



SERBIAN BRASS BANDS IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND REFLECTION OF IDENTITY

Marina González Varga
UCC School of Music and Theatre

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Marina González Varga

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Supervisor: Dr. Michalis Poupazis
UCC School of Music and Theatre
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DECLARATION

I, Marina González Varga, declare that all the work in this dissertation is my own, unless otherwise stated, and that none of the work was used for the attainment of any other degree.



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Marina González Varga

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Introduction

This dissertation approach the brass band tradition in Serbia as a musical and social phenomenon in which Serbian identity is constructed and reflected. The analysis of different social and musical aspects related with this tradition will be linked with cultural imaginaries connected to diverse layers of identity.

With an approach to music and cultural identity theories, topics as the history of brass bands, Roma role in music, musical traditions and intimate musical settings will be explored. Roma participation in this tradition is very relevant but there is not any section focused exclusively on them, as this is a multi-ethnic tradition. Isolating Roma or non-Roma practices would not depict the reality of this shared artistic expression. Taking this point of view, the continuous process of representing and creating identity in brass band music, is going to be examined in all aspects, not only music as a result. Furthermore, the new contexts appeared with the popularization of this practice will be explained focusing on the new meanings and ways of shaping identity in these spaces.

All the work is structured around my three principal goals:

Analyse the socio-cultural context of brass bands. Locating the place of brass band music in Serbian history and society. This approach will facilitate the understanding of the meaning of this musical expression nowadays and its links with Serbian identity.

Examine how brass bands define identity; through the exploration of the different levels of identity that can be expressed and reinforced with this music, from bigger and imagined communities to local communities. With this, I pretend to show the diversity of groups represented in this music.

Review how the new roles of brass bands in contemporary life have changed the ways Serbians perceive performances in new contexts. How the interest of western world in this music have changed the way brass bands structure and understand themselves? Through a comparison of meanings of traditional performances and new spaces, as festivals or soundtracks of films, I will try to analyse the differences of how the bands are presented for family celebrations in opposition to festivals aimed for international audiences.

The reason I have chosen this topic was in first instance due to personal interests, that afterwards were encouraged by the shortage of academic publications about the topic. Personally, Balkan music has been particularly interesting for me due to its rich and diverse multicultural influences. If we consider the numerous political conflicts which happened in the region creating sharp boundaries and social disparities, it is even more remarkable the communal and shared space that music brings them. As Jim Samson (2005, 42) mentions, this region is an example of the construction and deconstruction of collective identities through music.

Explaining my interest on the Balkans I must mention why, after a bit of research, Serbian music became the focus for this project; when I realized that the origins of the recently popularized Balkan brass bands are initially located in this country. The fact that at the beginning of this tradition, this musical expression was attributed almost exclusively to Roma community, increased my curiosity about what represents this music. Brass bands represent Serbian identity and in a deeper level local identities. Due to the complex historical and multi-ethnic cultural background of the country this music reflects lots of aspects of this society, which is translated in a distinctive style from other European bands.

These facts, made me question, how a marginalized community everywhere as Roma, finds a way for social cohesion exclusively through music? Also, if we look at the history of brass bands in the Balkans, how a relatively recent tradition can become a core national symbol and the representation of a broad and diverse society? These questions led in some way my research and the structure of this dissertation.

After introducing the aims and goals of this dissertation, the following sections explore the methodological approach I have engaged with. After this approach, I expose the most relevant theories I considered during the analysing process, to move to a general insight of the history of brass bands, the role of Roma communities in it and the place and meaning of this musical expression in traditional music. The first analytical section shows the main differences between West and South, from social aspects to musical aspects. After this local view, I explore the new contexts of performance in the last two decades in Serbia as well as internationally.

It is important to note that along this work when talking about the Gypsy community, it will be used the term “Roma”. Very often Roma people call themselves “Gypsy”, but as sometimes this same term is used with negative connotations and in some countries, has bad stereotypes associated, it will be avoided. Nevertheless, it will be used only when there is references to “gypsies” as literal transcriptions from fieldwork data.

Methodology

From the outset of this project, the criteria to determine which bands were going to be researched, were: in the first instance, bands located in Serbia, comprising bands that play internationally and the ones that play only in Serbia. Furthermore, the instruments which form the band were not an excluding factor. What I mean with this is, there is some brass bands with saxophones and some others without them; but what I considered when searching for possible participants was how they define themselves, so any band called brass band or *duvačkim orkestrima* in Serbian terms.

This work is not purely ethnographic, due to the short duration of fieldwork (1 week) the answers to my research questions do not rely only on it. As a guidance to explore these areas, I approach anthropological theories and some of the ideas about Serbian folk music as a whole, applied to this musical genre.

Given the idea of combining anthropological theories with music, the focus will not be only the music itself with comprehensive musical analyses near to the procedures posed by Mantle Hood (1971, 19-24), in which the process of learning to play the music is an important part of the research. For this study case, I am leaning towards the methodological approach of Ruth Finnegan (2002, 10-18), based on the idea of including music in the anthropological analysis, with this the results are not being based on musical characteristics but in the relations between music and social aspects. Taking Finnegan's idea of the importance and difficulty of writing from social distancing about creative processes, my approach will have a collective focus that emphasizes the meanings of music rather than the musical results.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted in first instance through questionnaires. This part, developed with the help of Katarina Jovicić as a translator, for the design of the questions and its dissemination, contributed in the task of locating culturally the space of brass bands and also, determined the design of interviews during my stay in Serbia. The first contact with all the participating bands was via internet, where they were explained about the research and about the questionnaires and interviews during fieldwork. After this they decided whether they were willing to participate and in what way. The groups involved in this music ensembles and the ones I worked with, belong to the Roma and Serbian communities. The questionnaires involved the participation of four brass bands: Orkestar Mija Bondzulica (Užice), Orkestar Marka Trnavac (Čačak), Orkestar Dragacevske Trube (Guča) and Orkestar Mlade Zvezde (Kruševac). This part, examined the general understanding of the world of brass bands through questions like: does brass band music

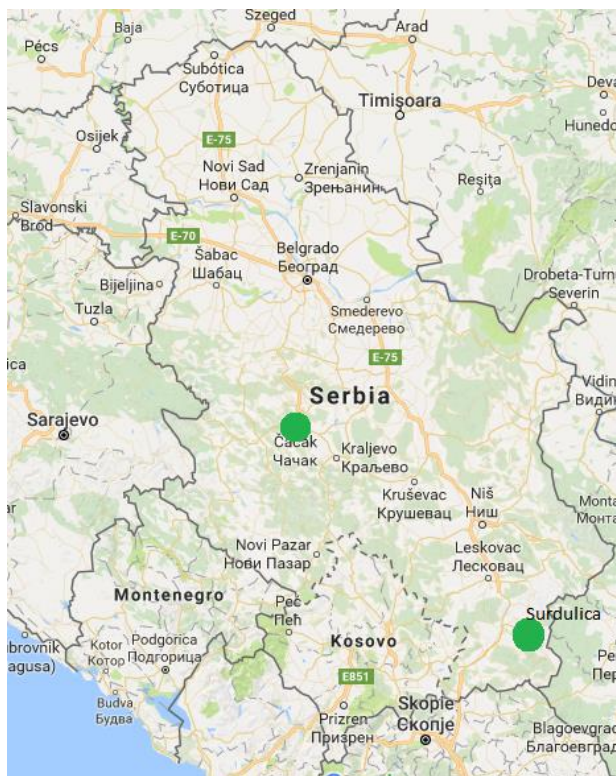


Figure 1: Map of locations visited during fieldwork. Čačak, Vlasinsko Leto and Surdulica. Map: Google Maps - Map's edition: Author.

triggers any specific memory for you? What are your feelings about performing in a brass band? Does your band have influences from other brass bands or from other musical styles?

The second and the main part of fieldwork, which lasted one week in July, took place in the West and South of Serbia (Figure 1). The work was based in Čačak and Vlasinsko leto (Surdulica), one of the four pre-competitions for Guča 2017.

Interviews were conducted with Orkestar Bojan Ristić (Vladicin Han), Orkestar Bojan Krstić (Vladicin Han) and Orkestar Marka Trnavac the musicians of the bands, with the manager of Orkestar Bojan Ristić, Goran Damjanović and with Silviya Pasajlic, media manager of Orkestar Marco Trnavac. An aspect to take into account is that all interviews and communications had to be done with a translator, with the exception of the managers' interviews. Therefore, the answers might not be literally as they explained it, due to the unavoidable translation bias. During this part of the fieldwork I carried out observant participation along with the interviews. Even with the fact of having a short time in the area of research, the openness of the participants made possible to get involved in the culture, understanding the social aspects related with this music and to get a holistic and general approach of the topic. As many anthropologists have recognised, fieldwork through long-distance communication is not productive, it needs that the researcher of "being there" (Geertz 1988, 4-5). I support this idea as the participation was significantly higher and easier during my stay in Serbia, in comparison with the communication via online questionnaires and emails.

