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REFLECTING EUROPE: PRESENTING THE PROJECT “EUROPEAN INFLUENCES IN THE MODERN URBAN MUSIC CULTURE IN THE BALKANS. BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH”



This article aims to present the ongoing project “European Influences in the Modern Urban Music Culture in the Balkans. Bibliographic Research”. The main objective of this interdisciplinary project is to conduct a bibliographic study of European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans. Research activities involve searching and reviewing of bibliographic sources and published materials on the subject, their description, annotation, systematization, and classification. A significant part of the materials collected during the implementation of the project are digitized and will be integrated into national and international e-infrastructures for the purpose of Digital Humanities. Many of these documents will be available to researchers and the public for the first time. The article presents, on the one hand, the project objectives, approaches for accomplishment of the research goals, as well as expected outcomes. On the other hand, it shows the current state of the research and the challenges faced by the team in time of COVID-19.

Key words: bibliographic research, urban music culture, influences, Balkans, COVID-19.

Introduction

“Whenever humans come together for any reason, music is there”, wrote Daniel Levitin, an American-Canadian cognitive psychologist, neuroscientist, writer, musician, and record producer. Then he specified “weddings, funerals, graduation from college, men

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marching off to war, stadium sporting events, a night on the town, prayer, a romantic dinner, mothers rocking their infants to sleep, and college students studying with music as a background” (Levitin 2006: 6). Music is and has always been part of the fabric of everyday life.

Throughout most of the world and for most of human history, music making was as natural an activity as breathing and walking, and everyone participated. Even more so in non-industrialized cultures than in modern Western societies, music is and was an integral part of the everyday activities. Only relatively recently in our culture, five hundred years or so ago, did a distinction arise that cut society in two, forming separate categories of music performers and music listeners (Levitin 2006: 6). Concert halls, dedicated to the performance of music, professional musicians and composers, specialized music lessons as well as formal music education in secondary and higher schools, they all arose only in the last several centuries. Even later in the Balkans.

Based on the understanding that music is a vivid and remarkable manifestation of the culture of societies, the project “European Influences in the Modern Urban Music Culture in the Balkans. Bibliographic Research” arose. It received funding from the Bulgarian National Science Fund (BNSF) in a competition for junior researchers and postdoctoral students. This project is the first attempt at a comprehensive bibliographic study of European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans. More specifically, the research will focus on sources, which examine the development and transformation of the music art in the Balkan cities influenced by trends in Europe (mainly Western and Central Europe) from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries. The project will create new knowledge by discovering, organizing and classifying various documents on the topic, including so far unknown and/or unpublished sources. Much of these materials will become available to wide audience for the first time.

The implementation of the project started at the beginning of 2020. The scholarly team led by me, is composed by postdoctoral and PhD students of the Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (host organization), the National Music School “Lyubomir Pipkov” – Sofia and the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The project duration is 24 months and it will finish at the end of 2021.

Current State of the Research on this Topic

The original bibliographic study of European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans sets the ambitious goal of filling a major gap in Bulgarian and European scholarly literature. Such specific research has been missing for years and its appearance would be a worthy contribution to the academic literature.

The scarce and insufficient database on the role of music in urban history and its influence in the complex process of modernization of Balkan societies explains the motivation of the project team to focus their attention and efforts on historiographic research on the topic. The lack of sufficient information so far does not allow for sound scholarly summaries and complete analysis. This extensive database needs to be supplemented, since partial and sporadic information often leads to manipulation of process interpretations as well as to impugnable statements. Moreover, the multifaceted approaches of interpretation we found indicate rather the accidental, outdated or controversial results of the analyses on the role of music in the process of modernization in the Balkans. Therefore, primary objective of the members of the team is to deepen and persistently study the available literature on the subject using library, archival and electronic resources, as well as research and discovery of additional, in many cases original and so far, unknown materials. In the course of the research activity, data and information in other fields of scientific knowledge are also discovered, the comparison of which is of particular interest not only to the project team but also to a wide range of professionals in arts and humanities.

Research Objectives.

