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# How much is opera inter/national?

## Kako inter/nacionalna je opera?

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## IZVLEČEK

Od 19. stoletja dalje se izraz »nacionalna opera« uporablja v dvojnem pomenu: poleg politične reference za »obrobno« območje (V in JV Evropa, Skandinavija, Iberski polotok, deloma Nemčija) pomeni tudi nacionalno tradicijo opere, vključno s »središčem« (Italija, Francija, Anglija, deloma Nemčija). Prispevek nudi zemljevid ključnih vprašanj, povezanih z nacionalno opero in njenim dojemanjem in razbija tradicionalno dihotomijo »nacionalno-internacionalno« v opernih študijah.

## ABSTRACT

Since the nineteenth century the term 'national opera' has been in use with a double meaning: additional to the political reference to the "peripheral" area (East and Southeast Europe, Scandinavia, the Iberian peninsula, partly Germany), it also suggests a national tradition of opera, including the "center" itself (Italy, France, England, partly Germany). This paper provides a map of the key questions related to the national opera and its reception, providing a deconstruction of the traditional dichotomy national-international in opera studies.

This paper proposes a different perspective on "national opera" in comparison with the way it has been considered in literature so far. In order to suggest a theoretical framework as a departure point for further study of the topic, the concept of the paper can be understood as mapping the key questions about given definitions of "national opera" along with possible answers, given in the examples from different national opera traditions, including the contemporary reception of the works.<sup>1</sup> Opera is a complex medium, providing various approaches to its different aspects in numerous possible contexts. The new opera research developed during the last decades represents a wide area with cross-

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of a book that will be dedicated to the national traditions in opera in Southeast Europe in the European context. The research has been conducted within the postdoctoral project *Opera And The Idea of Self-representation In Southeast Europe* supported from the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung: V143 at the Institute of Musicology (Elise-Richter Stelle), University of Graz.

ing disciplines from the history of music and theory of music to literary studies, sociology, teatrology, linguistic studies, cultural and political studies, colonial and postcolonial studies to physics, architecture, and medicine. Interdisciplinary approach opened up a variety of methodologies and resulted in new critical perspectives of the opera studies. Among them, national opera – in its different meanings – has also its place.

There are two perspectives in considering the problem of “national opera” related to the geographical (geo-political) point of view: from the inside and from the outside, as a label for the “peripheral” operatic culture and a self-label. As a matter of fact, the “national opera” is a term with a double meaning: additional to the mentioned political reference to the “peripheral” area (East and Southeast Europe, Scandinavia, Iberian peninsula, partly Germany), it also means a national tradition of opera, including the center itself (Italy, France, England, partly Germany). Analogous to this, the opinion about the existence of two opposite spheres – national and international – is also relative. What is national and what is international (and for whom) are categories that are not strictly determined.

Political and economic centers became in due course cultural centers as well, and as such they dictated innovative trends and their own (national) traditions reached the status of a European canon. In the surrounding areas the canon and local trends permeate each other, and this interaction has been often interpreted as “Europeanization.” Opera has been regarded as a very important signifier of this process as “one of the means – perhaps the crucial one – of such a society’s celebrating itself as a superior civilization.”<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the musics of the mentioned “peripheral” countries in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century have been designated as “national schools.” In this regard, my thesis is that there are not two strictly separated groups, national and international, within opera production. Instead, there are different national traditions of opera, within which those that develop in the politically and economically most powerful countries are declared and accepted as international. Certainly, it is an undeniable fact that the development of classical music took place in different ways in diverse geographic areas, in accordance with different stylistic periodization, resulting from quite contrasted political and cultural contexts (Habsburg vs. Ottoman, for instance). This fact, however, does not influence the division national–international because the mentioned supranational interrelations and communication resulted in the same (Romantic) stylistic framework. There is no deep, significant difference between musical language itself in what is called international and national opera in the nineteenth century, when this division was constructed.<sup>3</sup> Thus the nineteenth-century Romantic opera, including works of different European national traditions, is based on the same techn(ological) model of the discourse of music.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Riemer, *Inside Outside* (Sydney: Agnus and Robertson, 1992), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Excepting the difference between the operas written by composers of different generations, such as Glinka-Mussorgskij, Smetana-Janáček, Weber-Wagner and so on. Yet even in this respect, there are exceptions due to different style periodization. For instance, the national traditions in opera in the Balkans, in the previous Ottoman provinces (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece) were established later than the operatic tradition in West European countries. In that way, the intertextual relations to the earlier established traditions in opera were fulfilled in the works of the composer of the next generation. Let me mention the very significant influence of Mascagni’s opera *Cavaleria rusticana* on numerous operas in Southeast Europe.

<sup>4</sup> In his book *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 18, Eero Tarasti defined discourse of music through manifest and immanent levels. While at the manifest level it is possible to differentiate

Therefore, the “conflict” (national-international) is related exclusively to the ideological model of musical discourse. This area of ideology, guided by a number of fiery “pro-European” versus “pro-national” debates,<sup>5</sup> is where the concept of national opera was constructed. Thus, it is primarily ideological motives that have led to the advocating of “national” music and national opera. In this regard, the idea of national opera is seen by numerous authors as a “paradox” that does not really exist in the musical sense. Most of the “national” operas from Southeast Europe, for example, were formed under the strong influence of Italian *verismo*, primarily *Cavaleria Rusticana* by Mascagni, with “local” content. Is it really a paradox? What makes the opera more “national” at the “periphery” than in the “center”? Or, what makes the national tradition of the opera in the “center” international? Is it really the music itself or the ideas contextualizing music?

In the industrial age, when various types of transport were developed, it was usual for composers and musicians to travel or study in countries where the musical life was more vivid and developed, and where the institutional network was established due to the economical power. Thus creative experiences were formed in accordance to the same source of common knowledge (theory of music, tonal harmonization, orchestration) in the leading university textbooks, with local flavour aimed to provide communication in a new context. Or, the national opera is at the same time an opera for the nation. That was the time of renewed interest in folk heritage and national past, and so the communication in a given society presumed a use of a historical or a topic from the village life, as well as inspiration from traditional music and the use of folk melodies. It is therefore possible to speak about mainly the same musical language with the use of folk heritage, whether in literary (libretto), music (folk melodies or imaginary folklore) or iconographic (folk costumes) aspects of opera. This leads us further towards consideration of chosen recognizable symbols, both “national” (forests and hunting in *Freischütz* by Weber, the folk tale in *Ruslan or Sneguročka*, with an entire folk rite revived in the latter, a patriotic song in the most popular Croatian opera by Ivan Zajc, or muezzin’s singing in the Serbian or Hungarian operas) and “international” (the Kaiserhymne in the opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinski* by Ivan Zajc).