Related and relevant works

Some of the key concepts which I have followed in my bibliographical research where: brass band; identity; and place. To mention some of the journals that have been consulted continuously due to the usefulness and relevance of its articles for this case, can be highlighted *The Yearbook for Traditional Music*, *The journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, *Muzikologija* and *Ethnomusicology*.

As aforementioned, there is a limited number of publications about Serbian Brass Bands in the English language. Catherine Kilroe-Smith (2010) about Guča trumpet festival,

Marko Markovic (2015) about brass bands aesthetics and Marko Markovic (2012) about Roma musicians in Brass Bands, are examples of such. Yet, such pertinent studies (to my dissertation's enquiries), bring relevant data and ideas to this topic.

Two popular publications offering a global viewpoint on brass bands is Suzel Ana Reily's and Katherine Brucher's (2013) work on "*Brass bands of the world: militarism, colonial legacies, and local music making*". Through a more specific example, British Brass Bands, but still looking the global dimensions of brass bands, is Trevor Herbert's (1991) explorations of "*Bands: the brass band movement in the 19th and 20th centuries*". Surprisingly, in both publications, Balkan Brass Bands are barely mentioned despite of their popularity.

Furthermore, there are some publications where brass bands are examined in relation to a specific geography; as in "*Music in Bulgaria*" by Timothy Rice (2004), or general articles about musical phenomena related with folk music as "Metaphors of Power, Metaphors of Truth: The Politics of Music Professionalism in Bulgarian Folk Orchestras" of Donna Buchanan (1995), "Gender roles during the war: representations in Croatian and Serbian popular music 1991-1992" of Naila Ceribasic (1995). These works raise interesting ideas about folk music that could be applied to this case.

To address the new roles and spaces of performance in contemporary life, the more numerous publications about Guca Festival will help to explore the new expressions of identity in wider levels. The recent relevance of Guca Festival for this musical tradition and the participation of international bands in this event, create a space where the bands show themselves for Serbian audience as well as for foreign audience. Some of the most relevant authors about this festival are Ana Hofman (2013) Marija Krstic (2012) and Helena Gligorijevic (2014). Moreover, some publications as "Some Aspects of Formal

Expression in Serbian Folk Songs” of Radmila Petrovic or “From source to commodity: newly-composed folk music of Yugoslavia” of Ljerka Rasmussen, which tackle Serbian folk music and expression, will bring useful approaches to this case.

The last related topic that was used for this research was the Roma musicians and identity issues. In this case the main authors tackle the expression of Roma identity through music and its role in Serbian culture, like Margaret Beissinger (2001, 2005). Jelena Cvorovic (2009), develops the concept of Roma hybrid identity which depends on the social environment, in flux between Roma and Serbian identity. Mattijs Van de Port (1997, 1999), brings an approach to the Serbian perception of Roma musicians. Van de Port’s works, shows the double-sided perception of this social group as high-skilled artists and misjudged in other aspects.

The main contribution to the ethnomusicological field with this dissertation will be the combination of standpoints of the mentioned authors applied to the case of the Serbian brass bands and its role in society. My goal with this is to highlight the importance of Serbian brass bands, as they are a central symbol of identity which appears to be forgotten in academic publications about brass band history, that is mainly based on British brass bands. Therefore, I will bring a scientific approach to a popular musical expression that is very well known between Serbian society and Balkan society. However, this popular tradition for the locals has not taken lot of attention in music research.

Music as part of cultural identity

This section, explains the main theories used by this dissertation to analyse music and its meaning. However, these are not necessarily taken from studies having similar focus to this dissertation. In addition, theories and ideas about the Serbian case or the Balkans or brass bands will be reviewed during the analytical parts of this dissertation.

A key concept for this study, is cultural identity. Cultural identity is influenced and shaped by many factors, as society, place, ethnicity, politics and arts among others. As Stuart Hall (1996, 2) mentions about cultural identity:

It seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs - or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all such subjectification appears to entail, the question of identification.

Following this idea, identity recurs in the process of continuous rearticulation through social practices. This identification is based on the reproduction of the self as an image opposed to others, so ultimately is based on the abstract and subjective ideas associated with the self and “other”. According to Hall, identity is constantly in play. This play is redefining cultural and symbolic boundaries. Taking these ideas as a reference point means that one should lean towards the constructivist definition of identity raised by Timothy Rice (2007, 24-35). According to Rice’s arguments, the constructivist view is based on the idea of identities as fully dependent from the available cultural resources, while the essentialist holds that the characteristics of a group are maintained and unchangeable. Then the constructivist idea of identity would be fragile, variable, multiple and contingent. This definition is based on the idea of the possibility of new images of the group and its self-understanding. This complex of multiple selves relies on different

context where different selves (gendered, racialized, ethnicized, nationalized...) are developed.

Taking into account the considerations about both points of view, this dissertation supports the idea of constructive cultural identity, multiple, layered and in flux without rejecting the essentialist idea of continuity as identity is also based in shared features of a group as history and ancestry. The concept of identification is “the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person” (Freud 1921, cited in Hall 1996, 3). Thus, the sense of identity is based on a wide and abstract network of cultural and emotional ties. These connections are easy to see externally and analyse if we talk about small groups; but it becomes much more complex in bigger societies as these links are not physically direct between participants. This invisibility, can be understood as an imagined community as defined by Benedict Anderson (1991, 6):

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. [...] In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.

In this way, each community is recognized and connected by the imaginary linked to them. As Anderson mentions, this constructed image is used by political forces in order to construct political communities. The dependence on available cultural sources of music and arts in general, make music a subject of manipulation by governments. In this sense, national cultures are products of self which become objects. For this reason, along this research I will talk about Serbian culture, not Serbian nationality; that said, the research will not be focused only in the musical and cultural expressions supported by the government.

But where is the place of music in the construction of identity? As it was mentioned above, identity is based on the feeling of ties with other people and is constantly constructed or performed. Moreover, through music we construct ourselves and at the same time, our place in society, so it could be considered as an individual and communal expression.

Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind; identity, like music, is a matter of both ethics and aesthetics (Frith 1996, 109).

In addition to the ethic and aesthetics issues of music, I must mention the emotional aspect of music which is linked to the physical experience of music and its context. This characteristic of music makes it able to have a wide denotative level with multiple and changeable meanings. Thomas Turino (1999, 231-240) explains widely the diverse and layered semiotics of music, these varied associations with individual and social experiences permit music to be a way of communication and creation of common experiences where identity is reinforced. The complex of activities involved in music-making enable to place ourselves into the cultural narratives (Frith 1996, 124). Music is used to define ourselves and to differentiate us from other groups. Identity is formed by material and symbolic sources that are in constant development. In this development, the understanding of ourselves and the others is defined by showing the different ethical codes and ideologies.

As in the process of defining a group, the role of the cultural other is important as this definition very often is based in the opposition. So, identity is shaped by exclusion, especially if we talk about groups in a wider level or as Mark Slobin (1992) calls them, supercultures. Slobin's superculture is linked with hegemony, "It implies an umbrella-like, overarching structure which could be present anywhere in the system-ideology or

practice, concept or performance.” (1992, 15). The most relevant theories so far about the cultural other will be explained briefly.

So far, we have seen how music can be the expression of the own culture, but also, we tried to define the “others” and our relations with them which are also reflected in arts. The image that is created about the other aims to distance other cultures, so this view instead of corresponding with actual cultures accentuates and exaggerates the differences with them. With this, the perception of the others is based on an exoticised and foreign image. These exotic images reinforce the stereotypes about otherness. In the case of music, it sustains the dominant hierarchies based on ethnicity, class and gender. All of these mechanisms of creating an image as a product, are used in music industry as a way of selling the “attractive and foreign Balkanism” in international festivals as will be explained in the last section of this dissertation.

Music’s hyperconnotative character, its intense cognitive, cultural, and emotional associations, and its abstraction, are perhaps what give it a unique role in the imaginary constitution of cross-cultural and inter-subjective desire, of exotic/erotic charge for the other culture or music in social fantasy. But these qualities are also means for self-idealization and, through repetition of the existing tropes and genres of identity in music (national anthems, patriotic songs), for the reinforcement of extant collective identities (Born 2000, 32).

Affirmatively, there are two ways of representing identity in music. The first one, would be a the most direct reflection of a group, which it could be said it is not programmed for others, more linked with the self-identification within the group. The second, has to do with musical constructions corresponding to the image which is thought to be presented towards other cultures; what Georgina Born (2000, 35) terms “musically-imagined communities”. Born’s concept of an imaginary is either created for, or, by others aiming to create cultural antagonism.

