

## FOLKLORE AS A SOURCE OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN MUSIC

### 1. Nation and National Culture

According to many scholars – especially those in favour of communication theories – “a system based on musical laws alone, one that makes crystallization possible, is not only disconnected from extra musical laws but may well interfere with linkages between the two “worlds” (Katz, Cohen, 1993:94). Consequently, it is often assumed that music can actively influence the construction of aesthetic and discursive notions – one of the most influential being the concept of nationalism. In the scholarship of musicology the adaptation of the theory of nationalism in reference to musical composition opened up new possibilities of interpreting these musical components national music supposedly is made of. It is a common consensus among historians, sociologists and musicologists that the idea of nationalism – so fruitful in the history of music, especially since the 19<sup>th</sup> century – comprises a huge variety of elements, some altering in the course of time and developing along the progress of the idea itself, some remaining constant. Although the semantic interpretations of the very concept nation still vary among scholars, certain connotations promoted during the discussions of the nation and nationalism have always accompanied the discourse since the emergence of these concepts. Among them predominant tendencies refer to the perception of a nation as (1) an ethnic group [„A nation is a self-aware ethnic group” (Connor, 1978:388)] or (2) the result of political movements [„nation and nationalism... both their milder and their aggressive aspects originated and developed in response to the drive for democracy” (Mann, 1995: 62)].

Furthermore, some authors also emphasize (3) the role of the state in the functioning of a nation. The cultural theory has it that in order to attempt to define the nation a more complex description of its ethnic origins as well as political traditions and – equally important – cultural ones should be employed. Authors like M. Hroch claim that three main components create a nation:

- development of a complementary social structure
- achieving equal citizen rights

and

- improvement of national culture based on a local language used in education, administration and economics (Hroch, 1995:66-67). Other scholars like B. Malinowski went even farther and identified a nation solely with its culture [„...defining nation as a culturally homogeneous group unified by a common language, tradition and organization” (Malinowski, 1944: 258)].

Within the cultural definition of nationalism the idea of national music became to flourish as one branch of an even broader concept of national art. National art was attributed with several characteristics, referring predominantly, but not exclusively, to the use of national themes and myths. For example the most often exploited “found-

ing myth” served as an explanation and justification of the common origins of all members of a nation and at the same time promoted the so called national character, which would often and very willingly be pinpointed and underlined for the local, domestic use, whereas the so called universal qualities were stressed for the purpose of an external discourse (Ciećela-Korytowska, 1996:103). When F. Schlegel discussed the national literature he talked about „here and now” whereas while addressing the universal literature he meant its immortal qualities (Schlegel, 1967:206). It was also the truth in reference to music; national elements in music were, however, believed to ensure at the same time a place both in universal art and in the canon of national art (Dahlhaus, 1985:84). Also very characteristic for the discourse about national qualities present in national art (music) were its pedagogical functions contributing to the upbringing of future generations.

A set of factors associated with nationality and attributed to national art (among them the use of national language or deriving the inspiration from folklore, its didactic bias, etc.) created what can be classified as a simplified view of nationalism. The late 18<sup>th</sup> century roots of this view, intensified promotion of this kind of nationalism in music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century musicological attempts to interpret the discourse resulted in peculiar approaches to the problem of nationalism in music in particular countries and prompted the debate over the role of folklore as a source of national identification in music.

## **2. Romantic Traditions of National Music**

A Pan –European phenomenon of attributing national traits to music of a given nation and thus distinguishing it from other musics composed in Europe became a dominant mode of conduct not earlier than after the French Revolution. Regional or local characteristics present in music before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although with a hindsight interpreted as national, never before gained as much recognition as they did in the Romantic period. Despite the fact that F. Liszt never used the expression “national music” his words about an artist’s desire to portray the art of his/her own nation in the most poetic form possible so that this portrayal would become understandable for other nations (see Lissa, 1964:193) indicate a landmark of how nationalism in music was perceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Liszt himself, although never mastered Hungarian language, neither embraced the real Hungarian musical idiom, contributed much to the promotion of the idealized version of so called Hungarian national music. This in turn saved him from being criticized by later generations of composers (including Bartok) as a homeless cosmopolitan (Trumpener, 2000:410). Liszt – like many other composers trying to find the sense of their own national identity through music – tried to negotiate a compromise between cosmopolitan ideas and his own desire to compose national music. Both concepts – as C. Dahlhaus rightly points – were fashionable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it would be unwise for any composer to “ignore the climate of the times”( Dahlhaus, 1985:.83). The attitude was to be changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when composers like R. V. Williams observed (1942) “Many young British composers have been ruined by abdicating their birthright in their most impressionable years. Before they knew what they wanted to achieve, before they learned, so to

speaking, their own language, they went to Paris, or Berlin or Vienna and came back having forgotten their own musical tongue and with only a superficial smattering of any other. My advice to young composers is –learn your own language first, find out your own traditions, discover what you want to do; then go to Paris, Berlin, or anywhere else” (Williams, 1953:106).

Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, Liszt advocating Gypsy music on the one hand, and on the other R. Wagner who published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1850 the article „Das Judentum in der Musik” (see Wagner, 1964). (where he claimed that culture or language can be adopted but biological traits can never be changed) contributed to the awakening of the ethnical nationalism in music. In response French musicians – especially in the face of French–Prussian war of 1871 – reacted by establishing two prominent institutions whose main aim was to cultivate French musical life. C. Saint – Saëns founded Société Nationale de Musique and Ch. Bordes, A. Guilmant i V. d’Indy created Schola Cantorum. Musicologists often draw attention to the fact that „the emergence of nationality –or the nationalistic discourse – collides with the appearance of local public sphere, institutional life, etc” (Chanan, 1999:168). However, this not always must hold true. In Britain, for example, whose international status had been established for long and which did not have to struggle for recognition, the idea of nationalism in music appeared late, and even when it did never played any significant role. P. Hindemith interpreted this fact this way: “... musical nationalism [was] born and it had its cradle in countries without tradition of fine art. Nationalism was the simplest way of bringing their few and comparatively poor equipped musicians to the fore, since everyone was willing, for a while at least, to enjoy national color, manners, and fashion instead of classical grandeur, mastery, and compelling seriousness” (Hindemith, 1952:198). Perhaps one of the reasons why musical nationalism thrived in for example Italy or Poland was the fact that nationalism in music was often associated with promotion of patriotic feelings in countries whose political position – for a number of various reasons – called for reinforcement of such emotions. It seems that nationality in music served in fact the role of an alluded political claim to the right to have an independent state. In Italy in order to avoid the censorship some composers – including G. Verdi – made use of musical innuendoes by incorporating symbolic allusions in their works. The quest for national character was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century often confused with breast-beating patriotism. Music often became associated with other patriotic activities as well as patriotic movements, patriotic literature, etc. The discourse of patriotism in music was channeled into the concept of so called national schools.

### **3. National Schools and/or National Style**

In 1911 Guido Adler investigated the development of musical style and thus not only established the foundation but also contributed much to the further advancement of the musicology scholarship orientated towards this concept (see Adler, 1929). Adler hardly ever referred to the nationality in music, the ignorance of the issue being the result of his Germanocentric view of history, which was later critiqued as an

attempt to mitigate between the aesthetics and history in order to sustain the sacral status of music works interpreted as ideal objects ( Murphy, 2001: 6). In this scholarship nationalism as a category did not find its immediate place, as the importance was laid on the autonomy of great works representing Austro-German canon. Adler rather stressed the role of the analytical category of style, also in the reference to nationalism saying that „...vom 16. Jahrhundert an tritt der Nationalismus als stilbildendes Prinzip.“ (Adler, 1929:214).

Other German musicologists shared the similar approach to the problem. It was continued by A. Einstein who wrote in 1935 about nationalistic features in a musical work as the ones of secondary relevance, unrelated to the quality of the work itself. He said „...ob eine Musik >national< ist, und welchen Grad der >Nationalität< sie erreicht [...] das sagt nicht das Mindeste aus über ihre Qualität, über ihren Kunstwerk“(Einstein, 1958: 234 ). It is claimed that Einstein advocated the idea of German supremacy in music, the “idea of resilient German musical spirit that overcame foreign domination and found its voice in Bach, Haydn and Weber”( Murphy, 2001: 8). Einstein suggested that national style was in fact an individual style acclaimed a posteriori by listeners as national. C. Dahlhaus’s thinking about the problem reveals similar traits. He also underlines that it is the style of a piece of music that can be determined (e.g. national style), but not its quality (see Dahlhaus, 1985:96). However, the definition of national style as proposed by Dahlhaus highlights the impossibility to determine it thoroughly: „...a national style cannot usefully be defined as the sum of the common attributes of all the works written by composers who belong to the same nation”( ibidem:87).

Style understood as an analytic tool facilitating the discourse of nationality in music was sometimes interpreted as a version of historical style ( Łobaczewska, 1960:7), and as such served as an explanation for 18<sup>th</sup> century attempts to compose in “national style”: “In the eighteenth century ... a national musical style was not so much the ethnic character which a composer inherited at birth as a convention of writing which he could select and exchange for another at will” (Dahlhaus, 1985:90).