The international reception of the national opera is related mainly to the differences from the canon and what makes them “national.” Overemphasizing these differences directed towards the establishment of the term “national music” or even “national style” for Romanticism of the countries seen as peripheral.<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that certain writings on national opera obtain these terms as a part of self-representation and self-evaluation:

“Hungarian romantic musical idiom as a stylistic entity, was one of the most significant contributions of the Eastern periphery to European music history in the era that saw the budding, blossoming and withering of musical nationalism in its primary form. As attested by great number of pieces and movements in this style by Schubert,

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between ideological (philosophy, aesthetics) and techn(ological) model, at the immanent level there are the structures of communication and the structures of signification.

<sup>5</sup> Let us recall, for example, the opposition of Anton Rubinstein and Petri Ilić Čajkovskij versus the Five: in fact the representatives of “European” ideology also used folk melodies in their works, which was one of the objects of differences.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Michael Beckerman, “In Search of Czechness in Music,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, Vol.10, No.1 (Summer, 1986): 61–73; Taruskin, Richard. *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000; Michael C. Tusa, Michael C. Tusa, ed., introduction to *National Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Opera*. Vol. 2. Central and Eastern Opera. Ashgate, 2011.

Weber, Brahms and of course by Liszt... *style hongrois* enjoyed a wide popularity in the nineteenth century. In view of the overwhelming attraction of opera for both musicians and the public in the decades of musical romanticism, the idea of adapting the Hungarian national musical style to contemporary operatic forms inevitably had to be born in the 1830s.<sup>7</sup>

As is obvious from this quotation, the category “national style” is referring to romanticism, although it is not acceptable as such. What can be also concluded from the writings about the “national style” is that it is an expression actually meaning (personal or national) manner, not style.<sup>8</sup>

The search for “authentic” self-representation and the unique expression of national identity resulted in the establishment of special categories called “Czechness” or “Rusianness” or “Germanness.” The efforts to define these terms still remained ambiguous:

“Thus we may finally make a distinction between ‘the Czech style’ and ‘Czechness’ itself. While the former may be considered as a series of descriptive or analytic generalizations based on the actual characteristics of a body of music, ‘Czechness’ itself comes about when, in the minds of composers and audiences, the Czech *nation*, in its many manifestations, becomes a subtextual program for musical works, and as such, it is that which *animates* the musical style, allowing us to make connections between the narrow confines of a given piece and a larger, dynamic context.”<sup>9</sup>

By Czech music “we are referring to the music composed by Czech-born and Czech-speaking composers who perceive themselves to be part of the western European musical mainstream”.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these two criteria, there are other questions concerning the definition of national opera: “Is it the origin of the composer? The genre? The language? The subject? The musical style? The singers’ style of interpretation? Or all of these together? To anticipate, the hopelessness of finding a satisfactory answer to these questions reveals the whole dilemma faced by the concept of a national opera.”<sup>11</sup> Further efforts to define national opera are directed in a very similar way:

“Was ist eine deutsche Oper? Eine deutsche Oper ist zunächst ganz einfach eine Oper, die auf einen Text in deutscher Sprache komponiert wurde. Naturgemäß ist der Zusammenhang zwischen Text und Musik in der Oper sehr eng. Daher darf man erwarten, daß sich Opern auf deutsche Texte auch stilistisch von Opern auf italienische, französische oder andere nicht-deutsche Texte etwa in der Bevorzugung bestimmter melodischer und rhythmischer Muster insofern unterscheiden, als Sprachmelodie und Sprachrhythmus Einfluß auf die Gesangslinie nehmen. (...) Ein zweites Element, das

<sup>7</sup> “Hungarian National Music and Ferenc Erkel,” accessed April 5, 2012, [http://www.zti.hu/erkel/text\\_en.htm](http://www.zti.hu/erkel/text_en.htm).

<sup>8</sup> About theories of style and the difference between manner and style, cf. Marković, Tatjana. *Stil I: Istorijske i analitičko-teorijske koordinate*. Beograd: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Afterwards, Beckerman pointed out that in spite of the fact that “we cannot precisely *define* ‘Czechness,’ any more than we can fully articulate ‘Rusianness’ or ‘Germanness,’” it is necessary to consider them as “aesthetic facts” without which one cannot clearly interpret the nuances of communication in the music of this period.” Cf. Michael Beckerman, “In Search of Czechness in Music,” 61–73. John Tyrrell tried to define the “Czechness” in a clearer way, on the basis of the literature on music criticism of the 1860s, pointing out that it were “usually detected in passages which, purely because they were simple, were thought to resemble folksongs, whereas these passages which advanced the dramatic action were taken to conform to foreign models.” John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 213.

<sup>10</sup> Beckerman, “In Search of Czechness in Music”, 63.

<sup>11</sup> Silke Leopold, “The idea of national opera, c. 1800,” in *Unity and Diversity in European Culture c. 1800*, ed. Tim Blanning and Hagen Schulze (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22–23.

deutsche Opern von anderen unterscheiden könnte, ist die Tradition des Komponierens in Deutschland.”<sup>12</sup>

In answering the question of what does national German opera mean, Wolfgang Michael Wagner stated:

“Das erste Adjektiv soll andeuten, daß es sich hier um Werke handelt, die nicht nur auf deutsche Texte geschrieben, für die Aufführung an einem Theater in Deutschland bestimmt waren, sondern darüber hinaus Stilelemente enthalten, die als spezifisch deutsch angesehen wurden, und die deshalb als Produkt des deutschen Nationalgeistes galten. Natürlich konnten das nur noch Werke von deutschen Komponisten sein.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the author comes to the point that the German national opera cannot be divided from the German “national style.” It seems that certain national musics/operas could not fulfil even the basic demands of the mentioned definitions, concerning the ethnic origin of composer and the language of an opera libretto, as the following examples will show.