Maria Todorova (1997, 17-20) explains comprehensively the perception of opposition between Europe and the Balkans, in this case focusing in cultural aspects, traditions and identity. She further explains the construction of the imagined Balkan community. This construct was used by Europe as an attempt to undermine the Balkans in sustaining the narrative of them being the dominant culture. This resulted in creating a perception that Balkan countries – Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Albania, Macedonia, Romania... – are the Orient, in the same manner as Edward Said (1978, 11) defines the orient as:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

In addition to these cultural discourses, the Balkans are also perceived a religiously opposed culture from Europe, mainly due to its Ottoman cultural heritage, despite of geographically locating in Europe.

The works of Mattijs Van de Port (1999) raise the idea of the construction of otherness between groups within the same geographical area; with the specific example of the divisions and encounters, in cultural terms, between Serbian and Roma society. His ideas are also very helpful when applied to the analytical sections of this dissertation. All the mentioned ways of expressing identity on different levels corresponds with the different groups that can be found in a community. To understand this idea, the concept of micromusics posed by Slobin (1992) is employed. Taking always into account the concept of levels of identity or micromusics, where each level is not closed and it must be noted that they overlap very often.

By micromusics I mean the small musical units within big music-cultures. These have not disappeared, despite the dismal forecasts of earlier commentators. [...] Regional musics are less easy to define, since I am using the term "region" in an offbeat way. If "local" can be

bounded by a village or valley, then region, intuitively, is a somewhat larger zone of contiguous territory. However, I have in mind a much more flexible sense of region, partly as result of the spread of broadcasting and recordings. [...] Viewed this way, world music looks like a fluid, interlocking set of styles, repertoires, and practices which can expand or contract across wide or narrow stretches of the landscape (Slobin 1992, 2-10).

Further, Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011, 352), discussed that research in large participatory groups is divided in two different parts; the direct social relationships created, and the broad understanding of collectiveness. All these groups could be separated naming them subcultures, musical pathways and some other alternative terms. However, in this dissertation I am only using the concept of micromusic as a way of remarking the idea of small groups that are part of bigger collectives. At the same time, this is also the way I will be using the term “levels of identity” which represents the different groups of a community.

The general understanding of “community” changed after the urbanization from a sense of locality to a broader and complex societies, but the same term was used so it lost its meaning. Currently, mentioning “community” means bringing together theories of location, mobility, identity, and politics, thus, it is necessary to remark what we mean when using the term community.

For this case, and picking up the reference to the geographical space of Marin Cvitanovic (2009, 319-321), I limited the research on a geographical basis, focusing on Serbia. For this reason, it is important to give space to the theories about the relation between music and place, since “place” is a determining factor for this research. I am going to add some further explanations about the concept of place, as Martin Stokes (1994) defines place in separation from ‘space’. Here the term space means a physical location, while place is constructed and shaped socially, referring to geographical space linked with its social understanding. In addition, the creation of sense of place can create the impression of

social boundaries implying hierarchies between different locations. “Places can be thought of as complex entities, ensembles of material objects, people, and systems of social relationships embodying distinct cultures and multiple meanings, identities and practices.” (Hudson 2006, 627). In the creation of place, music as well as arts in general, influence in how their identities are shaped, whole communities find the way with music to represent their experiences of place and generate deep emotions attached to it (Connell & Gibson 2007). The specific context related to music points out the important connections between music and ritual space. Martin Stokes (1994, 5) affirms, rituals without all their facets as they are conceived, would not have the same power and effect in the connections and changes they have in society and music undoubtedly is one of them. “I would argue that music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them.” This highlights how meaningfulness is the connection between music and space.

This is a way of creating borders that can be closely linked with Todorova’s and Said’s ideas. Even keeping in mind the flexibility and changeability of borders in music as compared with the fixity of geographical and political borders, both are bounded:

It goes without saying that the borders defining collective identities foreground alterities at various interlocking levels (institutional, cultural, personal), and of various, often conflicting, qualities (religious, linguistic, geopolitical, social, ethnic). And while the borders themselves remain historically in flux as different collective identities come into contact, there is usually an in-built resistance to crossing from one to another at any given time (Samson 2005, 40).

Ostensibly, there is some outlines which delineate the general characteristics of broad collective identities that are very fluid and flexible. But as Samson points out, in music we can find subtle stylistic borders, those represent symbolically the different

communities and social systems into the same 'imagined community'. Stylistic differences are a way of setting internal borders to reflect the existence of diverse groups. The emotional and affective dimension that is created by music reinforces the virtual ties with the geographical space and thus, people can express what a place means for them. On the other hand, as Cvitanovic (2009) adds to the complex network of meanings in music, these vary depending on its context where is performed and listened. The specific context and features associated to music enhance the creation of emotional ties between people. For example, "The sound of traditional instruments can evoke the sense of specific places such as the banjo regarding USA or bagpipes regarding Scotland." (Cvitanovic 2009, 319).

Historical outline

It is necessary to specify what I mean with brass band in this research, as there are lots of ensembles named “brass band” around the world and it is a generic name. Frequently, under the category “brass bands”, there are ensembles that not only includes brass instruments, in some cases, there is a percussion section or saxophones among others.

The most popular type of brass band in the academic world are British brass bands, these are represented widely in the main publications about brass bands. The other type of brass band that we might have in mind is the American marching bands, with jazz influences. Other types of brass bands can be found in France and Netherlands, the fanfare orchestras, with influences of the British bands but each one of them with distinctive styles, repertoire and instrumentation. And finally, there is the Balkan brass bands, this term comprises brass bands from different countries with some differences in instrumentation and style. The Balkan countries, where the brass band tradition is stronger are Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria.



Figure 2: Brass band from Vlasinsko leto. Photo: Author

The general instrumentation of Serbian brass bands is: usually three trumpets, three tubas (Wagner tuba), a side drum and bass drum with cymbals, while some bands also have a

helicon. Moreover, in some regions, especially in the south, can be found bands with saxophones and clarinets. However, this is un-common as these instruments are part of Macedonian bands traditionally (Forry 2000, 945).

To explain cultural roots of these ensembles, it is necessary to return to the history of British brass bands and the Turkish mehter; Ottoman military bands with wind and percussion instruments which blended classical and popular music. Due to British colonisations during 19th century, brass bands were spread around the world; even the fact of being a product of colonization has not stopped the cultural expression of indigenous musical traditions to be developed through this kind of ensemble. Thus, the origins of these bands are the military groups but in this case, the function of Serbian bands is entertainment (Herbert n.d.).

As Catherine Kilroe (2010) points out, European military bands, had a key role in introducing brass instruments in the Balkan area in general. It is likely that the first contact with this type of instruments were during the Austria-Ottoman war and the Austrian occupations during the early 18th century. In between these wars along the century, discarded instruments from Austrian military bands started to arrive to Serbian villages to be played recreationally.

Basically, the main input of European musical ensembles in Serbian brass bands were the instruments which comprise these bands, brass instruments. Nevertheless, the style of this music was not imitated, maintaining their distinctive sound. In this aspect, we have the influence of the other culture which occupied this same territory for years, the Ottoman empire. The mehter, was also a musical influence which originated the Serbian brass bands (Feldman n.d.). These type of bands, were known in Europe since the 17th century due to their role in military affairs; these contacts have also influenced European music,

with the introduction of new instruments for example (Bowles 2006, 534-553). Their arrival to Europe was during the Ottoman invasions. They introduced the *surna*, known as *zurla*. In Serbia, it became a popular instrument for folk music generally linked to Roma culture. In addition, Turkish mehters did not have exclusively a military role, they played both for military events and important ceremonies and festivities. The lack of observed about this music culture, is due to its oral tradition, Pirker (n.d.), in his article about Janissary music, mentions that the personnel hired for these bands were mainly Roma.

Within these two cultural influences, most of the authors looking into brass bands history (Kilroe 2010; Markovic 2012; Bujic n.d.; Forry 2000), locate the origins of Balkan brass bands in Serbia during the 19th century. This period also aligns with the first Serbian uprising (1804-1813), rioting against the Ottoman occupation. After its independence from Turkey, their own culture, and consequently the musical life, were highly developed in the second half of the century. During this revival, brass instruments replaced the use of the *zurla* in ensembles with percussion, and therefore, music with Ottoman musical features with Western instrumentation. The military origins of this type of group were put aside to perform only in festive moments as the mehter. The brass bands, known in the country as *orkestar*, took folk music traditionally played with the *zurla*, *frula* or the *gusle* (Figure 3); due to its popularity ended up being considered popular music separated from traditional instruments. Its repertoire is generally a mixture of rural songs, urban popular songs, military marches and Serbian patriotic songs. One more connection with the Ottoman tradition is the origins of the musicians. Serbian brass bands are made up of Roma people principally.