Approaches for Accomplishment of the Research Objectives

The main research objective is to conduct a bibliographic study on European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans. This ambitious goal will be achieved by applying an interdisciplinary approach as a leading one in our research, which will ensure the interdisciplinarity of the project. This approach brings close together the methods of diverse scholar disciplines such as history, historiography, cultural studies, and information and communication technologies (ICT) on which the project is grounded.

The initial stage of work to achieve this objective implies searching and reviewing *de visu* of the bibliographic sources and published documents on the topic, their description and annotation in order to provide information on the content of the material. This activity covers a wide variety of materials from monographs, collective volumes, memoirs and periodicals, to conferences proceedings, scientific articles and papers on the topic. We gather those materials through diverse sources, such as libraries and national archives, repositories of musical academies, associations and organizations, private collections and archives.

Next step includes collection, systematization, classification and cataloguing of discovered materials. The outcome of this activity is creation of a bibliographic corpus that includes different types of documents on the topic written in one of the European languages, and published in Europe. This corpus will be integrated on a website specifically designed for the project. The website is currently under construction and will go public in the coming months. Open and free access will be granted to all stakeholders.

Furthermore, considerable part of collected materials already is or will be digitized. Digital copies together with the entire bibliographic database will be provided to the National Interdisciplinary Research E-Infrastructure for Resources and Technologies for the Bulgarian Language and Cultural Heritage (CLADA-BG), integrated within the European Infrastructures CLARIN-ERIC and DARIAH-EU. Following the example of Austria and the Netherlands, CLADA-BG combines CLARIN-ERIC's ultimate goals to make language resources, technology and expertise available to humanities and social sciences research communities at large, with those of DARIAH-EU to enhance and support digitally-enabled research and teaching across the arts and humanities.

Expected Outcomes from the Project

The successful implementation of the activities under this project will make the first attempt for a comprehensive bibliographic study on European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans. This will create new knowledge through the discovery, systematization, classification and cataloguing of documents and materials on the subject, including so far unknown and/or unpublished sources. A considerable part of the materials will be presented for the first time to the public.

Moreover, the project will create an appropriate model to continue describing and classifying the huge, significantly fragmented and overly scattered array of data. This will allow, on the one hand, the constant filling in of the database with newly discovered materials on the topic, and on the other – the use of the exact same model to study similar topics in the field of historiography, history and musicology. The model will be presented through an ontology in which control over the inheritance of the information will exist. The formal language of presentation will be sufficiently expressive to encode information. As far as the presentation software, it will be made understandable to humanitarian specialists and will assist them in their research activities. Thus, the project outcomes will support future fundamental scholarly research in different fields such as historiography, history, musicology, cultural studies, and many others, both in Bulgaria and abroad. Collected data will be useful for the work of teachers in different disciplines, as well as for students, senior and early career researchers who are interested in this topic.

Successful implementation of the activities will increase the capacity of the host organization and will improve all team members' qualification. The gained new knowledge and skills will be extremely useful in future scholarly work, as well as in the implementation of activities in accordance with the National Research Strategy, the National Reform Program, the European and National roadmap for Research Infrastructure, framework programs setting specific priorities for the European Union, as well as other European and international initiatives.

All of the above will ensure the sustainability of the results and actions of the proposed project.

Challenges in time of COVID-19

In the past months, Europe experienced new ways of living due to the effects of COVID-19. We all learnt what it means to self-quarantine, work from home, home-school children, cancel a long-awaited trip abroad or even lose a loved one. Undoubtedly, the coronavirus pandemic was and still is the biggest challenge before the implementation of this project. The disease broke out at the very beginning of our research activities and affected them in several ways.

First – and this is common for academics from different disciplines and perhaps at different stages of their careers, is the struggle to

access the essential resources and facilities needed to conduct and share the results of their research. Whilst some academic facilities such as libraries, archives and repositories are opening up with social distancing measures in place, most remain shut or with restricted access. Libraries are trying their best to offer digital resources, but many of these have not been digitized or purchased. The situation greatly affects all humanities scholars, because we are unable to access essential non-digitized library resources, manuscripts, older books, archives or physical collections.

Global lockdown is also having a significant impact on scientific conferences and events, which were postponed for better days or even cancelled. In-person conferencing remains severely curtailed. This is a serious drawback for our team composed by early career researchers who often depend on conferences to grow their networks, find collaborators, build their profiles and be noticed. Another challenge is that we have to find new angles for our research output as scientific journals are keen on promoting and publishing research connected to the pandemic.