In spite of his enthusiasm for calling himself the first Czech composer, Smetana never spoke the Czech language fluently. In a letter (11 March 1860) to his former student and friend Ludevít Procházka, the composer, pianist, music writer, conductor, and collector of Czech and Slovakian folk melodies, Smetana regretted his inability to learn Czech: “...up to the present day I have not had the good fortune to be able to perfect myself in our mother tongue. Educated from my youth in German, both at school and in society, I took no care, while still a student, to learn anything but what I was forced to learn, and later divine music monopolized all my energy and my time so that to my shame, I must now confess that I cannot express myself adequately or write correctly in Czech.”<sup>14</sup> More than twenty years later (31 August 1882), Smetana claimed: “I am, according to my merits and according to my efforts a Czech, and the creator of a Czech style in the branches of dramatic and symphonic music – exclusively Czech.”<sup>15</sup> This personal development followed Smetana’s belonging to the New German School. “The fact that Smetana ultimately came to identify with his Slavic ethnicity, rather than with his original native language, his Teutonic cultural milieu, or his lifelong political allegiances, encapsulates more vividly than any other single musical-historical fact the metamorphosis that the idea of nation underwent over the course of the nineteenth century.”<sup>16</sup>

Also questioning the mentioned definition of national opera is the case of a composer who has been regarded as the leading Croatian national composer, after whom the entire period 1870–1914 is named (*Zajčevo doba*), and who wrote one of the most popular opera in the history of Croatian music. Giovanni von Zaytz was born in 1832 in the Austro-Hungarian city Fiume (today Rijeka in Croatia), where his father Johann von Zaytz, the Kapellmeister of a military orchestra from Prague, moved with his ensemble. He studied at the Milan Conservatory (1850–1855), yet despite starting a very successful career in Milan, he went back to his birthplace Rijeka (Fiume) to continue his father’s

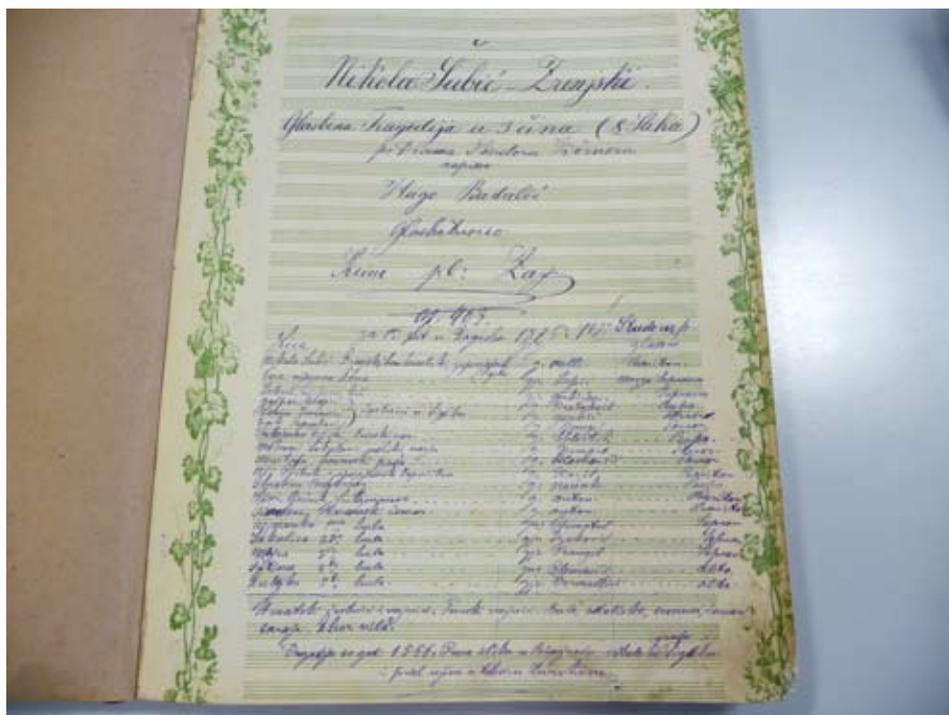
<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Michael Wagner, *Carl Maria von Weber und die deutsche Nationaloper* (Mainz: Schott, 1994), 9.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Michael Wagner, *Carl Maria von Weber und die deutsche Nationaloper*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western music*, vol. 3, “Music in the nineteenth century” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 443.

<sup>15</sup> František Bartos, *Bedřich Smetana: Letters and Reminiscences* (Prague: Artia, 1955), 250–251.

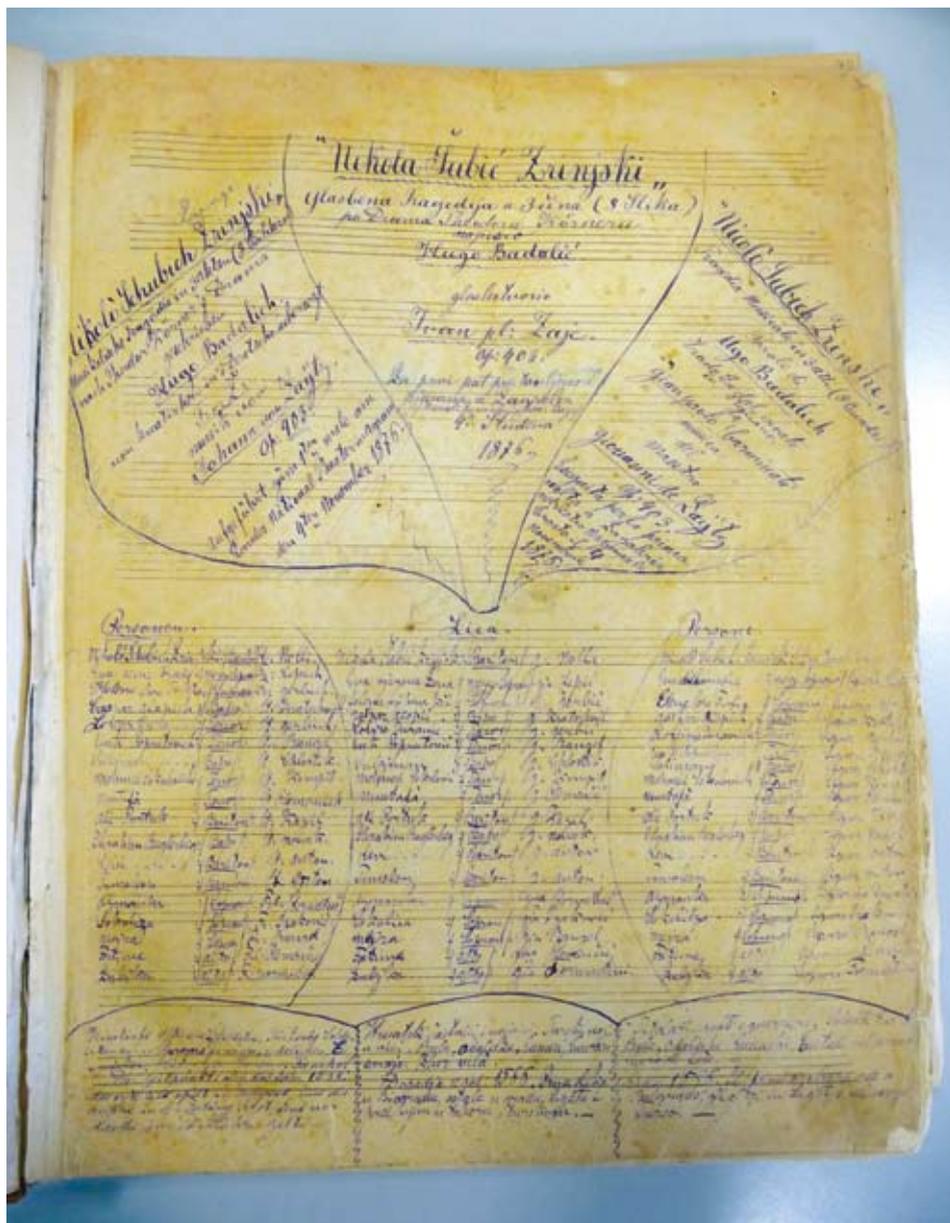
<sup>16</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western music*, vol. 3, “Music in the nineteenth century,” 443.