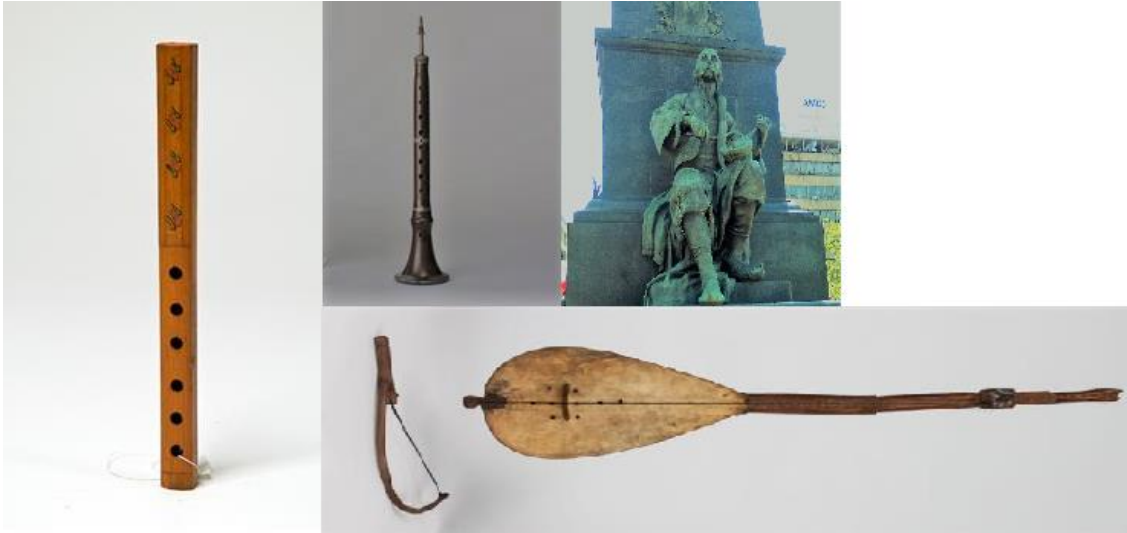


Figure 3: Photo collage of Serbian traditional instruments-left to right: Frula, Zurla and Gusle. Photos: Author, Gusle (monument), and Musical instruments museums online [Online]. Available: <http://www.mimo-international.com>

This brief introduction to the multicultural roots of brass bands, illustrates, like in other cultural fields, how Serbia as many other Balkan countries/geographies create their musical identity in between West and East.

It is important to note the origins of Serbian brass bands during the post-war period. After big social changes, there is a search for identity and definition of Serbian culture. Also, during 20th century due to the political history of the country, similar situations happened, and in the periods in-between wars, the development and popularity of this ensemble will be enhanced. At the same time, is a tradition that reinforces and points out the ties of Serbian cultures with diverse cultures. Along this work, when mentioning brass bands as a new tradition, I will refer to the fact that is a tradition no older than two centuries and to the concept of tradition posed by Farkas (2014), that will be explained later.

The periods of crisis during and post-wars during 20th century, resulted in the field of culture, in a necessity of self-representation. This self-representation was specially divided by political boundaries, since the breakup of Yugoslavia and the 1991-1995 war, each country started to be thought as different cultural spheres which at the same time had common cultural roots. In Serbia, the trumpet was taken as a symbol and it is seen as

a traditional instrument. Even though, the locals know that this was not a traditional instrument. However, due to the history of the instrument in the region, linked directly with the local history, the trumpet and its style of playing is a language which represents Serbia. As one of the participants pointed out when he was asked about the place of brass bands in Serbian culture: “It’s interesting that every celebration in Serbia means the sound of trumpet.”

Role of Roma communities in music

Finally, as another key part of brass bands I must mention its relation with Roma community. First, it is necessary to point out the scarcity of written documents about this community due to their reliance on orality. This makes more difficult the understanding of Roma history in this area, as Cvorovic (2009) explains comprehensively.

Notwithstanding, the arrival of Roma communities to the Balkans is estimated to be during the 14th century. Since then, this group is a ubiquitous minority which always have been marginalized in the Balkans and also in Europe. Many myths surround this culture, one of them its nomadic nature, which nowadays changed depending on their occupation and sources of income. Generally, professional Roma musicians worked for nobility and the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, in the Balkans, musicians were settled where nobility was. They used to play during celebrations and festivities for non-Roma people.

Roma musicians are valued as highly-skilled professionals, due to their social success, Roma musicians are understood as almost a separate social group from the rest of Roma, which face a contingency of social miscegenation wherever they are settled (in most cases being misunderstood). In other words, their low social status based on ethnic stereotypes,

is improved according to the status of the job they are having. Professions as a source of prestige and wealth are in this case culture-related; all the myths and romantic ideals associated with Roma, like their musicality by nature, their exotic associations with the Oriental culture and some more ideals make music a powerful tool for them. Ljerka Rasmussen (1991, 44) talks even about attempts of proving scientifically the natural musicality of Roma during 19th century, as a way of discrimination trying to link culture with ethnicity. These orientalist ideas of an outsider culture as the other with an elevated artistic spirit, joined with the cultural adaptability of these communities, became a way of crossing the defined social boundaries in the field of music performance.

Many times, Gypsies adopted their hosts' culture in response to the different requirements of their social and environmental surroundings. The result is a great diversity of Gypsy tribes and a lack of identity as an integrated ethnic group (Cvorovic 2009, 48).

Roma role in music has determined the multicultural characteristics of brass bands. They used to be musicians for the Ottoman Empire, so that style of playing and their songs were brought to Serbia. The aforementioned adaptability, was especially strong in music, where they came into play in the conservation of Serbian folk songs. When most of the population was moving to cities, Roma communities remained in rural areas maintaining this way the songs they have learnt there. In addition, their openness to adopt tunes from other cultures while conserving their own songs, originated the exchange of traditional songs from different Balkan countries, as Pettan (1992) and Van de Port (1997) illustrate with examples of musical connections between Kosovo, Albania, Serbia and Macedonia.

One of the most popular examples of a popular shared song between many different ensembles, is *Djurdjevdan*, also named *Ederlezi*, its Rom title or the song *Djelem, djelem*. These songs were also mentioned by several participants of this study. The mentioned

titles among some others, are played in many Balkan countries with some differences in the instrumentation.

These diverse influences in Roma music are one of the most valued aspects in brass bands, and also are for all brass bands, the diversity and dynamism of their repertoire. Thus, this could be the reason of the high value associated to Roma brass bands, as the participants mentioned, the ability to play different types of music is important for the expression of feelings and “be ourselves”. “Participate in music makes me happy, relaxes me. With this music, I can freely express different emotions and feelings. [...] We try to follow as many styles that you never know which will be our style”.

For all these reasons, music is a key part of Roma identity, as it is their way of accessing to some social power. At the same time, due to their central position in musical performance, its music has become part of the musical identity of non- Roma, too. All of this without forgetting the two-sided image of Roma community, where musicians are seen as an elite due to their defined occupational identity based in a specialized skill, which in addition, makes them be closer and more involved within society.

Locating Brass Bands tradition between other musical traditions

This section will map out the connections between other traditional ensembles, the genres played by each of them and its dances. Special emphasis will be placed on the folk dances *kolo* and *čoček*, as they are the most common forms in brass band music. These forms are especially popular in Western and Southern Serbia, where brass bands tradition is stronger as well.

Kolo is a form accompanied by dance, known with the same name. This dance, appears in variations according to the region that is performed. It is performed at festive occasions, where a chain of dancers moves in circles.¹ Traditionally is performed with instruments associated with rural areas such as accordion, tambourica or frula. The popularization of brass bands brought this music to the same spaces as traditional instruments, like



Figure 4: Kolo dance in Vlasinsko leto. Photo: Author

weddings and baptisms among some others, thus *kolo* started to be part of its repertoire. This form is not exclusively performed in Serbia, as it can be found also in Bosnia, Croatia, Belarus, Slovenia and Macedonia (also known as *oro*).

Čoček, is a musical genre mostly popular in Southern Serbia and Macedonia. This genre used to be accompanied by a solo dance. However, in Serbia and Macedonia there is almost no solo dances, so this genre is not danced or in some occasions the audience dance it in a similar way as *kolo*. This genre originates from Roma brass bands, as it is related with the Ottoman mehter, this is one of the influences mentioned in the historical outline. According to Prévôt (2001, 4), the term *čoček* has Greek origins and it refers to a round dance which was attributed to women. It is important to point out that women participate in folk dances but not in brass bands; nowadays, *Danijela Orkestar* is an exception to this rule as the leader trumpet is a woman.

