later on, I think that it is very important not only because of history and future of the discipline, but also because of the broadness which author presented in this definition, and its recognition in East European ethnomusicological schools, too. At this moment I will not spend time on problems concerning this approach which I call 'urgent ethnomusicology' analog to previously mentioned term, but I have to mention it because of applied ethnomusicology in Serbia,<sup>5</sup> which is nationally oriented and has been developing exactly on East European ethnomusicological fundaments,<sup>6</sup> so it is logical that these methods are used for particular ethnomusicological goals.

Officially, applied ethnomusicology exists since 1992, when *Ethnomusicology* 36 (3) was published by Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). In 1998, Applied Ethnomusicology Section as part of SEM is founded and sort of manifest was announced, which contributed to institutionalization of the discipline. In that period, propagation of the group and its goals has started as well as the assembling of members and inclusion in university programs, which initiated the rise and constant development of the discipline. In 2008, newly established International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM) Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology held its first congress in Ljubljana,<sup>7</sup> and on that occasion, the following definition, which can be considered as culmination of definitions up until that moment, was established: "Applied ethnomusicology is the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts" (cf. ICTM 2010).

It has to be mentioned that applied ethnomusicology brings new role of ethnomusicologist in the society – he/she is not only observer, but activist for social benefit. Applied ethnomusicologist

4 Quotemarks by Nettl.

5 More about Serbian ethnomusicology is available in Golemović & Rakočević 2008.

6 Typical for East European ethnomusicology is development under Soviet and German influences, which implies belonging to musicological paradigm, which is as construction opposite to anthropological, mostly connected with American ethnomusicology. Musicological paradigm implies research of musical text and performance as basic, so it considers music as product. More about those paradigms and about possibilities to overcome the differences in Zemtsovsky 1997.

7 Papers from the first meeting of ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology are available in Pettan 2008.

has to be good educated ethnomusicologist with compassion for the partners on the field whose interests should be advocated, and all that activities had to be in service of society and science. Also, there are some fields that are more compatible with this aspiration, which means different fieldwork approaches, too. Most successful fieldwork method for activities like this is participation observing.<sup>8</sup> The question of ethics is very interesting because of regularity of intentional acting: although like in all human sciences there are some regulative ideal norms, the most significant is benevolence of researchers and his will to improve something. As expected, most of critics of applied ethnomusicology are related to this question, i.e. to losing of neutrality and setting particular goals. Of course, all of this brings many scientific problematizations to the discipline which are discussing now, but also have to be debated in the future.

I will briefly present the position of applied ethnomusicology in Serbia, based on the results of my questionnaire for ethnomusicologists, which was about their attitudes about traditional music, fieldwork, performing, teaching, their professional activities and goals, but also about ethnomusicology and cultural policy.<sup>9</sup> Common for almost all Serbian ethnomusicologists is that they are professors, they have been involved in organization of some folklore festival, they have been members of judging panel on competitions of folklore musicians, they are not familiar with methods of cultural politics and management, they think that traditional music should be more popularized in media, and they would like to deal with humanitarian work (Dumnić 2010:95). Local specific qualities of Serbian society are very interesting, because nowadays Serbia is postsocialist society of clashing tendencies of Serbian nationalism and oblivion of Serbian folklore. In addition, it is important to mention that this postconflict country is economically undeveloped, and the overlapping of different music cultures which exist parallelly is especially interesting in this social context like this. Achievements of applied ethnomusicology in Serbia are, as a product of mentioned activities and goals of ethnomusicologists, considered to be good. It should be mentioned that discipline I am talking about attracts more attention of Serbian ethnomusicologists, so more and more of them acclaim a worldly actual 'applied ethnomusicology' as their field of interest, but on the opposite some of them still have resistance to this discipline.

I will present practical part of this paper. It is a concert 'Traditional Music of Multicultural Belgrade', held on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 in Yugoslav Theater in Belgrade, organized by Ethnomusicological Society of Serbia (ESS). Based on the field research, my assignment in organization was to find some performers, to evaluate their ability for participation and to estimate the repertoire which they might perform. Also, I conducted a survey among participants, which will be discussed later.