Example 1a: Ivan Zajc: Nikola Šubić Zrinjski, manuscript (Zbirka muzikalija i audiomaterijala, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica, Zagreb): the title page of Croatian version of the opera.

duties after his death. In 1862 Giovanni von Zaytz moved to Vienna and continued his successful career as an operetta composer at the Carltheater. After eight years, he accepted an invitation from Agram (Zagreb) and moved to this city, where he established the Croatian Opera House and became its first director and conductor, the leading organizer of the musical life, and music teacher. He also continued composing operas in the Croatian language, as well as other works. This was followed by the changing (or, Croatizing) of his name to Ivan Zajc. He spoke Croatian but not fluently, and even his main opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (1876) was composed in two versions, Croatian and German (cf. title pages of both versions in *Example 1a* and *1b*). The practice of composing operas in Croatian and German or Italian was common for many composers in Croatia.<sup>17</sup> Expressed Croatian nationalist feelings are intriguing if we have in mind that the opera was inspired by a heroic act of Nikola Šubić Zrinjski or Miklós Zrínyi, Hungarian soldier of Croatian origin in the service of the Habsburg Monarchy, described in a theater play by a German playwright, and written in Croatian and German language – the mixture of elements that would hardly be accepted by any theoretician of national opera. Yet,

<sup>17</sup> The same practice of composing operas in both native and foreign languages was also present in Bulgaria and Greece.



Example 1b: Ivan Zajc: Nikola Šubić Zrinski, manuscript (Zbirka muzikalija i audiomaterijala, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica, Zagreb): the title page of German version of the opera.

even if Ivan Zajc was neither born in Croatia nor spoke the language fluently, but these were obviously not obstacles for him to be the composer of the most significant Croatian national opera. Even after profound consideration of the music proper, it is possible to say that the same ambiguity remains: in addition to the very popular chorus number from the opera “U boj, u boj” (To the fight, to the fight),<sup>18</sup> one of the music themes serving as not quite articulated leitmotif technique is actually a combination of the Haydn’s Kaiserhymne and Serbian (royal) national anthem! Since this fact was unknown so far, I will explain it in a more detailed way.

At the very beginning of the opera, in the instrumental Introduction, music “explains” the motive of heroic act of sacrificing the life Zrinjski and his soldiers in the struggle with much more powerful Ottoman army – it was their loyalty to the emperor and Empire – by quoting the Kaiserhymne, i.e., Serbian national (royal) anthem *Bože pravde* by Davorin Jenko, very similar to each other (see *Examples 2–4*).

The quotation appears several more times during the opera, and the last of them is at the beginning of the farewell duet of Zrinjski and his wife Eva (No. 30) in the manner of the Glinka’s concluding chorus “Slavs’ja” from his opera *Жизнь за царя* (A Life for Tsar), fortissimo in tutti orchestra, in *Pesante ritenuto*, in octaves. The mentioned “national-international” (Croatian–Hungarian/German) ambiguity in *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* shows one more important dimension of the national opera: ambiguity of the national versus imperial identity.



*Examples 2–4. Example 2: Ivan Zajc: Nikola Šubić Zrinjski, Introduction, m. 1–2. Example 3: Joseph Haydn: Kaiserhymne, m. 1–2. Example 4: Davorin Jenko: Srpska himna (Serbian anthem), m. 1–2.*

Clearly, the definition of national opera is applicable to some cases, but it cannot be accepted as the complete definition. It is obvious that the composer’s origin, even the language of the libretto, are not the main – or, at least not the only important – criteria for defining national opera. Also named as signifiers of national opera are the content of the

<sup>18</sup> In 1866, when the 300th anniversary of the Siege of Sziget and heroic death of Zrinjski was widely celebrated in Croatia, Ivan Zajc, who lived then in Vienna, wrote a composition for male choir and solo baritone *Zadnji čas Zrinjskoga* (The last hour of Zrinjski), more famous as *U boj, u boj* op.182 of verses by Franjo Marković. Later on, this song was incorporated into the opera.

libretto and/or the literary or musical references to the national context. For the Russian music critic and composer Aleksandr Nikolaevič Serov, precisely this criterion was the most significant. Interestingly enough, he pointed out that the big historical events in which historical heroes take part, are the most unfavorable. He recommended instead “patriotic feeling,” which should be treated very carefully, so that “it brings delight and gratitude to the event and the heroes instead of sacrifice them to the work of music.”<sup>19</sup> The ideal example for Serov was the content of the Glinka’s opera *Жизнь за царя*.