Currently, *čoček* and *kolo* have influences form urban styles and other foreign styles. Brass bands play all types of repertoire form rural, *starogradske* music (old city songs),

¹ See track 1

and popular songs. During the interviews, the answers of musicians about their repertoire shows how there is still maintained this tendency of playing all types of folk music but they also admit the increasing influence of “new styles”, “modern music” or “foreign hits” in their music.

To sum up, this section remarks the role of brass bands as a bridge between rural and urban world, bringing together two different lifestyles into the same culture. The characteristics of the instruments allows the ensemble to perform a wide range of styles.

Brass Band performances and their meanings in intimate settings

“It’s interesting that every celebration in Serbia means the sound of trumpet. For example, weddings, birthdays, baptisms, celebration of glories and even funerals. We usually say that trumpet accompanies all from birth to death” (Marko Trnavac - May 15th 2017, email interview)

As mentioned above, the importance of brass band music extends throughout a variety of social events. Most of such appear to be family gatherings, giving this way expressions and special meaning in performance mostly linked with feelings of euphoria, pleasure and community. Therefore, this section aims to elucidate the symbolic meaning associated to this social practice, and how this reinforces social cohesion and collective identity.

The most common space of performance when talking about special family celebrations is undoubtedly weddings. Yet, some participants mentioned other relevant events such as the Guca festival; a popular yearly competition of brass bands. In these events the music which accompanies them is aimed to express the feelings of the participants, which traditionally are happiness, joy, emotiveness, communion and remembrance as musicians state. One can connect the brass band participation in public performances as a way of connecting musically with the imagined Serbian community; thus giving social meaning

to this expression, and at the same time connecting with the traditional, the mythical past and in cases a commemoration of lost loved ones. Here, it can be seen how cultural and emotional ties play their role in the reinforcement of the community, through its rituals and a sense of identification with tradition. Sustaining this feeling of identification is vital to maintain the development of the tradition of brass bands to the everyday life, giving rise to new repertoires, new performative spaces or new formations in the bands. An example of new formations would be Orkestar Danijela and very likely the fourth generation bands, with female musicians.

The main function of brass bands during family gatherings could be defined as a stimulus in increasing communal excitement, while highlighting participants' shared culture and understanding of social practices. "First, we play one or two tunes, so they all know the trumpeters are there and the wedding's begun" (RT documentaries 2016).

The high participation of Roma musicians in non-Roma rituals symbolizes the relationship between these two socially binary opposing groups. Ritual contexts where these performances take place, are very often closed to the community and create a sphere of intimacy, the fact of opening this space to other communities reveals the concealed relations between different ethnic groups. This proves that brass band performances act as a way of showing cultural identity, yet separate from ethnic identity in the sense that it is part of the identity of two different groups with shared cultural features. Roma communities in the Balkans are not only perceived as the other, but also as the "inner other". This closeness allows them to have this important space in ritual development, intimate settings and in cultural life of Serbia.

Groups of symbols may be so arrayed as to state a message, in which some symbols function analogously to parts of speech and in which there may be conventional rules of connection. The message is not about specific actions and circumstances, but the given culture's basic

structures of thought, ethics, esthetics, law, and modes of speculation about new experience (Moore 2009, 308).

The message in the relationship between these socially separate groups elucidates what brass band music represents, the existence of a multi-ethnic cultural identity in Serbia involving Roma and non-Roma. When talking about Roma culture, it is necessary to point out that it is impossible to talk about an individual Roma culture due to the group's diasporic movements around the world. In this case, it would be more exact to say Serbian Roma, as Roma cultures are highly influenced by their location. This group adopts customs, folklore and languages from the local cultures where they are settled, adding their own style to them while preserving their own. For this reason, as Jozsef Vekerdi (1976, 79-85) explains more extensively, Roma groups have preserved some repertoires from rural areas that were forgotten by the locals.

To sum up the main ideas of this section, I would like to highlight how the brass band performances reinforce cultural identities, not ethnic identities through their shared symbolic meaning. Here, cultural identity is a layered construction, where Serbian Roma and Serbian non-Roma culture come together in some point to reflect a shared musical tradition and common views of the meaning their music. Cvorovic (2009, 67) uses the term "preferred identity" to name Roma communities which claim to be Serb. My research in Serbia have shown that "preferred identity" is not an accurate term as it suggests a form of false identity. Taking the view I got in the musical sphere of the brass bands I worked with, the definition of Serbian identity as a construct seems a more appropriate denomination, as it includes Serbian Roma and Serbian non-Roma; given the even and integrated participation of both groups in the cultural sphere, where non-Roma have adopted Roma music and vice versa.

Brass bands in the creation of identity

This section analyses the differences between West Serbian and Southern Serbian brass bands. Looking into the examples of Orkestar Marko Trnavac from West Serbia and the examples collected during Surdulica competition, with seventeen different bands from Southern Serbia (Bojnik, Vranje, Vladicin Han, Surdulica, Leskovac, Zaguzanje and Grdelica). After looking into the ways musicians begin their careers in brass bands through diverse paths, focus turns to the analysis of Western and Southern styles, closely connected in many ways but reflecting the belonging to different subgroups.

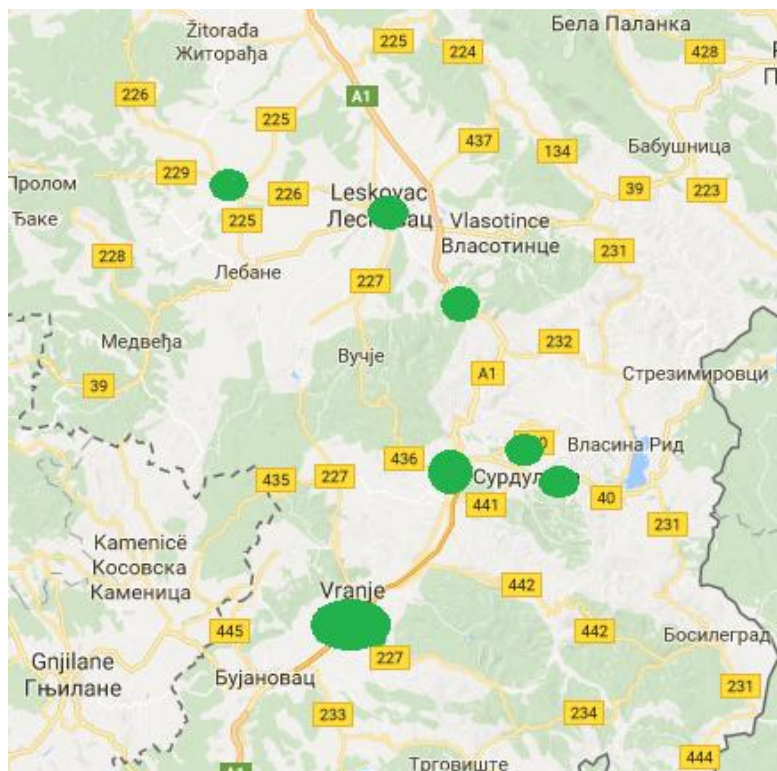


Figure 5: Location of the towns of origin of the bands in Surdulica competition. Map: Google Maps - Map's edition: Author.

It could be said that brass band tradition is mainly an oral tradition based in family legacy. However, it is possible to make a distinction between the ways of initiating a musical career. For example, Marko Trnavac, from the West, a self-taught trumpeter, got involved with music on his own. What attracted Marko to brass band music were the links between

this tradition and his family, despite that in his preceding generation, his father and mother, were not musicians. His grandfather was a trumpet player also, so his strong memories related with brass band music and family memories led him to get started in music. This short story is not an isolated case, as some of his band mates have very similar stories. Around this region, the access to music through an academic path is easier to access than in the south, so there are also a few examples of brass bands musicians with academic education.

On the other hand, the relation between family and music in the south is slightly different. The life stories of Bojan Ristić and Bojan Krstić, both trumpet leaders of Roma bands from the South of Serbia, reveal more direct familiar links with brass band music. Belonging to musical families, their beginnings in music are traced back to their childhood. “Is a tradition from my family, so I continued with it [...] All the *orkestar* is a family” attests Bojan Ristić (July 7th 2017, Vladicin Han), explaining how brass band is part of his life and his family.

This musical tradition is learnt through enculturation, as very often the children that are part of a musicians’ family start playing when they are around six or seven. The youngest children learn music performing with their fathers’ *orkestars* in family events.

