

Towards a Typology of Traditional Music

K otázkám typologie
tradiční hudby

Lubomír Tyllner ■ Ondřej Skovajsa ■ Hana Vaňková (eds.)

Praha 2017

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Introduction: Why Typology?

Lubomír Tyllner

My answer to the question *why typology* is closely connected to the development or rather the state of our field in the second half of the 20th century. The study of traditional music going hand in hand with realism and optimism was supposed to be the focus of scientific research during the socialist era in Bohemian lands and especially in Bohemia. However, the reality was rather different and this goal was hardly met. The 1950s saw the accusations (and later purges) aimed at formalist, structuralist and culturally-historical approaches, and after a short hopeful period before 1968, the scientific departments witnessed political purges which heavily trod on folklorists, ethnomusicologists, ethnochoreologists. In the few years before November 1989 our field was neither part of the Czech Academy of Sciences nor the Faculty of Liberal Arts and a number of projects dealing with traditional music and dance were interrupted or stopped.

I only mention it because this situation has influenced – to a large extent – our activities in the times when we were no longer bound to listen to the thematic and methodological dictatates of the past. In the new conditions – after 1990 when the Department of Ethnomusicology (a part of which was also ethnochoreology) got stabilised – we could have simply turned our backs at history, bombarded by the current and intriguing topics which confronted us from all sides. This, however, would have meant to shun the unique and exceptionally rich archive of the German traditional music in Bohemian lands which we keep in our Academy archive, or leave behind the hundred-year-old plans for publishing a National Ethnographic Encyclopaedia or abandon a project of revising ethnographical history (as the 1968 edition of *Vlastivěda* still unfortunately excluded German, Jewish and religious cultures). What also called for our attention was an amazing source discovery from the times of the still Austrian Governmental Collection Project – Kunz's Collection – which enables us to study the issue of traditional dances in the old governmental collections, the discovery of Jan Jeník from Bratřice Manuscript, audio-records found on Edison's phonograph from 1909, a wonderful collection of traditional music recordings on shellac records from 1929 and many others. But mainly: the Czech Academy owns the richest traditional music archive in Bohemia from which — during nearly a hundred years of its existence — there had hardly been any publications up to then: the last one being *Das Volkslied in Österreich* from 1905! That is why we also had to face the question of extensive publication projects. This was related to the task of creating a complete bibliographical list of all accessible sources of folk music and dance because as we are facing the situations when many institutions were

Toward the Typology of Traditional Instrumental Music of Serbia¹

Danka Lajić Mihajlović

Abstract: This paper contains an overview of the research on traditional instrumental music in Serbia with a special focus on the latent ideas regarding typology. Namely, in comparison with traditional songs, instrumental music has not been thoroughly researched. Consequently, there is neither comprehensive systematization nor explicit typology of instrumental music. Meanwhile, the marginalization of some instruments in folklore practice has led to almost disappearance of particular genres and instrumental music styles and to the new problem of typology with historical dimension, i.e. inclusion of tradition's dynamism. The main goal is the reaffirmation of that kind of thinking in Serbian ethnomusicological circles and the advocacy of systematization and typology in current and future projects.

Keywords: Traditional instrumental music, Serbia, typology, genres of instrumental music, dance music, epic music, sound signals/announcements, children instruments' sounds/music, identity of instrumental music, applied value of music typologies.

Serbian traditional musical instruments have been a subject of great interest for researchers. However, the music performed on them has been significantly less studied than the vocal music. In other words, the knowledge corpus is reducing following the course from material aspects of the instruments to their non-material dimension. The reasons behind this fact are the proportionally late establishment and slow development of the general science of music, as well as ethnomusicology in Serbia, followed by the lack of human resources and the lack of strategy in regard to institutionalized researches of traditional music in the previous decades. The final consequence is the lack of firmly established generalizations and typologies,² and, therefore, the lack of innovative theoretical

¹ The paper was written as a part of the project *Serbian Musical Identities within Local and Global Framework. Traditions, Changes, Challenges* (No. 177004) funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

² This paper addresses typology in the manner described by Oskár Elsčhek in relation to typology of instruments as: "method based on scanning the totality of the data and isolating variants, groups of variants, and types," whereby a type is not, however, to be regarded as a paragon or archetype (Elsčhek 1969: 33). As Margaret Kartomi highlights, this method is distinguished from the systematic approach of down-ward-thinking taxonomists, but it does not negate it, it complements it, suggesting not only upward but also downward as well as lateral thinking. In other words, it represents a multi-dimensional method of arranging objects according to the simultaneous intersection of categories (Kartomi 2001: 288–289).

ideas in this field. Even though the works by Oskár Elschek (1987, 1996), Svetlana Zakharieva (1987), and especially Igor Matsievsky's *The Traditional Instrumental Music as a Cultural Phenomenon* (Народная инструментальная музыка как феномен культуры, 2007) were very inspirational, the overview of instrumental music in Serbia made for the new issue of the *Grove's Dictionary* by Mirjana Zakić and the author (in press) relies upon the importance and the number of instruments in the tradition. The Prague conference "Typology of Traditional Music" appeared as an incentive for me to look back at the former studies of traditional instrumental music in Serbia from this perspective and to rethink the possibilities of systematization of knowledge, given the applicative potential of such projects. Special attention will be paid to the initial researches in Serbia, which are less known to the wider scientific community, however, highly indicative.