As was mentioned, village life was an opportunity to present an idyllic image of people or a love plot, often in the framework of a comic story. It was a favorite theme of writers of plays with singing, for which composers wrote harmonization and stylization of folk melodies. As a matter of fact, the theater plays with music numbers were highly popular in this period and, in the societies where there was no possibility to establish operatic life, such as Serbia, it was a dominant form of stage music during entire nineteenth century. Examples of the operas from this group would be, for instance, the “first national” Czech and Croatian operas, Bedřich Smetana’s *Prodaná nevěsta* (1866) or Vatroslav Lisinski’s *Ljubav i zloba* (Love and Malice, 1846).<sup>20</sup> “Smetanas ‚neudeutscher‘ Orientierung widerspricht es keineswegs, daß er den nationalen Ton, in dem ein unterdrücktes Volk sich wiedererkannte, zunächst nicht in einer tragischen, sondern in einer komischen Oper – der *Verkaufte Braut* – traf; denn da Wagners übermächtiges Werk die musikalische Tragödie gleichsam besetzt hielt, propagierte Liszt um 1850, als Smetana in Weimar war, die musikalische Komödie, wie sie im ‚neudeutschen‘ Zirkel Peter Cornelius mit dem *Barbier von Bagdad* (1858) zu realisieren versuchte.”<sup>21</sup>

Along with the mentioned genre of comic national opera, there is also the fantastic, or fairy-tale, opera. The most famous examples in this category certainly are *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber and *Ruslan i Ljudmila* by Mihail Ivanovič Glinka.

According to the content of national operas, it seems that historical and patriotic content were the most common.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, in addition to comic and fairy-tale opera, the most significant (we can also say the most “convenient”) genre is opera tragedy. Tragic narrative can be also related to a love story with national historical or social background, as in the Polish and Serbian operas *Halka* (1848) by Stanisław Moniuszko and *Na uranku* (At Dawn, 1904) by Stanislav Binički. Quite a number of these operas are

<sup>19</sup> A. H. Серов, Статьи в музыке 1: 1847–1853 (Москва: Музыка, 1984), 188.

<sup>20</sup> Since the content of the Croatian opera is not widely known, let me present it briefly: Obren and Ljubica fall in love with each other, but her father decides to marry her to Vukosav. At the end, the father realizes that Vukosav is an evil man, regrets his own decision, and consents to the marriage of Ljubica and Obren. The seemingly patriotic message “U boj” (Let’s go fight) is thus related only to the duel between two men motivated by their love for the same girl. A happy ending is provided with the help of the “voice of the reason”, certainly not accidentally named Ljudevit after Ljudevit Gaj. Ljudevit Gaj (1809–1872) was a linguist, writer, founder of the first Croatian newspapers (Slovenian, and Dalmatian Newspaper, 1834; in 1836 renamed The National Illyrian Newspaper), representative of the idea about a South Slav unity, and the central figure of the Croatian national revival, called the Illyrian movement. (More detailed about this opera cf. Tatjana Marković, “The myth on the ‘first national opera’: The cases of Serbia and Croatia,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 2012, forthcoming.)

<sup>21</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Gesammelte Schriften in 10 Bänden, Band 5*, “19. Jahrhundert II. Theorie / Ästhetik / Geschichte: Monographien,” Hrsg. Hermann Fanuser (Laaber-Verlag, 2003) 219.

<sup>22</sup> Precisely historical topic in the following combination of French grand opéra was recommended by Franz Brendel as early as in 1845: “Als musikalisches und ideologisches Vorbild empfahl Brendel die französische grand opéra, deren Volksszenen und geschichtliche Stoffe ihm als besonders massenwirksam erschienen”. Barbara Eichner, “Vier Hochzeiten oder ein Todesfall: Die Inszenierung des *Kudrun*-Epos als Nationaloper,” in *Bühnen der Politik. Die Oper in europäischen Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Sven Oliver Müller, Jutta Toelle (Wien, München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 55.

based on a dichotomy between Us and the Other, referring to historical events, famous battles, and the period of striving for liberation and struggling against the occupation. In the widely celebrated Russian national opera *A Life for the Tsar* or *Ivan Susanin* (1836), this dichotomy is placed between Russians and Poles in the seventeenth-century episode from Russian history called *Смутное время* (Time of Troubles). The paradigmatic Russian hero is a peasant who sacrificed himself by misleading a group of Poles that were searching for Mihail Romanov in order to prevent him to become the Russian tsar. “Sodann erscheint in *Iwan Susanin* der Patriotismus – der außer der Handlung auch Teile der Musik so drastisch prägt, daß der Schlußchor zu einer Art zweiter Nationalhymne werden konnte – in der Gestalt einer Rettungsoper, in der er für die Herrschenden, denen das Opfer galt, ebenso akzeptierbar war wie für die Beherrschten, die es brachten.”<sup>23</sup> It seems to be excessive to designate the music of the final chorus “Slav’sja, slav’sja” from the opera as “drastisch.” It was a usual music setting of patriotic choir composition from the repertoire of the choral societies. In this case the words were dedicated to the glory of the Russian tsar and the Russian people:

Славься, славься, наш Русский Царь!  
 Господом данный нам Царь-Государь!  
 Да будет бессмертен твой царский род,  
 Да им благоденствует русский народ.

Interestingly enough, it was Glinka’s friend Prince Vladimir Fedorovič Odoevskij, philosopher, author and music critic, who persuaded him that the chorus could be a hero of the opera,<sup>24</sup> which was characteristic for the entire Russian opera tradition. Judging by the example of the choir “Slav’sja,” it was apparently wise advice.

There are similar examples not only of the musical topoi of patriotism, but also of the same reception to the patriotic musical numbers, which became national anthems too. Thus the final music number “Kde domov můj?” from the incidental music to the play *Fidlovačka aneb Žádný hněv a žádná rvačka* (1834) by Josef Kajetán Tyl, composed by František Jan Škroup, later became part of the Czech national anthem. A similar case is the last chorus *Bože pravde* (God of Justice) from the theater play with music *Markova sablja* (Marko’s Saber) by Jovan Đorđević with music by Davorin Jenko. This play was written and performed in celebration of the coming of age of Prince Milan Obrenović, when he became a ruler of the Principality of Serbia, and the melody was accepted as the national anthem. Ten years later, in 1882, when Serbia was proclaimed a kingdom and when Prince Milan won the title of king, it became the anthem of the Kingdom of Serbia. The chorus *Bože pravde* gained the status of national anthem due to its great popularity, i.e., the reception of the audience.