The comparison between southern and western orchestras, shows a generational gap in the brass bands from Western Serbia. This can be explained with the differences in the development of each region after World War II (WWII). Even if this musical tradition goes back before the war, bands formed approximately 50 years ago, are now considered the first generation, followed by the second generation bands approximately at the end of 20th century. In those years, while recovering from WWII and during the breakup of Yugoslavia the development uneven in these regions; “During war time, the best *orkestar*

came from the south. Why? People on the West of Serbia worked on agriculture, industry... but the people from the South only played the trumpet” (Goran Damjanović, July 5th 2017, Krusevac). As Southern Serbia was impoverished and left without any job opportunities, musicians kept playing music as a way of overcoming the post-war period, as a tool of empowerment (Pettan 2010, 178-192).

Due to the third generation of brass band musicians taking over now, and the revitalization of brass band music in the West, some young girls are now starting playing in brass bands and entering competitions. As mentioned above, females have never played in brass bands apart from the example of Orkestar Danijela, from West Serbia. Participants suggest that it is very likely that the next generation will also bring with it the first mixed bands in the South of Serbia as now there are a few girls learning.

It should be noted, when talking about the differences in accordance with different regions, that most of brass bands from the South are Roma bands. As a representative example, from the seventeen bands participating in Surdulica competition, all of them were Roma. The stylistic differences can be observed with the following example of a traditional song, *Djurdjevdan*, played by two different bands, Orkestar Marko Trnavac (West Serbia)² and Orkestar Bojan Ristić (South Serbia).³

In the first version, the main melody (Figure 6) remains unaltered except for some small melodic ornaments, mainly appoggiaturas and mordents.

² See track 2

³ See track 3



Figure 6: Main melody *Djurdjevdan*. Transcription: Author.

The second version adds some improvised sections based in the Phrygian mode on C, but the main melody remains the same. At the beginning of the song, these improvisations are presented as small cadences changing the main instrument. After the singed part (min. 5:34), the improvisations have less defined structure, giving the soloist more creative freedom.

Moreover, it is noted the different rhythm patterns the bands use (see Figures 7 & 8). In Orkestar Marko Trnavac's version, there is no tempo changes, only sound intensity contrasts and their rhythmic pattern is syncopated in the beats 2 and 4. In this case the rhythm is played by *dobos* (side drum) and *bubanj* (bass drum).

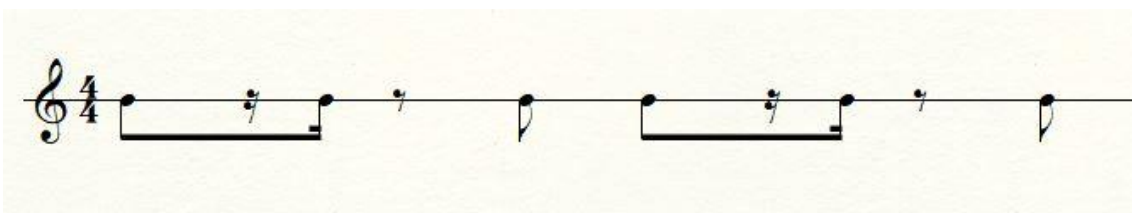


Figure 7: Orkestar Marko Trnavac's rhythmic pattern. *Djurdjevdan*. Transcription: Author

By contrast, for the Orkestar Bojan Ristić example, the percussion and bass section play the rhythmic part, achieving a more dynamic result. This version starts without any rhythmic section, then they start and the tempo speeds up slowly until the minute 4:26.

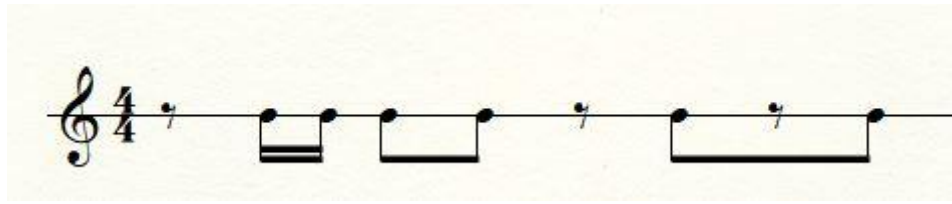


Figure 8: Orkestar Bojan Ristić rhythmic pattern. *Djurdjevdan*. Transcription: Author.

Roma music has contributed widely to brass band music, with complex rhythms, Roma songs and characteristic melodic movements with origins in Turkey and Greece. Their role as cultural mediators facilitated the diverse influences that can be found in this music (Pettan 1996). Due to the strong presence of Roma brass bands in the south, their genres and rhythms shaped what is understood as the southern style, and even non-Roma bands are now performing it. This musical complexity reinforces the orientalist stereotypes as these were mentioned in the section “Role of Roma communities in music” of musicality as a given, in other words natural musicality, (Rasmussen 1991, 44). Nonetheless, the great diversity of this music is related with the different understanding of music and its purposes.

Bands in the West play all types of genres, old songs, traditional songs, modern songs, as the audience ask them for all kind of songs and they try to follow all their requirements. In any case, musicians enjoy performing traditional songs as “that’s the real sound of our trumpet” (Marko Trnavac - July 6th 2017, Čačak). *Kolo*, is especially meaningful for Western Serbian bands and their members. However, they also shape their performance and song choices around preferences of the audience; these bands play *čoček*⁴ as well, “when they play *čoček* they play it like if they were gypsies” (Silvija Pasajlic – July 6th 2017, Čačak). While Bojan Ristić and Bojan Krstič, both from the south, agreed in their

⁴ Čoček is a musical genre and dance representative from Southern Serbia. Usually is linked with Roma bands due to their central role in the preservation of this genre. Nicholas Prévôt (2001) locates its origins in the Ottoman *mehter*, the role that Roma played in Ottoman troops could be the link between Ottoman and Serbian music culture.

preference for traditional music but pointed out *čoček* as most representative of their region. The willingness and openness to new and diverse repertoires, appears to be the same in the South with the only difference being that this “outer” repertoires are not played so accurately. South bands try to make a version sounding like being their own song. This way of adapting music is directly linked with the great majority of Roma bands in this region. Some authors highlight the adaptability of Roma musicians and their role as cultural mediators (Pettan 1996, 35; Van de Port 1999, 293-294; Vekerdi 1976, 80-81). Without rejecting their influences from jazz, rock, latin and traditional music, the aim of this music is self-expression. “In Serbia there is a specific style and also each region has different styles, the style comes from soul” explained Bojan Ristić when talking about the differences with other Balkan bands (July 7th 2017, Vladicin Han). In concluding with the main stylistic differences observed between West and South, are rooted in musicians’ aims, while in the former based on imitation, so the most accurate the better; the latter tries to find the self-expression with all songs.

Moving to the social aspects of this type of ensembles very similar in both regions, is necessary to remark the feeling of community between the members of the band. “One important aspect of the band is that everyone stays together like a family, then we have a good quality orkestar” (Bojan Ristić - July 7th 2017, Vladicin Han). “All musicians have the same relevance in the band and we have many achievements together” (Bojan Krstić – July 8th 2017, Vlasinsko leto). These statements support the idea of a close identification between the members of the band. In addition, the “family” feeling sometimes is not only due to the connection that music creates, in some bands there is up to five members from the same family, this occurs more often in South Serbia.

Repertoire

Most of the musicians mentioned the traditional songs as their favourites, or the songs they feel more connected with, but as it was mentioned when talking about the repertoire, this is very flexible and adaptable. This adaptability records in brass band tradition every historical and contextual change, “Music records social change much faster than novels or movies for the simple reason that the process of creating it, and the journey of a musical piece from the author to his audience is much shorter and therefore current.” (Cvitanovic 2009, 400). Approaching the “historical record” in this music, I must mention a song which took my attention in first instance due to its contrasting rhythm, tempo and melody in comparison with other songs I heard until then. *Marš na Drinu*, a popular military march originated during I World War and composed for wind band was adapted to brass band and currently is part of their repertoire.⁵ This song is a way of connecting with their past, as it was mentioned before expresses feelings of remembrance.

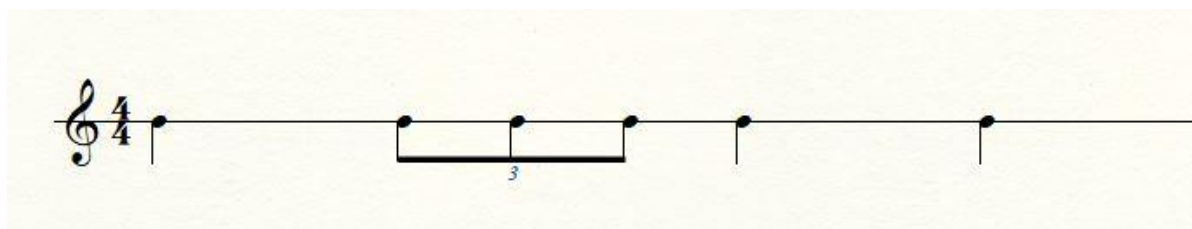


Figure 9: *Marš na Drinu* rhythmic pattern. Transcription: Author

After explaining the stylistic differences, deeper analysis into the representation of different layers of Serbian identity follows. This is considered as necessary in order to explain the various types of repertoire played in brass bands. Each type of repertoire is linked with different levels of self-reflection in different spaces.