Musical instruments were mentioned in the earliest historical records which are related to the South Slavs, followed by diaries and notes by Serbian courts guests, as well as travel books of voyagers from the Balkans routes (Petrović 1975). However, limitations of insights from the authors of these observations mainly to the public practice and representative performances, reduced descriptions of instruments and terminological problems make those sources conditionally usable in organology and especially in the instrumental music studies. Furthermore, drawings of instruments on frescoes in Serbian monasteries also cannot be taken as reliable, given that the artists who painted them were often from different cultural backgrounds; therefore, they represented the instruments from their memory, not exclusively from the local culture (cf. Dević 1974; Pejović 2013).

The first significant sources about traditional instrumental music are the ethnographic documents and *Српски рјечник* (Serbian Dictionary, 1985 [1818]) by the celebrated Serbian folklorist from the 19th century Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (cf. Dević 1989). The key sublimation is that "Serbian folk music—that is the bagpipes (*gadlje*), which accompany the dances, and the *gusle*, which accompany epic songs. Every village has its own bagpiper, and almost every household owns the *gusle* [...]" (1985 [1826-9, 1834]: 126). This is how Karadžić, by using the functions of the most significant instruments, determined the basic genres of traditional music which is performed on the instruments as dance music – the music which, in folk practice, appears in syncretism with movement and as a "sound mask" in the syncretism of poetry and music in the epic vocal-instrumental performances.

Furthermore, among the terms related to idiophone instruments mentioned by Karadžić in *Српски рјечник*, the ones which denote the signal instruments, like church bells and cattle bells, are the most common. It is explained that the functions of the church bells are announcements of various church rituals, as well as announcements of a community member's death—"it rings for a dead man", and fire alerts—"it rings for a fire". *Zvečka*, a metal board which is hung in

front of a church and hit by an iron hammer, has a similar function, but it is less acoustic than the bell. One can also come across the term *klepetalo*—a wooden plate hit by a wooden mallet, which could be found as a signal instrument in sparsely populated areas. Given that the sound is of a short range, the signals were transmitted by repetition at every house. Aside from informing in general social relations, a series of terms in *Српски рјечник* point to the specific signal code in cattle raising communities. In this way, it has been implicitly pointed to the signals as a genre which (in the ethnomusicological sense) is also a part of instrumental music.

Significant contributions to understanding musical instruments and instrumental music from Serbia and Serbs from other areas of the Balkans were provided from foreign researchers in terms of wider interest for South Slavic traditional music. Precious studies by Peter Brömse (1937) and Walther Wünsch (1934) are known to the wider scientific public; therefore, I would like to point to the less known attributions of the pioneers of ethnomusicological research in Serbia.

At the end of the 19th century, among the young Serbian élite were also the first musically literate people. Vladimir Đorđević in the introduction of the book *Српске народне мелодије – Јужна Србија* (Serbian Traditional Melodies – Southern Serbia) points in detail to the functions of instruments: "*Gajde* (bagpipes) and *duduk* (a larger wooden folk flute with six finger holes) are used for playing dances, *kaval* (a long, end-blown pipe opened at both ends with eight finger holes and four resonant holes) is used only for songs, *šupeljka* (a shorter opened pipe with six finger holes) is for dances and songs, *dvojnica* (an end blown duct/fipple double flute) is used for improvising melodies with undefined rhythms (...), *zurle* (a double-reed oboe) is used for dances and songs" (Ђорђевић 1928a: XV).³ In other words, some instruments had primarily social character, and they had a function of the pivot of community gathering with dance music. The function of organizing the social communication is emphasized, given that *kolo* (a collective, round dance) is predominant. On the other hand, certain instrumental melodies were primarily meant for stimulating intra-communication, a specific meditative state of the lone shepherds or *rabadžija* – carriers of goods by a horse or cow drawn cart.