Due to very admirable and positive evaluations by music writers of *A Life for the Tsar*, the opera was declared the “first Russian national opera” almost immediately after its premiere. “No other major Russian work was ever received with such universal

<sup>23</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Gesammelte Schriften in 10 Bänden*, Band 5, “19. Jahrhundert II. Theorie / Ästhetik / Geschichte: Monographien,” 215.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted from David Lowe, “Vladimir Odoevskii as Opera Critic,” *Slavic Review* 41 (Summer, 1982): 313. (306–315)

acclaim,<sup>25</sup> at least at the beginning. At the same time, the cult of Glinka was established and with it a rich national/ist narrative:

“The composer used many folk melodies in order to compose music in the same way. Because of that, the opera ‘A Life for the Tsar’ can be called national Russian opera par excellence. It seems that the composer depleted in it all richness of our native melodies and we would say that it is almost impossible after this opera to write another one in a purely national spirit. Finally, it takes a musician equally talented as Glinka. In the future these people may appear, but now we do not know any.”<sup>26</sup>

The nationalism of the first opera entirely in the Russian language “was acknowledged and praised by court, intelligentsia and public. All agreed, though for different reasons, that this was how Russianness should be represented...”<sup>27</sup> The main reason for this attitude was undoubtedly the fact that the opera was based on the intonations of Russian folk melodies in the framework of early-nineteenth-century Italian opera. Glinka’s contemporaries, later music historiographers, and even Glinka himself did not deny that fact. Moreover, in a letter (15 February 1841) to his mother, Glinka wrote: “Art, this joy given to me by heaven, perishes here [in Russia] from the murderous indifference to everything that is beautiful. Had I not spent several years abroad, I would not have written A Life for the Czar. Now I am completely convinced that Ruslan can only be completed in Germany or France.”<sup>28</sup>

Obviously, the concept of the national opera is not in any contradiction with the West European musical canon. The opposition is imposed not by the “national composers”, but by West European music historiographers, sometimes in a rather unusual way: “Der Stil Bellinis und Donizettis, durch dessen Aneignung Glinka während seiner Italienreise Anfang der dreißiger Jahre “musikalisch sprechen” lernte, hinterließ in beiden Opern Spuren, die nur ein fanatischer Nationalist leugnen kann.”(!)<sup>29</sup>

The mentioned Otherness in the historical operas is certainly related to the national cultural memory, and as such they were communicative. In a significant number of works in different national traditions of opera – Russian, German, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian and others – cultural memory is associated with the national past, marked by the trauma of wars with or slavery under the invaders. Among the biggest conquerors for centuries were Ottomans, and so the characters of Turks are often present in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European operas and theater plays.

In analyzing Croatian and Serbian opera,<sup>30</sup> I have come to the conclusion that there are two kinds of relation to Orientalism, understood ultimately as “a political vision of

<sup>25</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian music and nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 60.

<sup>26</sup> A. H. Серов, *Статьи о музыке 1: 1847 – 1853*, 182. Exclusively positive opinion about Glinka’s opera was later changed. This growing difference in critics’ opinions about that caused separation among them, the split between two prominent music critics, Aleksandr Nikolaevič Serov and Vladimir Vasil’evič Stasov is famous.

<sup>27</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian music and nationalism from Glinka to Stalin*, 59.

<sup>28</sup> Yuri Olkhovskiy, *Vladimir Stasov and Russian National Culture* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Gesammelte Schriften in 10 Bänden*, Band 5, “19. Jahrhundert II. Theorie / Ästhetik / Geschichte: Monographien,” 215.

<sup>30</sup> More detailed consideration of Orientalism in Serbian and Croatian opera was carried out in: Tatjana Marković 2012. (2012): “Ottoman past in Romantic opera’s present: Balkan operas between Orientalism and Occidentalism,” in Risto Pekka Pennanen, Panagiotis Poulos, Aspasia Theodosiou, ed., *The Ottoman Past in the Balkan Present: Music and Mediation* (Helsinki: The Finnish Institute at Athens), forthcoming.

reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."<sup>31</sup> In case of the Habsburg province Croatia, the Ottoman characters are presented as respected, but under the dominance, "different," Other, "sounded" by Italian opera conventions, as the mentioned *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* shows. In the countries occupied by the Ottomans, this characterization is much more "exotic," since the cultural and musical traditions were in direct contact, so that their musical depiction is actually a crossroad between Western, or Occidental and Oriental conventions. In that way, Serbian operas – like some Russian – show a self-orientalization, or "the exotic self" from the Western point of view: "Balakirev did not see the Oriental style as a means for representing a separate, alien people, and Other, in current parlance, but as an essential component of musical Russianness."<sup>32</sup>

It is worth noting that precisely Orientalism was one of the reasons Wolfgang Michael Wagner stated to explain why Weber's opera *Oberon* not be considered a German national opera: "Insofern kann Webers *Oberon* außer Betracht bleiben, denn er wurde auf einen englischen Text über ein zum großen Teil orientalisches Sujet für das Londoner Covent Garden Theatre geschrieben."<sup>33</sup>

It seems that Weber was chosen to be the composer of the first German national opera in accordance to other criteria. The arbitrary decision as to whether or not a certain national opera will be marked as such depended primarily on historical, political and cultural circumstances. Thus, the "first" or most important national operas were proclaimed very often in relation to a political crisis or war, when the public reception was heightened emotionally. Let us take the example of German and Croatian opera, with Weber's *Der Freischütz*<sup>34</sup> and Zajc's *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski*.

Thinking about these two operas as the model in this respect, I would argue the need to take into account the rich tradition of choral societies in promoting national movements and on being powerful organizations struggling for unity and liberation. The national choral societies consisted mainly of music amateurs, and so they assembled the masses; their meetings, especially while singing patriotic songs, were among the risky political events. Precisely the composers of the most popular patriotic songs were the most popular and praised national composers. Among these were Weber and Zajc.

During the war against Napoleon's army, and especially after the victory over France at the end of Napoleonic wars, there were big patriotic celebrations in Berlin in 1814:

"Die große Volkserhebung vom Jahre 1813 hatte ihre Früchte getragen, die Nation hatte durch eignen Willen, eigne Opfer, eigne Kraft den großen Unterdrücker besiegt und stand, wie ein Löwe, ihrer Stärke bewußt, auf dem Siegesfelde. (...) Vom kleinen Straßenjungen an, der, seit dem Mai 1814, in Berlin militärisch stramm einher ging, bis zu den Generälen des aus dem Volke hervorgegangenen Heeres, füllte nur ein Gefühl alle Herzen: Selbsterkämpfter Sieg, Kraft, Freiheit! – Leben, Kunst, Wissen, Alles mußte sich auf diese Begriffe und Ideen beziehen, wenn es Gewicht in den Augen des Volkes erhalten, Aufmerksamkeit erwecken sollte. (...) Vor Allem aber legte sich die musikalische

<sup>31</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London Penguin Books, 2003), 43.