⁵ See track 4

In order to make this analysis clear, I have divided the repertoire in four different categories. This categorisation, is based on participants' testimonies. Using interview narratives recovered during my visit to Serbia, I am going to give a brief definition of each category, followed by some songs for illustrative purposes.

The first category is traditional songs, which includes the main genres of *kolo* and *čoček*, but also a repertoire of "patriotic songs" and old Serbian and Roma songs.⁶ Some of the most popular titles are: *Vrtlog*, *Ramo Ramo*, *Caje Sukarije*, *Moja mala nema mane*, *Vlasinka kolo*, *Pukni Zoro* and *Uzivo čoček*. Taking into consideration the importance of improvisation and renovation in brass band tradition, it must be pointed out that all bands compose their own *kolos* and *čoček*s. Even if it is considered traditional music, this does not necessarily translate for Serbians as "old music". This also reflects during the competitions, where lots of bands present their own songs, yet one of the requirements of the competition is that it "must be traditional", making it compulsory for them to follow any regional Serbian style

There are also "new" folk songs, most of them are originally singed and adapted to brass bands afterwards. All these songs are inspired by traditional songs, and they are also known as newly-composed folk music (NCFM). These songs are linked with the rural population moving into urban spheres, common practice post-WWII. This music symbolizes the efforts of rural populations to maintain their traditions in a new context (Marković 2013, 52). Some of the songs are: *Ružo rumena*, *Kalashnikov*, *Popij me kao lek* and *Kad zamirišu jorgovani*.⁷ Some of these are Šaban Bajramović's songs, mainly popularized internationally by Goran Bregovic.

⁶ See track 5, 6 and 7

⁷ See track 8

The third category, Balkan songs, comprises from all the shared songs between Balkan countries. In many cases the title and lyrics of these songs are different in each country, and in their vernacular languages. However, the topic of each song remains the same as the music does. Some examples of this category are: *Djurdjevdan*, *Djelem djelem*, *Jutros mi je ruža procvjetala* and *Ruse kose curo imas* (all the titles correspond to the Serbian versions). Likewise, *Jovano Jovanke* is an example of a Macedonian song, which is popular in Serbian brass bands.

The last group could be called modern songs. It encompasses soundtracks, songs from TV shows no older than a few decades and also what they call international songs, songs which are very popular in other countries and are adapted to this style. A song that all participants mentioned, was *La Bamba*. However, this was not the only song mentioned, with also versions of *Wonderwall*, *One step beyond* and *Quantanamera*⁸ as part of my observations and participants' testimonies also emerged. By going back to different versions of *La bamba* and their meanings and purpose in brass band performance, the next section analyses all these new repertoires and their functions.

Category	Description	Songs
Traditional songs	Old Serbian and Roma songs from rural areas	<i>Vrtlog</i> , <i>Ramo Ramo</i> , <i>Caje Sukarije</i> , <i>Vlasinka kolo</i> , <i>Pukni Zoro</i> and <i>Uzivo čoček</i>
New folk songs	Inspired by traditional songs but composed by rural population moved to urban areas	<i>Ružo rumena</i> , <i>Kalashnikov</i> , <i>Popij me kao lek</i> and <i>Kad zamirišu jorgovani</i>
Balkan songs	Shared songs in Balkan countries	<i>Djurdjevdan</i> , <i>Djelem djelem</i> , <i>Jutros mi je ruža procvjetala</i> , <i>Jovano Jovanke</i> and <i>Ruse kose curo imas</i>
Modern songs	Songs from soundtracks, TV shows and international hits	<i>La bamba</i> , <i>Quantanamera</i> and <i>One step beyond</i>

Figure 10: Table of different categories of repertoire. Source: Author

⁸ See track 9

All the ideas mentioned in this section refers to the connection of history, identity and music in this recent tradition full of social discourses behind it. Coming back to Farka's concept of recent traditions, brass band can be defined as a recent tradition created by a wide social group, as there is many sublevels of identity reflected in it which somehow are linked. This tradition was formed in parallel with the process of creation of the republic of Serbia, this fact, explains why this music is felt so deeply and close to Serbian identity. "The brass band is my life and also I make my living with it [...] When I play music, I forget about everything, it takes everything out of my mind" (Bojan Krstić – July 8th 2017, Vlasinsko leto). This music had an "integrative function" (Zaki 2012) in a period marked by wars and recovery processes, especially after II World War. Focusing on the identities expressed here, first, can be mentioned Balkan identity, this is the broader level, based on a shared cultural imaginary and in musical terms, shared repertoire but with clear stylistic differences. The next level would be Serbian identity, with a shared understanding and meaning of this cultural practice. Lastly, local identities, geographically determined mainly, where the differences in the development of each area marked also the development of brass bands. In this case, the musical divergences are based on the traditional genres, *kolo/čoček* depending on the zone *West/South*.

The flexibility of this tradition in terms of repertoire, style and gender in the last years make it an alive tradition which is developed in parallel with society.

New context of performance and its implications

So far, I have briefly explained: how brass band tradition has been changing through time in order to adapt on each period's affairs, the historical influences and how Serbian history was reflected in a musical practice. Now it is necessary to explore the most recent changes, during the last two decades. This section will explore how the same identity is articulated and shaped through new repertoire. The functions and meaning of this music is developed in a different level, where a complex musical tradition is presented to an international audience detached from the whole culture and society it represents.

Firstly, I will explain the new realities in Serbia and the repertoires used there. After this, the focus will be turned into international performances and festivals, increasingly popular during the last decades.

The appearance of the new repertoires mentioned in the previous section, are traced back to the period after WWII. "In those periods, during the war 50 years ago, there was only traditional songs, but now there is also modern. We have repertoire for kids and modern international songs." (Marko Trnavac - July 6th 2017, Čačak). This period also increased the differences between rural and urban areas and it was the same situation in the music performances. "When we play in cities more people asks for modern songs, when is a party for young people they ask for modern songs [...] In some occasions we play only old songs, in villages in the mountains" (Marko Trnavac - July 6th 2017, Čačak). Marko's testimony also explain why Roma musicians were seen as keepers of tradition, the same way Jozsef Vekerdi (1976) suggests. Vekerdi explains that most of the Roma communities remained in rural areas after the war, and the preferred repertoire for their bands was traditional.

On the other hand, in urban areas, some of these new contexts are intimate settings such as graduations or the time of births at the hospital. These new performative spaces require modern repertoire; the second and fourth category as explained above (new folk songs and modern songs). During graduations, the music performed is usually songs from TV shows, soundtracks or modern pop songs. Soundtracks also function as a way of popularizing brass bands outside the geographical borders of Serbia since two decades ago. The most representative example are Emir Kusturica's films *Time of the Gypsies*, *Black cat*, *White cat* and *Underground* (Silverman 2015). After this popularization, many brass bands incorporated these songs in their repertoires, *Bubamara* is a widespread example.⁹

This phenomenon (of using soundtracks as a way of popularising themselves), enables the bands to link the songs belonging to the category of traditional songs to rural areas. Yet always taking into consideration that in all contexts there are mixed songs, but the main part would always be traditional songs. The second category, new folk songs, would be the most popular in urban areas. The third, Balkan songs, is linked to Balkan countries. In addition, when brass bands play in neighbour countries they are not limited to their shared repertoire, they also try to learn and perform some local tunes from the area they visit. "We play a few national songs from all the Balkan countries we go" (Goran Damjanović, July 5th 2017, Krusevac). The last category, modern songs would apply to international festivals and performances in non-Balkan countries. The latter, turns the next paragraphs' focus on such festivals.

⁹ See track 10

During the last two decades, festivals, have opened a new space for brass bands, this is where most of their performances take place nowadays. In Serbia, the main festival is Guča Sabor trubača which includes four pre-competitions in each Serbian region, one of which I have attended in Surdulica.



Figure 11: Vlasinsko leto program. Source: <http://tosurdulica.org>



Figure 12: Audience (Surdulica). Photo: Author

In these local festivals, the musicians wear traditional costumes in contrast to how they dress at private events or international festivals. This symbolic, costume, concept will be discussed in more details at a later part in this dissertation. The performative space of festivals, allows the musicians to reach a wider audience. “I prefer festivals because there is more people there, so I have more emotions when there is more people” (Bojan Krstić – July 8th 2017, Vlasinsko leto). However, and in contrast to Bojan, some other musicians through my questionnaires stated their preference for the intimacy which family celebrations have to offer.