A different approach is represented by advocates of so called “national schools” understood as a phenomenon characteristic of Romantic Europe. This approach Dahlhaus still sees as an emanation of Germanocentric view of music history – although he does not say it explicitly. He suggests rather that “the concept of a “national school” [...] implies, tacitly but unmistakably, that “national” is an alternative to “universal” and that “universality” was the prerogative of the “central” musical nations” (ibidem: 89). In other words “national schools” are to be understood as peripheral in comparison to mainstream musical activities of the period. As Dahlhaus’s writing on the subject of nationalism and music exerted a considerable influence not only on German but also Anglo-American musicology, his point of view was widely accepted. More and more musicologists have tried to balance – like composers over 150 years ago – between what is universal and what is national in music. A Polish musicologist J. Dankowska claims „Good music can be national and universal at the same time” (Dankowska, 1995:173 ).

#### 4. Volkgeist Tradition in Music

It was the 19<sup>th</sup> century consensus on what as national in music can or even should be considered that enabled composers to compose "nationally" (and "universally" at the same time). The discovery of folk poetry was one of the first incentives for creating national art, including music. The 18<sup>th</sup> century pre-romantic movements encouraged the interest in studying mythologies of given countries, and also prompted intellectuals to launch the searching for them among simple people. The ideal of natural societies, simple and happy had an impact on European thinkers postulating (like Moser in 1765 in his "Schreiben an den Herrn in Savoyen") better understanding of folk people who presumably managed to cultivate only these customs and traditions of essential relevance. Similarly Johann Gottfried Herder believed in "the spirit of the people" as a truly creative force. National sentiments were imposed onto philosophical conditions associated then with idea of *Volkgeist*. This in turn not only allowed to incorporate elements of folk music into artistic music, but prompted the national status of works overtly influenced by folk art. What in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was still regarded as regional or social transformed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the help of *Volkgeist* hypothesis into a national spirit of music. In the Romantic period the national character in music was essentially that of the folk music quality. As Dahlhaus put it "The clearest expression of musical nationalism was folklorism" (Dahlhaus, 1985: 92).

The spurt of interest in folklore triggered the growth of undertaken attempts to document the traditions, songs or folk poetry for future generations. For example in Poland O. Kolberg only during his lifetime (between years 1857 and 1890) published as many as 34 volumes of his work "Folk", which aimed at saving the Polishness in the occupied country, non-existent on any political maps of contemporary Europe. Similarly in Georgia the scholarly investigations into folk music began around the same time – namely 1860s. The efforts were initiated first by amateurs, later to be taken over by professional musicians. In 1899 Ia Kagarteli published in Tbilisi the "Georgian Folk Songs in Notes", followed ten years later by "Georgian Folk Songs". The folksong tradition in Georgia was also popularized by Lado Agniashvili who founded in 1886 the first professional folksong choir. All these efforts mirrored the European tendency of "back to folklore" policy. Georgia - after its incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1801- actively participated in musical European culture, and the similarities between Georgian attempts to preserve its national musical culture and to establish artistic national idiom within it and for example Polish struggle to achieve the same effects seem striking. The "back to folklore" policy supported the efforts of these European countries which suffered from the lack of independence.

Even if the national music of these countries established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century bore the traces of peripheral phenomenon, it at least enabled them to cherish their own musical legacy. What is interesting is the fact that folk qualities in music were of interest usually only to a given nation: other countries paid little or no interest to the investigation of musical idioms characteristic of foreign to them regions. In Georgia's case it changed a little when Russian musicians became interested in Georgian polyphony. Other European musicologists learnt more about the Georgian traditional polyphony in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to Georg Schünemann (1920) and

Robert Lach's works (1917). The review of the latter's "Kaukasusvolker" appeared in 1932 in Polish "Musical Quarterly" in which the author J. Pulikowski confided himself to statements on the analogy between Georgian and European polyphony supposing only that this comparison could shed new light on the problem of the development of polyphony as such. He did not, however, attempt to elaborate on the topic. In fact, for the first time Georgian polyphony was mentioned in Polish musicological literature as early as 1900. It happened on an occasion of a visit paid in Warsaw by a Georgian poet and composer – M. Balanchivadze. A two page long article published anonymously by E.M. in "Echo Muzyczne" (*Musical Echo*) no. 850 was dedicated to Georgian polyphony: the author presented a few types of polyphony and their functions also in reference to the emotional character represented by different regions. Unfortunately the next article in Polish about Georgian folk music appeared as late as 1960 (It was K. Wilkowska-Chomińska's "Georgian folk music" in a prominent Polish journal "Muzyka" (*Music*) 1960, no3). Overall, in the field of musicology more and more investigations on Georgian polyphony were undertaken also among foreign scholars and the knowledge about it disseminated. The roots of the interest in it can be traced down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of national music and the Volkgeist hypothesis..