<sup>32</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian music and nationalism from Glinka to Stalin*, 153.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang Michael Wagner, *Carl Maria von Weber und die deutsche Nationaloper*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> The opera (actually Singspiel) in the German language, *Günther von Schwarzburg* (1777) by Ignaz Holzbaue is also mentioned as a candidate for the first German national opera. Cf. Silke Leopold, "The idea of national opera, c. 1800," 33.

Bearbeitung der patriotischen Gedichte des jungen deutschen Sängers nahe, der, durch seinen poetischen Tod bei Gadebusch, auch auf diese, an sich schon bedeutsamen Gesänge, ein vaterländes Licht geworfen hatte.”<sup>35</sup>

Inspired and delighted by these fiery patriotic feelings, Weber, like many other composers, wrote patriotic compositions and set Theodor Körner’s poems. Körner himself voluntarily joined the war against Napoleon’s army and died as a 22-year-old soldier, becoming the symbol of Germany’s struggle for liberation. Among Weber’s compositions were ten songs to Körner’s poems, *Leyer und Schwert* (1814). Precisely the patriotic choir compositions as the one mentioned brought glory to Weber. He became an idol of young Germans and “zum ersten Male fühlte er sich politisch als Deutscher, zum ersten Male erwärmten die Begriffe von Freiheit, Vaterland, Heldentod, Bürgertugend, Thyrannenhaß seine Seele, und gewannen bald eine so intensive Kraft in ihm, daß sie, auf eine Zeit lang, alle andern künstlerischen Motive in den Hintergrund drängten und ihn mit allem Feuer den Stoff suchen ließen, in dessen künstlerischer Gestaltung er seine Wärme für diese Ideen...”<sup>36</sup>

It seems that precisely the musical topoi of the patriotic choirs, introduced afterwards into the opera, contributed to their communicativeness. With this experience, Weber composed “Jägerchor” in his opera *Der Freischütz*, which became widely popular and was very often performed as an independent song.

Beside the patriotic discourse, there are also other textual and musical “means of communication” recognized as characteristically German, resulting in the status of the opera *Der Freischütz* as the representative German national opera. A great contribution was made by Richard Wagner, who clarified what made this opera German: “the ‘specifically German character’ of its underlying story, with its profound dependence on nature and the demonic; the opera’s roots in folk legend; and its meditative spirit. Weber had forged in this opera a work that had united a politically and socially fractured Germany. ‘Here the most opposite tendencies of political life met at one common centre: from one end of Germany to the other the ‘Freischütz’ was heard, sung, and danced.”<sup>37</sup>

Including a patriotic call to battle “U boj, u boj” in *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (1876) by Ivan Zajc, an opera inspired by Theodor Körner’s drama, made it the most popular Croatian national opera. As the librettist Hugo Badalić pointed out, the opera related to the revival of medieval myth about a Hungarian general of Croatian origin, struggling for the Habsburg Monarchy, who was offered to the people during the Balkan crisis in 1876:

“In this hour, when the issues of education and progress are being solved in the Balkans, and when cannons decide the fate of Croateness, here it is, Croatian people, take a green leaf of your history, here’s the hero of Siget, Nikola Šubić-Zrinjski! He is an embodiment of your sublime task during previous several centuries; he makes you still understand how much significant are you for yourself and for the world. Anyone, with any belief, should admit that the struggle of the small troops for their freedom and their

<sup>35</sup> Max Maria von Weber, *Carl Maria von Weber. Ein Lebensbild* 1 (Leipzig: Ernst Keil, 1864), 450–451.

<sup>36</sup> Max Maria von Weber, *Carl Maria von Weber. Ein Lebensbild* 1, 454.

<sup>37</sup> William Ashton Ellis, ed., *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works* (New York: Boudé Bros, 1966; orig. pub. London, 1898) 176; quoted from Michael C. Tusa, “Cosmopolitanism and the National Opera: Weber’s *Der Freischütz*,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36 (2006): 484.

education against the wild torrents and against tremendous masses, acquired honorable name for Croats in all nations and all centuries.”<sup>38</sup>

The study of the national traditions of many cultures in the opera “off center” is much more difficult because there are only piano scores of operas performed or published, or else scores in uncritical editions that are not completely reliable. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the manuscript of the scores in attempting to reach the relevant conclusions regarding the language of music. Another difficulty in studying these operas is, however, the fact that these manuscripts are not easily available.<sup>39</sup>

Different versions of a national opera exist because of censorship, as well because of “corrections” in preparing the work for performance. A well-known example of censorship causing two different versions of an opera is *Boris Godunov* by Mussorgskij. The case of “correcting” a national opera is related to the Serbian “first national opera,” *Na uranku* by Stanislav Binički. The opera was composed and premiered in January 1904 (December 1903, according to the Julian calendar, then in effect in Serbia). The libretto by leading Serbian playwright Branislav Nušić presented the love of the young Serbian couple, Stanka and Rade, in the context of the country occupied by Ottomans. The couple was to be married, blessed by Rade’s mother Anđa, but the wedding (a village celebration) was interrupted by the Turk Redžep-aga. Being offended because of Stanka’s refusal, he decided to take revenge: he comes uninvited to the wedding and reveals the long-kept secret that Rade is an illegitimate child. In a patriarchal society during the early nineteenth century, that was the biggest shame. When Anđa admits that Rade is a “child of love,” the disgraced son kills his mother in the heat of passion. This is obviously a typical subject of a veristic drama. However, when the opera was renewed at the stage of the Narodno pozorište (National Theatre) in Belgrade in 1968, director Jovan Putnik changed the end, so that in his production, Rade did not kill his mother. “I betrayed both Nušić and the composer Binički, since I did not want to accept the son’s murder of his mother because of the reason which is not understandable to today’s psychology. I used the motif of the folk song: when she realizes that the son wants to kill her, mother’s heart burst of grief and she falls dead.”<sup>40</sup> This act of “correcting” an opera in order to gain more “positive” image of self-representation shows that the opera researchers should take into account all results of profound historical investigation of performance practice.

