

ROMA MUSIC: ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS, ROMA CONTRIBUTION TO MEDIA AND RECORDED MUSIC¹

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Abstract

The study delineates the dynamic picture of the Roma music on the Balkans. The research interest is both anthropological and culturological, focused on the musical contexts – the functioning of music in the media and the music industry during the 20th and the 21st centuries.

The first part of the study is dedicated to the recorded music on the Balkans during the current-day times: gramophone records from the first half of the 20th century, recorded Roma music from the Balkans at the beginning of the third millennium. Names, titles and phenomena from present times – still waiting to become an object of scientific analytical interpretation, are included in the final section: Roma contributions in the local ethno-pop music on the Balkans, kings and queens of the new Roma music, revival of local Roma practices in the instrumental music.

The second part of the study traces the routes of the Balkan Roma music on the globalisation road in the space of the new media: the Internet, as voices and images in the we-media (social networks, video content sharing websites).

Some characteristic media images of the Roma music from the third millennium are analysed in the third part: the Balkan Roma contributions to the modern ethno-jazz, the Balkan Beat phenomenon as a local Roma contribution to the world music and the ethno-fusion, the idiom Gypsy-punk.

In conclusion, the common for the Balkans concerning the Roma music is generalised into two fields: as a Balkan musical idiom (music styles, instruments and ensembles, musical images) and as musician practices via the figure of the Roma musician on the Balkans. The Roma musicians and their music are mediators and innovators of the musical culture on the Balkans, in Europe and around the world. Their importance grows in the post-modern situation and in global aspect: the Balkan musical contributions of the Roma today acquire global cultural significance.

Key words: Roma music on the Balkans, Roma music styles/genres, Roma music and the music industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's global cultural flows are multicultural. According to Arjun Appadurai, they are made up of media spaces (mediascapes) crisscrossing with ethno-spaces, techno-spaces, financial spaces and ideological spaces. The

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media spaces are bound both to the ever more accessible electronic media and to multiplying fields of images created by them (Appadurai, 2006: 55-60). If today we have to outline the profile of the Roma music it will show up most prominently in the media music, which is located in the cross zone of the media spaces with the ethno-spaces as one of the peak focuses on the alternativeness, interactivity and mobility inbred to both.

Media music is the focus important aspects of Roma music and musicians: traditions and modernity; folklore, art and popular music (folk, art, pop music³/ connected with Roma origin and identity; amateur and professional music making; migration processes and intercultural roles; images and symbols revealing different relations between Roma music and musicians and Roma and non-Roma audience.

The text below is to outline the dynamic picture of the Roma kinds of music on the Balkans and their media images. The researcher's interest will focus more on the musical contexts, i.e. the functioning of the music in the new times (20th – 21st c.) rather than the music as text. As long as each event in the modern age exists through mass media, the Roma musical culture is seen through the perspective of media and musical industry. A basis for this study is the artefacts of the media music: records of physical (gramophone vinyls, audiotapes or VHSs, CDs) and virtual (Internet) carriers. Researcher's approaches are anthropological, culturological, media studies, ethno-musicologist (Dimov 2010A).

2.1. ROMA MUSIC AND MUSICIANS OF GRAMOPHONE VINYLs DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

It would be impossible for us to imagine the early media music on the Balkans without the participation of Roma musicians. The Roma people are among the professional musicians, who are great masters of the instrumental and vocal rural and city music performed live on the radio and recorded by commercial gramophone vinyls. Roma soloists and entire orchestras would define the style of the instrumental folk music. Among “the aces” of the then orchestras/bands within the folk music in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia/Yugoslavia, the Ottoman Empire/ Turkey were famous Roma clarinet players, cornet players, bagpipers, accordionists, violinists, entire Roma orchestras. Roma musicians were among the best interpreters of local, traditional and modern Balkan music. Virtuositic and literate in notes Roma musicians (notably pipers) took part in light music and wind orchestras performing Western (light classic music, potpourri from operettas, marches, popular schlagers) and dance music.

³ According to the European concept which, once the Romanticism epoch was over, became the worldwide model, the musical culture is divided into ‘high art’/art music, art based on ancient people's country tradition, i.e. folk music, and art ersatz, street and mass art, i.e. popular/pop music. Today the elitist dispositions of this triad concept are perceived as capping terms to cover quite divers phenomena recommended as useful and comfortable for the purposes of classifying of music even in the non-western world (Nettl 2005: 363). Furthermore, the classification is applied in the Bulgarian ethno-musicology when analysing modernisation processes in the folklore music, in Popular music studies and Minority music studies (Statelova 1999; Peycheva 2008).