#### **5. The Use of Folklore as an Indicator of Nationalism in Music?**

A few questions arise at that point: whether Georgian composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were interested in creating a national idiom, and if yes, whether they were prompt to use Georgian polyphony as the signal of their intended nationalism in music? An independent Georgian style in artistic music began to emerge in the climate of 19<sup>th</sup> century search for nationality in music. Georgian composers – like many other European composers before them, to remind an already mentioned Liszt – tried to mitigate between what was considered as universal (or of Classical-Romantic origin) and national. For example an Italian A. Casella in 1910s intended to create "a style at once Italian in spirit and contemporary in its sonorous language" (Casella, 1955:95). Similarly in Georgia the fight to create and preserve national character in music was balanced by the desire to sustain the standards of composed music within European tradition. On the other hand Georgia, and especially Tbilisi, located in the very heart of the whole Transcaucasia abounded with various musical influences – not only those coming from Germany or Italy, but also from neighboring countries or lands. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century these folk influences – as is often claimed – ceased to be of local or regional importance, but instead became to be regarded as national. Consequently composers from the period between 1890s and 1930s such as Meliton Balanchivadze (1862-1933), Dmitri Arakishvili (1873-1953) or Victor Dolidze (1890-1933) and the following generations exposed to all these various stimuli made an extensive use of traditional music. Their struggle to establish national style of Georgian music manifested in specific musical solutions rooted deeply in folk music –e.g. the distribution of accents in vocal declamations or striking similarities to the folk music cadences. The fact that composers more and more willingly derived from the folk traditions coincided with the time of the growing interest in collecting Georgian polyphony. It can be assumed that both

activities stimulated each other and thus contributed to the promotion of Georgian music, both traditional and artistic. It cannot escape our notice that for example Niko Sulkhaniashvili (1871-1919) was at the same time the composer of vocal works a cappella and an expert in Kahetian songs performance.

Combination of national elements with Classical –Romantic principles, although one of the methods used by Georgian composers, was not the only one. Characteristically they referred to the so called “national” themes – especially in operas, to name only “Malicious Tamar” (known also as “Perfidious Tamar”) by Balanchivadze or “The Legend of Shota Rustaveli” by Arakishvili. In such works the national element understood very broadly (not only in reference to folklore) became to play an important role as a “productive force” to use Adorno’s expression ( Adorno, 1989:166). In this light it seems insufficient to employ only the so much acclaimed Volkgeist hypothesis to explain the complex situation of the interrelations between nationalism and musical culture.

#### **6. The Intentional National Music**

As observed, the national identification in music cannot be confined or identified solely with the use of folk elements. The employment of folksong is no guarantee that national character will be embodied in the music. It is rather a composer’s intention that his/ her work should be considered as national that ought to be respected and accepted as the ultimate factor determining the “nationality” of a given composition. Dahlhaus suggested that “if a composer intended a piece of music to be national in character and the hearers believe it to be so, that is something which the historian must accept as an aesthetic fact, even if stylistic analysis – the attempt to “verify” the aesthetic premise in reference to musical feature – fails to produce any evidence” (Dahlhaus, 1985:86). It can be disputable whether or not hearers really must agree over the fact that a piece of music is national. This is not only very difficult to determine but also the result of any research undertaken would be purely quantitative (e.g. out of 100 hearers an X number agree that a given composition is national, but an Y number rejects to accept it as national). That is why it appears that the only plausible verification lies in the intention of the creator of the work (in this case the composer). Still Dahlhaus is absolutely right when he writes that there are no external or objective indicators of national elements in music. Even the use of folk can be interpreted in many ways far away from the concept of nationality. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century the use of for example Polish melodies by Telemann or Bach indicated only the knowledge of different regional dances. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and deep into the 20<sup>th</sup> the use of folk tunes was dictated by purely aesthetic – not ideological – reasons (the music of other country might sound exotic to the composer’s ears, or interesting enough so that it could be interwoven into the composition without any national hints). Composers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century became aware of that fact. C. Chavez wrote: “So we come to an obvious conclusion: the great art, the great music of, let us say, Brazil or Mexico- [...] will not be achieved merely by reaching a certain historical, sociological status, or by means of nationalistic techniques, or by any techniques whatever, but by the talent or genius of individual composers, born in such lands”( Chavez, 1961:18 ).