The mentioned new perspectives in opera studies go along with a focus – or, should it be said, reduction – to the English language. Without any intention to challenge the need for a *lingua franca*, which is the English language today, it seems there is a certain danger in this practice. One of the results of focusing on the English language exclusively is to direct scholarship in a not quite precise way and to reach wrong conclusions, like in the following quotation. The entire tradition of opera production and performance before Glinka’s works has been ignored, when it is mentioned that the Russian and Czech

<sup>38</sup> Hugo Badalić, introduction to *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski. Glazbena tragedija u 3 čina (8 slika)* (Zagreb: Tiskom C. Albrechta, 1876), 3.

<sup>39</sup> In this regard, the initiative of the Institute of musicology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest and the Manolis Kalomiris Society in Athens to present the national operas online is praiseworthy.

<sup>40</sup> D. Gajer, “Izneverio sam Nušića,” *Espresso*, 26 September, 1968.

opera traditions in the second half of the century were created “more or less *ex nihilo*”.<sup>41</sup> It seems that not only knowledge of the required languages of the libretti, but also insight into the research in the respective languages would provide reliable conclusions.

Instead of the term “national opera,” with a connotation of the so-called periphery, it seems preferable to talk about national traditions in nineteenth-century opera.<sup>42</sup> In accordance with the undeniably accepted influences of the West European opera composers, what was confirmed by both composers and music critics from all other parts of Europe – and as comprehensive “national operas” show themselves, between the adopted Western stylistic musical vocabulary and national signifiers such as the colours of traditional music, use of the folk melodies, and specific harmonies – is the fact that between the national traditions in opera and the canon it is possible to achieve harmony. To conclude, there is no opposition and no paradox between the opera traditions designated as national and international opera.

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<sup>41</sup> Michael C. Tusa, ed., introduction to *National Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Opera 2: “Central and Eastern Opera”* (Ashgate, 2011), xi.

<sup>42</sup> This has been already done in two collections of essays in the framework of the Ashgate Opera Studies. Cf. Steven Huebner, ed., *National Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Opera 1: “Italy, France, England and the Americas”* (Ashgate, 2010) and Michael C. Tusa, ed., introduction to *National Traditions in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, Volume 2: Central and Eastern Opera.

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## POVZETEK

Skupaj z razvojem nove ali kulturne muzikologije je polje opernih študij postalo veliko širše, interdisciplinarno in je znova opredelilo številne tradicionalno obravnavane težave. Med rezultati omenjenih študij je tudi ponovna opredelitev t.i. nacionalne opere. Študije opere, napisane v zadnjih 25. letih, so namreč znova preučile nacionalna izročila v italijanski, francoski, nemški, ruski in češki operi.

Od 19. stoletja dalje se izraz »nacionalna opera« uporabljaja v dvojnem pomenu: poleg omenjene politične reference za »obrobno« območje (V in JV Evropa, Skandinavija, Iberski polotok, deloma Nemčija) pomeni tudi nacionalno tradicijo opere, vključno s »središčem« (Italija, Francija, Anglija, deloma Nemčija). S časom je praksa, da se ohrani izraz za »obrobno« kulturo z vidika Zahodne Evrope (včasih izraženo celo na kolonizacijski način), postala prevladujoča. Še več, razprava o operi ponavadi ni vključevala zgodovinpisja nacionalne glasbe in literature, napisane v jezikih »nacionalnih« oper.

Članek nudi zemljevid ključnih vprašanj, povezanih z nacionalno opero in njenim dojemanjem, kot so: Kaj napravi opero bolj »nacionalno« na »obrobju« kot v »središču«? Ali, kaj napravi narodno izročilo opere v »središču« mednarodno? Je to res glasba sama po sebi ali ideje, ki dajejo glasbi smisel in kontekst? Možni odgovori razbijajo tradicionalno dihotomijo »nacionalno-internacionalno« v opernih študijah. V času industrijske dobe, ko so se razvili različni načini transporta, je bilo za skladatelje običajno, da so potovali ali študirali v državah, kjer je bilo glasbeno življenje bolj živahno in razvito, in kjer je bilo zaradi gospodarske moči vzpostavljeno institucionalno omrežje. Tako so se v učbenikih vodilnih univerz oblikovale kreativne izkušnje, skladne z istim virom splošnega znanja (teorija glasbe, tonska harmonizacija, orkestrira-

nje), z željo da lokalni priokus omogoči komunikacijo v novem kontekstu. Z drugimi besedami, nacionalna opera je hkrati opera za narod. To je bil čas obnovljenega zanimanja za nacionalno zapuščino in zgodovino, zato je komunikacija v določeni družbi izkoriščala uporabo zgodovinskih tem ali tem iz vaškega življenja, ter iskala navdih tudi v tradicionalni glasbi in v uporabi ljudskih melodij. Zato je mogoče govoriti o večinoma istem glasbenem jeziku z uporabo nacionalne zapuščine, ne glede na to, ali govorimo o literarnih (libretto), glasbenih (ljudske melodije ali navidezna folklor) ali ikonografskih (ljudska oblačila) vidikih opere. To nas pripelje do razmisleka o izbranih prepoznavnih simbolih, tako »nacionalnih« (gozdovi in lov v Weberjevem *Čarostrelcu*, ljudska pripoved v delih *Ruslan* ali *Sneguročka* – v slednji je spet obujen celoten ljudski običaj –, domoljubna pesem v najbolj priljubljeni hrvaški operi Ivana Zajca, ali poziv k molitvi s petjem kot znak *lokalne barve* v srbskih in madžarskih operah) kot tudi »mednarodnih« (cesarska himna v operi *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* Ivana Zajca). *Lokalna barva* je izraz, uporabljen za regionalno literaturo, pomeni pa »leposlovje in poezija, ki je osredotočena na like, dialekt, oblačila, topografijo in druge značilnosti posameznih regij«.

Skladno s temi nesporno sprejetimi vplivi opernih skladateljev iz Zahodne Evrope so tako skladatelji kot glasbeni kritiki iz drugih delov Evrope potrdili dejstvo, da je med nacionalnimi izročili v operi in kanonu mogoče doseči harmonijo. Kot obsežne »nacionalne opere« same kažejo, med privzetim zahodnim slogom glasbenega besedišča in narodnimi elementi, kot so barve tradicionalne glasbe, uporaba ljudskih melodij in posebne harmonije, ni nasprotij, prav tako pa ne neskladja med opernimi izročili, označenimi kot nacionalna in internacionalna opera. Namesto izraza »nacionalna opera« s konotacijo t.i. obrobja se raje govori o nacionalnih tradicij v operi 19. stoletja.