Ђорђевић also emphasized the specific roles of instruments in practice: "Playing the *zurle* cannot be imagined without *tupan* (a double-headed drum, made from a wooden hoop and leather heads), which is a very significant instrument for giving rhythm. It is not a seldom practice that the dance takes place with *tupan* playing only, without any additional music" (Ђорђевић 1928: XV). Not only does it primarily identify certain instruments as parts of an ensemble (as opposed to solo instruments), but it also additionally con-

³ Notes on instruments made by D. L. M.

firms the primacy of rhythm and the secondary character, almost irrelevancy of the intonation component of dance melodies. In that way, the perceiving of stratigraphy of instrumental music functions is being directed. That is how, for example, bagpipes, which are identified by Vuk Karadžić as an instrument for performing dance melodies, were also found as a part of *koleda* (traditional ritual from the winter cycle) and wedding rituals (Марјановић Крстић 1998; Лајић Михајловић 2000). In the ritual instrumental melodies, *bordun* (the low-drone), as the main characteristics of the bagpipes, comes to its full extent and functions as an essential idea of noise as anti-silence, a man's sound symbol in the ritual, as written about by Jacques Attali and Svetlana Zakharijeva (Atalli 2007: 7, 19–20; Захариева 1987: 45). Its constant presence carries the semantics of man's intention to survive and overcome the finality of the individual life. The ritual noise is literally realized through sound tools and bells in the winter rituals, therefore, the role of the *gajdaš* (the bagpiper) is perceived simultaneously as a part and as the articulation of the anti-silence function. This kind of sound expression basically differs from the dance melodies, where the bagpipes become a one-man-band with a clear rhythmical and latent harmonic component, and even with a more clearly articulated melody. Examples like these make the typology of instrumental music demanding in relation to the diachronic changes of functions of instruments, as well as in relation to the (culturally conditioned) evolution of the aesthetic of traditional folk music.

Even in the initial phase of ethnomusicology in Serbia, children's musical instruments were highlighted as a unique phenomenon. Đorđević only classified and described one smaller collection (1928b), but he indirectly brought to attention their sound dimension, i.e. the children's instrumental music as a specific genre or sub-genre system of instrumental music.

Latter researches of instrumental music in Serbia identified certain genres which make its typology even more complex: instrumental onomatopoeia, compositions from the military practice (marches), program music (e.g. *The Lost Lamb*). Amplifying the melodies of songs and supporting the chanters led to creation of instrumental melodies under the influence of vocal music (cf. Закић 1993). The professionalization of instrumental practice led to new forms in the function of exposition of creative and performing qualities of musicians (cf. Zakić and Lajić Mihajlović 2012). Until now, instrumental music has not been considered as a whole; consequently, the potentials of its comprehension from the perspective of "clean", "absolute" instrumental music and music which is performed on the instruments within the syncretic dance-music and poetic-music (vocal-instrumental) expressions, were not taken into consideration.

It is important to mention that even the researches from the beginning of the 20th century indirectly pointed to the problematics of the ethnical identification

of instruments and music performed on them, as well as the influence of the historical changes in relation to that. Namely in 1928, the year when Đorđević's collection was published, The (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia was a part of Serbia; therefore, all instruments were nationally marked as *srbijanski* (native of Serbia). However, he emphasizes that the *zurle* is "the carrier of Eastern culture", and his younger colleague, a composer and a deserving researcher of Serbian musical folklore Kosta Manojlović, connected the ethos and the tone structure of traditional folk music with Slavic cultural component and/or oriental layers (Манојловић 1929: 20). Even these researchers had in mind the sensitivity of, for example, attributing ethnic and national instruments, and especially the music performed on them. It is implied by rather detailed documentation of traditional instrumental music practice by Miloje Milojević, a composer and musicologist, the first Serbian musical science PhD, including comprehensive field-work data about the chanters, their lives and circumstances of adopting the playing practice (Gojković 1990: 13–14). This offered possibilities for studying the migrations and consequential intercultural processes, i.e. instrumental music in the cultural-historical and geo-cultural sense. Unfortunately, the politics of complex state creations in which Serbia spent almost the entire 20th century, did not offer a good background for ethnically oriented integral research about certain cultural phenomena, even the traditional Serbian music. On the other hand, just a number of professional researches in Serbia dealt with various subjects at the same time, which, as a consequence, offers only a partial insight into instrumental music. Systematizations as the base for typology were provided only for certain instruments, like the flute and bagpipes (Dević 1969; Vukosavljević 1979; Dević 1981). Recent researches were unfavorably organized for the fundamental ethnomusicological knowledge and the disciplinary contribution to the (interdisciplinary) humanistic studies: institutions such as the Institute of Musicology SASA persevere exclusively on the basis of projects, and as the state strategies potentiate innovations this makes us adjust to global trends. Such strategies treat culturally and historically oriented typologies as rather anachronistic and overlook their valuable contribution to the discipline. Aside from the significance for comparative ethnomusicological research, in the times of emphasis on applied and revival projects, knowledge synthesized that way may represent a worthy contribution in the process of approaching the semantics and stylistics of traditional music. Finally, it is very important in regard to the UNESCO project and programmes which aim at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and whose very functioning refers to the contemporary national, i.e. political boundaries: systematics and typologies based on the historically oriented studies of music therefore represent key references.

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