Belgrade, as the capitol of Serbia, is a multicultural environment with constant influx of population. Except for the majority of, conditionally, native Serbian orthodox population, national minorities are a part of Belgrade population, too. There is also a significant number of Serbs who are the refugees from previous civil war in former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and also those displaced from Kosovo and Metohija. In addition, Belgrade is populated by members

8 For further informations about contemporary fieldwork approaches see Barz and Cooley 2008.

9 Survey was conducted in 2009 year with eminent Serbian ethnomusicologists: Dragoslav Dević, Dimitrije Golemović, Mirjana Zakić, Jelena Jovanović, Selena Rakočević, Sanja Ranković. For the form of questionnaire see Dumnić 2010: Appendix 3.

of other Yugoslav nations (cf. Wikipedia 2010). Since in Belgrade exist different music cultures outside of performing scene, ESS felt need to present them in that way too. The need for the presentation of music of ethnicities living in Belgrade is logical because musical pluralism is now an omnipresent phenomenon. On this occasion, the presentation was the concert with a concept of collage portrait of different music traditions separately.

The point of this concert was to show the coexistence of different traditional musics. The idea is also that, after long cultural unification in socialism and despite origins from different parts of the Balkans, those musics can and should exist simultaneously in the environment such as Belgrade. In addition, the promotion of non-dominant cultures is noticeable, and since one concert was not long enough to show all the minorities living on the territory of Belgrade, this is the initiative to hold such concerts in the future and to present all the minorities. Apart from the performance aimed at wider audience, which serves the purpose of presenting the performers and their nation, they also had the opportunity to make contacts with other performers and to get a chance for some future cooperation. Speaking about their public performance, it must be mentioned that the audience who was not strictly expert had the possibility to learn about different traditional music cultures through their musicianship and with accompanying ethnomusicological comments.

The concert was organized as follows: in preparation phase ethnomusicologists had to find the performers who sing or play traditional music of their own nation, i.e. the competent performers in terms of cherishing the tradition and having music-technical skills. On top of that, the performers would be the representatives of their tradition and would promote themselves on renowned event. In addition, media promotion of the concert belongs to this phase.

During the first half of the concert, the music of Serbs was performed, first from Serbia, and then followed the music of colonists and refugees in order of their migration to Belgrade. The second half of the concert was marked by the music of national minorities, from those who migrated earlier to the recent newcomers. Conception like this was made because it was planned to open the first concert with performance of musicians from major population, and then to present music of all minorities (which are numerous in Belgrade) in this and concerts in the future. Also, at this concert performances were leveled from less to more stylized, and from less to more exotic for the audience, with the exception of performance of the group 'Shira u'tfila' which was in the middle and it represents a contrast to the first part of concert and an introduction to the second.

The performers on the concert were: vocal group 'Paganke' (they sang Serbian folk songs in 'museum' manner); cultural-artistic society (CSA) 'Kordun' presented vocal-instrumental practice of their originate area, as well as the group of colonists from Hercegovina; Circle of Serbian sisters from Raška-Prizren Eparchy (members of this group live in Belgrade since 1999 like refugees and they presented music of Kosovo and Metohija. It is interesting that they are familiar with the works of Serbian ethnomusicologists Miodrag Vasiljević); CAS Šafarik presented folk music of Slovaks; group 'Shira u'tfila' (this group is multiethnic and Belgrade public of 'world music' scene is familiar with their work. At this occasion they performed vocal-instrumental compositions inspired by traditional Sephardic music from the Balkans and the Mediterranean); ensemble 'Ašik Junus' (this group is cherishing 'sufi' music and insists on the usage of traditional

instruments); Nenad Vještica-Khan (he is player on sitar who performs Indian classic music in the way he learned from the native players and for this occasion he played an introduction to larger instrumental piece. He is cooperating with many local musicians, such as representatives of Jews on this concert); 'Salsa y Punto' (this is popular Belgrade band whose members are excellent Cuban and Serbian musicians. They performed popular songs in the arrangement typical for Cuban music).<sup>10</sup>