Major roadblock is homeworking. The pros and cons of working from home have been discussed for a number of years, prior to this year's public health emergency, in the context on how to achieve a healthy work and life balance. A paper entitled "Work-Life Balance and Working from Home", authored by Tracey Crosbie and Jeanne Moore and published in 2004 examined the experience of homeworking in this context. The paper concluded that "a more cautious approach to homeworking would be wise given that so little is known about its effects on home and family life" (Crosbie, Moore 2004: 229). However, the pandemic has made it mandatory to work from home and this has proved challenging in a number of ways for academia.

The example of Newton is often mentioned to show how isolation can foster creativity and innovation. Isaac Newton discovered calculus during the Great Plague of London, which occurred in 1665. At that time, he was a student at the University of Cambridge. He discovered gravity in the same year. However, reality in 2020 paints a different picture. We have had to learn to use unfamiliar technology quickly to teach, collaborate, provide student supervision and share the results of our research. Some of us have had to find a quiet space at home – which is harder when the household includes young children in need of entertainment or home schooling – to continue planning and

writing papers. Academic institutions might be supportive, but they still have some reasonable expectations of productivity.

Coronavirus has had a global influence and has affected every aspect of academic and university life. However, the impacts might not be experienced equally. Whilst some members of our team were using this time of isolation as a fruitful period to concentrate on their research and writing, others were struggling to balance work and caring responsibilities and thus their research was suffering. Whilst some colleagues had the workspaces and resources, they needed to continue with their work, others were hampered often severely.

The inequality was also divided along gender lines, at least in the early stages of lockdown. It turned out that women are facing additional constraints because of the pandemic. As the global community fights the disease, the productivity and scientific output of female academics are disproportionately affected, leading to loss of women's scientific expertise from the public realm (Gabster, van Daalen et al. 2020: 1968). Early data show that COVID-19 significantly affects women's publishing, which is essential to career advancement. For example, in a Github analysis of arXiv and bioRxiv submissions, Frederickson showed that, although preprint submissions are increasing overall, the number of male authors is growing faster than the number of female authors (Frederickson 2020). Female authorship in other research fields shows similar trends (Amano-Patiño, Faraglia et al. 2020).

Challenges women in academia face are well documented in non-pandemic times. These challenges include male-dominated institutional cultures, lack of female mentors, competing family responsibilities due to gendered domestic labor, and implicit and subconscious biases in recruitment, research allocation, outcome of peer review and number of citations (Howe-Walsh, Turnbull 2014: 415–428). However, COVID-19 has led to unprecedented day care, school, and workplace closures exacerbating those challenges. Recent data from the USA, the United Kingdom and the European Union suggest women spend more time on pandemic-era childcare and home schooling than men do (Adams-Prassl, Boneva et al. 2020: 19). This is particularly difficult for single-parent households, the majority of which are female-headed. The important question now is whether these inequalities are continuing and whether there might be a long-term impact along gender and career-stage lines – something that will become obvious over this year.

General Findings about the Modern Urban Music in the Balkans

Although the research is still ongoing, some general findings and observations about modern urban music in the Balkans could be made at this stage of project implementation.

While music has traditionally been part of the Balkan urban spectacle, several significant changes took place in the ways it was practised that reflected on the greater transformation that modernity brought to the urban context during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

First, modernity highlights significant cultural-historical process, viz. the understanding of art as an autonomous phenomenon that has left the anonymity of folklore. In the field of music, this is an unknown phenomenon to the Balkan peoples, whose ideas about ‘art’ have been based for centuries on folklore and church practice – traditions that have preserved for generations their role as a sustainable sign of national cultural affiliation and source of creative inspiration.

Second, the first generations of professional musicians came to the Balkan cities from abroad: from Vienna, Prague, Naples or Milan. The road of cultural migration was not accidental, but determined by political, geographic, cultural and ethnic factors. A comparative look at Serbian, Romanian and Greek music reveals an entire complex of trans-European links. The western musical system was introduced into the Romanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia largely by Austrian musicians (Preda-Schimek 2007); in Greek centres, such as Corfu and Athens, it came through Italians, arriving mainly from Naples and Milan (Romanou 2003); in Serbia and Bulgaria, Czech composers were predominant (Tomasevic 2004).