### **7. National Music as a Concept – the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Re-Interpretations**

The extensive literature covering various aspects of national music proves that this phenomenon has remained one of the key issues in musicology. Despite the richness of existing resources – or perhaps because of it – the concept of national music became blurred in the result of the number of nouns combined with an adjective “national” (be it national school or national colour, national category, national spirit, national climate, etc.). Furthermore, depending on the author usually different aspects of the problem are analyzed.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a considerable number of composers seemed to support Adorno’s point of view that the function of music within society cannot be separated from the problem of nationalism” ( Adorno, 1989:155). American composer R. Sessions described the whole process as following: “Musical culture begins in one’s own locality with the musicians who are contributing their best efforts to the community in which they live and to those music-lovers who, independently of organized publicity, seek genuine musical experience, whenever it can be found, with active curiosity...” ( Sessions, 1979:168).

And the 20th century encyclopedias proposed various definitions of the phenomenon: in Harvard Dictionary of Music from 1944 we read that national music „...is characterized by a strong emphasis on the national elements and sources in music. It is based upon the idea that the composer must make his work the expression of national and racial traits, chiefly by drawing upon the folk melodies and dance rhythms of his country as an inspiring factor, and by choosing scenes from national history or life as subjects for operas and symphonic poems” (Apel (ed.), 1946 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition): 478-489).

Two years later E. Blom continues in „Everyman’s Dictionary of Music” the same line of thinking as represented by W. Apel: “Nationalism in music manifests through the endeavour of individual composer or schools to find some sort of musical idiom that may be said to express their countries” characteristics, either idiomatically, [...]. Idiomatic expression is [...] attained through adoption, imitation or adaptation of folksong and national dances” ( Blom, 1946).

National music as a part of national culture was defined in the 1966 German musical lexicon: „Jede Nationale Musikkultur entwickelt sich mit ihrer Nation als einer der Faktoren and gleichzeitigen der Ergebnisse ihrer Entstehungsgesch“ (Seeger (ed.), 1966:200). In 1976 „Muzykalnaja Encyklopedija” entries on national songs appear (Ke<sup>3</sup>dysz (ed.), 1976: 887-903) but in a little bit older „Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart” from 1961 this issue was omitted, and it found its place in the extended and updated version, in a form of an article written by B.Sponheuer entitled „Nationalsozialismus”(Sponheuer,1997:25-43). Quite similarly the problem of nationalism in music was absent in the prominent „Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians” from 1981.

As Michael Murphy suggests the „marginalisation of the study of musical nationalism in musicology during the twentieth century was a result of both musicological and political factors” (Murphy, 2001:6). He concludes that one of the most visible reason for such a state was the fact that musicological methodology was „incompati-

ble with the study of nationalism as ideology” (ibidem). This – however – became overcome and as a result one of the most interesting concepts on nationalism in music was proposed by R. Taruskin in 2001 edition of „New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians” (Taruskin, 2001: 689 – 706). The author defines nationalism as *a condition*, whereas national identity he decides to describe as *an attitude* (ibidem: 689). Taruskin perceives nationality in music as an ideological factor present in the European culture since the end of the 18th century, and combines his definition of nationalism in music with various aspects of functioning of nation itself. Consequently he looks at the nationalism from different angles, be it cultural context of German Romanticism, tourist nationalism or Americanism (ibidem: 689 – 706).

In comparison with Taruskin C. Alonso offers a much less detailed, yet still allowing a lot of interpretations definition of nationalism in music in 2000 encyclopedia: „el nacionalismo musical es un fenomeno conceptualmente complejo: folclorismo, populismo, universalismo, regeneracionismo, historicismo, originalidad, renevacion estetica y pintoresqueismo son conceptos y realidades complementarias que condicionan su denir (...) Ademias el nacionalismo musical encierra una pluralidad de significados, marcados por circunstancias historicas y geograficas (...)” (Alonso, 2000 : 924 – 944).

As clearly seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the tendency to apply ideological perspective to nationalism in music resulted in adaptation of sociological approach to the problem. It is now commonly suggested that the political and sociological context of nationalism need to be taken into account while discussing musical nationalism in order to determine the interrelations between them. Such events like conferences on traditional polyphony organized in the independent Georgia promoting the national qualities notwithstanding their international dimensions seem to prove that standpoint.

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