Figure 14: Performance in Čačak (private event). Photo: Silvija Pasajlic



Figure 13: Festival performance with traditional costumes. Photo: Author

Apart from brass bands' role festive occasions which make them be linked to happiness, joy, emotiveness and community: there is another two different aspects that are highly valued whether intimacy, in small groups or collective excitement, in wider groups.

Any performances or festivals outside Serbia, should be analysed through different parameters. This is due to the fact that there is no sense of creating community in the same ways, or, rearticulation of inner social relationships. Within these out of Serbia spaces, the function of creating an image of the self becomes the reproduction of the self for other cultures; as Marko Trnavca (July 6th 2017, Čačak) explains:

It's important to be in foreign musical contexts because we represent our music, our country and our culture. We're very proud of having played in America, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, Italy, Greece... presenting our country. When we play in other countries they are very pleased about our music.

During the previous section, the self-identification through music, genres and styles were explored. In the case of contemporary performances, the main repertoire are modern songs, generally adapted to the "Balkan style", also with some popular Serbian and Roma songs. This shows how the musical construction of place in international contexts becomes a modified tradition, adapted to diverse audience with different cultural backgrounds (Connell & Gibson 2007, 20-21). With its popularization in this space, this cultural expression became closer to a market product. Through the analysis of this type of performances, I observed that the function of reinforcement of identity becomes an orientalist image of the culture. This happens since the moment that for touristy purposes, all the cultural features are put on stage to show a marketable product which reinforces alienation and the perception of a cultural "other", from the view of the audience. However, looking at its meaning for performers, this would be described as a

symbolic fight, to erase the perceptions of the Balkans as a cultural other, and to add value and recognition to their culture (Bordieu 1988, 241). Moreover, taking into consideration the widespread orientalist image of Roma people, their appearance in international festivals could mean a form of cultural empowerment for them. Their popularization could be an important step for the recognition of their misrepresented and repressed culture.

Even during festivals that take place in Serbia, musicians intend to bring a kind of innovation in traditional music, by making old songs attractive to young people and, thereby, keep the tradition alive. Already mentioned how musicians value the traditional repertoire, find themselves in a predicament on maintaining the balance between tradition and innovation, while also keeping a sense of continuity. This aspect has been criticised specially by local ethnomusicologists as Catherine Kilroe (2010, 45) mentions: “Although Boban Markovic has won the first prize numerous times and is hailed as the best trumpeter of the last two decades, Serbian ethnomusicologists do not call the style of music he plays reflective of Serbian folk music.”. However, my research with local musicians tells a different story; of the innovative aspects of this music combined with traditional music as a way of guaranteeing the continuation of the tradition with a great presence in current social practices. The preservation of traditions as museum objects, in other words, unchangeable, would change their meaning and function. Without development, this cultural tradition would not be any more a definition of a group.

To illustrate the adaptation into this new international context, the example of *La bamba* as performed by brass bands will be utilised. With this song, musicians try to get closer to a new audience that does not share their culture. In this case, it can be observed that even when bands are “presenting their country” to foreigners, their local styles are kept. The music sample is Orkestar Marko Trnavac’s and Orkestar Bojan Ristić’s version of

La bamba.¹⁰ While in the first version the rhythm is simple and with a regular speed, trying to create an accurate imitation, the second version has faster rhythm, double and triple tonguing which is widely used from all brass bands and melodic ornaments such as *mordentes*. In Ristić's version they use their own style and therefore there is a few improvised parts and solos.

This song, is specially meaning full for Bojan Ristić as it is a song that they can play for any audience while creating a sense of connection between performer and spectator, and at the same time, as Bojan explains, he feels it as his own using his style to perform it.

“I must listen every style and musician to learn so in any party I can play anything our guests want [...] I want to play it like the original” (Marko Trnavac - July 6th 2017, Čačak). Conversely, Southern bands pay attention to every style, mainly latin, rock and jazz to learn from them and then incorporate some ideas to their performance and style.

Contemporarily, trumpet has become a socially constructed symbol of Serbia which works also as a reminder of war periods due to its connection with military bands. Guca festival serves to reflect the importance of this music and the culture that surrounds it, for Serbian population. Their appearance in international contexts is allowing Serbian musicians to represent themselves and the Balkans. In this way, Serbian culture is improving its representation levels in ways that, change orientalist social discourses and stereotypes. This suggests a change in the understanding of Serbian culture as an exotic “cultural other”.

¹⁰ See track 11 and 12

Conclusions

After the analysis of brass bands as a cultural practice, it can be said that this musical tradition shapes continuously relations of subjects and social practices. The diversity in social discourses behind this musical expression is related with its multi-cultural origins. As explained above, the influence of military, WWII and occupations is undeniable. In addition, this military influence brought also the Roma heritage into this music, as an aftermath of Roma role in Turkish troops.

Due to the placement of Roma culture in Europe, as a forgotten and denominated exotic product, the Serbian reality is always based on the concept of place with a cultural imaginary, not nation. This view, is also adopted by this dissertation as a way of avoiding nationalistic connotations in the history of Serbia, and also due to the general notion of Roma community claiming no territory. The reflection of identity in this music, based on an abstract network of cultural and emotional ties, allows this tradition to reshape and bring together in arts two different social worlds; the Roma and the non-Roma. The involvement of both communities in intimate settings via musical performance, such as weddings, births, birthdays, and other family gatherings, highlight the path for social cohesion that this music brings. Using Frith's (1996, 124) terms, brass band music enable two different communities to have shared cultural narratives due to their common understanding of place.

Focusing on identity, the main idea of this work is the reflection of different levels of identity within this music. In this way, music can be used to define and differentiate from other groups simultaneously. The levels of identity from the widest to the most specific are: Balkan identity, Serbian identity, local identity and band identity. However, these levels entail the formation of boundaries between groups relating to different histories,

culture, and their placement in the global pragmatism. These groups are in constant redefinition through their performances which reflects also the changes in society as these are adapted in musical performance in order to reflect the diverse realities of their audience. Taking the idea of the layered semiotics of music of Thomas Turino (1999, 231-240), about diverse associations on individual and social levels between experiences and music creating common experiences which work as a way of identification; it explains the feeling of brass bands members as a family. Each specific song, apart from its meaning in relation with social and historical discourses, is also a way of communication between musicians and audience. Due to this way of communicating with songs, each band have their own identity through their own compositions.

Moving to the example of Western/Southern styles, it was illustrated how each region plays with different purposes, leading to separate different styles. The regional styles are full of general prejudices which are related to the different historical developments. With this, I mean the preconceptions as “gypsy bands are better” or “southern bands are better”, based on the aforementioned romantic and orientalist ideas created around the Roma. The next layer of identity is Serbian identity. Here, the common cultural aspects between the members of this group are shared finding commonplace also in history, or, to be more accurate, their view of it. The fact of including Roma songs as traditional Serbian songs, as aforementioned, reveals how this music represents cultural and not ethnic identities. In this case, cultural identity translates for Roma and non-Roma Serbians sharing a performative place and the history related to that same geographical place. The existence of war songs in the repertoire of brass bands, records Serbian history and a period marked by wars where music played a major role in post-war social re-constructions. During those years, the republic of Serbia was in its developmental process, and also brass bands

tradition. This fact, highlights the origins of the close and deep links between music and place.

Finally, the widest identity group represented here, is Balkan identity. With a shared cultural imaginary, and reflecting on Georgina Born's (2000) idea of "musically-imagined communities" this group fits into the categorisation of an "Balkan imagined community". In terms of the participant musicians, "Balkan sound", refers to all those shared songs between countries including Turkey, Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, and etc.

The group linked with Balkan identity is important as it delineates a border between the self and the others. Even considering the differences between culture in Serbia and other Balkan countries, there is a concealed common understanding of this tradition. Nevertheless, as it is mentioned in the previous section, during performances for international audience, musicians present themselves in different ways. The main differences are the clothing (see figures 12 and 13), and/or repertoire. In performances outside the Balkans the presence of "modern songs" known internationally, show the perception of this audience as outsiders, or others. These popular songs are played to get closer to the audience, combined with some Serbian songs as a self-representation. On the other hand, if one looks at performances inside Serbia, musicians do not need to get closer with the audience, as they are perceived as part of the collective self within a shared space where they can play a repertoire which represents their region and their band.

The adaptability of this music, in terms of repertoire, style and contexts, make possible to approach a wide range of audiences and therefore, the music and its symbolism is in constant development. All these characteristics, make this musical tradition, the trumpet

and its style of playing, a language which represents Serbia, reflecting its history, its multicultural influences and its different ethnic groups.

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