For my MA work I made a survey among the participants about their musical practice, nationality, religion, interpretation of level of traditionality of their own performance, openness for intercultural partnership, opinion about folklore festivals, cultural politics, and finally about ethnomusicology (Dumnić 2010:108-115).<sup>11</sup> Briefly, the results were: all of them consider themselves as competent representatives of their traditional music and they make efforts to preserve it, they do not support (at least not explicitly) its use for political purposes. Thence, it was interesting how much they consider themselves to be open for interethnic music cooperation: like it was expected, that is the way how 'Paganke', 'Shira u'tfila', 'Salsa y Punto' and Nenad Vještica declared themselves. The second part of the survey was about the attitude of the performers to performances on folklore festivals and related terms, and there appears the field which must be influenced by ethnomusicology. Namely, most of the participants have the negative concern about hitherto cultural politics, but mainly they have the positive attitude towards ethnomusicology (though they are not very familiar with Serbian ethnomusicology), which means that ethnomusicology should be more engaged in that field. In addition, performers did not have good experiences with folklore festivals, so it can indicate another domain where ethnomusicology should be more influential – most of them have negative opinion about competitions and doubt in regularity, which is directly related to ethnomusicologist, as person who makes a selection of performers, professionally takes care of someone's performance and finally estimate the best in different categories. On the other side, all of them had a positive opinion about review concert of this type, because they promote themselves and their culture, which contribute to benefit of the society, so it should be the aim.

Among the performers, there are experienced professionals who have a tendency toward improvisation, make international cooperation and maintain the idea that traditional music is very lively area and that they are part of it, therefore, they do not treat tradition like set of the artefacts that can be transmitted only in given form. 'Shira u'tfila' and 'Salsa y Punto' are multiethnic according to nationality of their members, Nenad Vještica cooperates with 'Shira u'tfila', while 'Salsa Y Punto' has very positive opinion of cooperation with previously mentioned musicians. It is interesting that all of them declare themselves for 'world music' musicians, i.e. that they carry alterglobalistic idea of local music as the music of the world, and with that music they overcome national borders and contribute to the mutual understanding between them and all similar musicians as well as supporting public. They also think that every audience has a potential to understand that, because it can recognize itself in the invocation of music to its mystic archetype origin and universality. Other musicians are mostly turned to audience of their nationality and the goal of their preservation of tradition is national distinction (Dumnić 2010:114-10 The program of concert is available in Dumnić 2010: Appendix 1. For details about the concert see Dumnić 2010: 103-108.

<sup>11</sup> For all particular results see Dumnić 2010: Appendix 2.

115). Approaches to tradition like this are typical for postmodern, so it is logical that they are interesting for applied ethnomusicology like contemporary science.

From the aspect of applied ethnomusicology, this concert is important because it revealed a new field of action – presentation of minorities' music, the expectations were accomplished (promotion and conservation of certain minority's music and consequently its identity, and possible cooperation of the musicians, too), but it was important also because this is one of the first projects of applied ethnomusicology in Serbia, and especially because of elaborative activity of ethnomusicologist. This concert was also the initiative for the next with similar concept, with presentations of music of other minorities (Roma, Croats, Hungarians, etc.) which couldn't participate in this concert because of technical reasons.

Expectations from this concert were not big, because it was not a big project, in terms of duration, organization, media and financial support. Therefore, for bigger effects and conclusions, a series of concerts like this is needed, even just for presentation of all communities who live in Belgrade, which would be one of the tasks for ESS in the future. If musical evaluation of the concert is considered, it can be said that the concert was very good and that the audience shares that opinion and it is especially important that people met some new cultures. The idea of organizers about the success of concert was to present different ethnic and religious groups, to promote the performers, and on top of that to present them as good interpreters of their own traditional music and to meet other performers for potential cooperation, which will consequently lead to the openness and will contribute to togetherness in Belgrade. Also, it is important that connection between ethnomusicology and possibilities of cultural management is made and elaborated (Dumnić 2010:118-124). If these parameters are evaluated, the project was successful.

I will try to accent the importance of applied ethnomusicology in different spheres, at least because it helped me to realize some new opportunities. First of all, applied ethnomusicology is a new branch of ethnomusicology which is very human, because it demands extreme devotion of ethnomusicologist, contact and understanding with associates on the field, and also has effective results. In community applied ethnomusicology gives new possibilities or betterment of relation to the musical folklore, but also the betterment of human relationships. This discipline is certainly very perspective, especially in Serbia, because of its great goals, obligation of interdisciplinarity, openness in realization, but also because of its long tradition (of course, not with that name). Future ethnomusicological projects have to explore its possibilities and to contribute to its development.

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