Third, public space became increasingly differentiated. Whereas music in earlier times was performed in a variety of improvised and informal venues with highly restricted audiences such as royal theatres and aristocratic palaces, the arrival of modernity produced highly specialized venues, open to a larger public, where music was performed professionally, and often for a fee. Later on, further calls were voiced for more specialization into theatres, opera houses, dance halls, music halls, variety theatres and cabarets, which further stratified the public – and the entire city districts – along the lines of class, social status and wealth. However, while the formation of these larger, yet highly stratified modern audiences and their favourite venues was a consequence of urbanization, those calls did

not always meet the public demand and were often motivated by other considerations, such as nationalism, local patriotism, the desire to improve the standing of their respective cities in the eyes of an honourable visitor and, quite simply, to have their favourite venue in a desired city quarter (Prokopovych 2013: 600).

Lastly but not least, opera house, operetta theatre, music hall and dance hall became modern urban institutions that contributed to – and even catalysed – the change in musical taste among the city’s population. Furthermore, those music venues were places where otherwise impossible social encounters could be made, and where official city representatives competed with others in their aim to represent a particular vision of the city’s past, present and future. Yet they were also places where social hierarchies became visible like nowhere else. The power of new music venues to attract, mobilize or even unsettle the local public increased greatly. They turned into local sites of contestation, in which music acquired additional, or entirely new connotations.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges we are facing, the project team is determined to achieve the ambitious goal of filling a major gap in Bulgarian and European scholarly literature by conducting a bibliographic research on European influences in the modern urban music culture in the Balkans. The successful implementation of the project will meet several national and European priorities in the field of scientific research. First, in accordance with Art. 2 of the Scientific Research Promotion Act (SRPA) of the Republic of Bulgaria, it will create new scientific knowledge about Bulgarian history, culture and national identity as an integral part of the cultural heritage in the Balkans. We will accomplish this through discovering unknown to date materials about the role of music in urban history and its influence in the complex process of modernization of Balkan societies. Second, the outcomes of the project will fit completely into Horizon 2020 priority for creating innovative and thoughtful European societies by supporting the research of European heritage, identity and culture. Finally, achieved results will fulfil the requirement of the National Council for Science and Innovation of the Republic of Bulgaria to increase the access to international research and innovation networks. As mentioned above, we will provide a considerable part of the collected materials to be included in the National Interdisciplinary

Research E-Infrastructure for Resources and Technologies for the Bulgarian Language and Cultural Heritage (CLADA-BG). This will guarantee their publicity, free and open access and international visibility, both in the academic community (among senior and junior researchers, postdoctoral fellows, PhD students and students) and the teaching community to increase teaching process effectiveness.

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ОДРАЗ ЕВРОПЕ: ПРЕДСТАВЉАЊЕ ПРОЈЕКТА
„ЕВРОПСКИ УТИЦАЈИ НА МОДЕРНУ ГРАДСКУ МУЗИЧКУ
КУЛТУРУ БАЛКАНА. БИБЛИОГРАФСКО ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ”

Резиме

Прилог има за циљ да представи текући пројекат „Европски утицаји на модерну градску културу Балкана. Библиографско истраживање”. Основни циљ овог интердисциплинарног пројекта је да обави библиографско истраживање европских утицаја на савремену градску музику Балкана. Истраживачке активности укључују претраживање и критички приступ библиографским изворима и објављеном материјалу на ову тему, затим његов опис, анотацију, систематизацију и класификацију. Значајан део грађе прикупљен током рада пројекта је дигитализован и биће интегрисан у националне и међународне електронске инфраструктуре у циљу укључивања у глобални пројекат Дигиталне хуманистике (Digital Humanities). Многа од ових докумената биће по први пут на располагању истраживачима и широј публици. Прилог са једне стране представља циљеве овог пројекта, приступе за постизање истраживачких циљева као и очекиване резултате. Са друге стране, показује текуће стање истраживачког рада на пројекту и изазове са којима се тим суочава у периоду пандемије ковида-19.

Кључне речи: библиографско истраживање, градска музичка култура, утицаји, Балкан, ковид-19.