

1991: ПАД КОМУНИЗМА И ЊЕГОВ УТИЦАЈ НА МУЗИКУ И УМЕТНОСТ

1991: FALL OF COMMUNISM AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSIC AND THE ARTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

28–30 MAY 2026

УСТАНОВА КУЛТУРЕ “ПАРОБРОД” / CULTURAL CENTER PAROBROD
BELGRADE, SERBIA



EMORY
UNIVERSITY

FMK



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УСТАНОВА КУЛТУРЕ “ПАРОБРОД” / CULTURAL CENTER PAROBROD

КАПЕТАН-МИШИНА 6А

BELGRADE, SERBIA

CONFERENCE CONVENED BY

Laura Emmerly

ORGANIZED BY EMORY UNIVERSITY (ATLANTA, USA), CULTURAL CENTER PAROBROD
(BELGRADE, SERBIA), AND THE FACULTY OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS (BELGRADE, SERBIA)

SPONSORED BY EMORY UNIVERSITY INITIATIVE FOR ARTS AND HUMANISTIC INQUIRY

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УСТАНОВА КУЛТУРЕ “ПАРОБРОД” / CULTURAL CENTER PAROBROD
КАРЕТАН-МИШИНА 6А
BELGRADE, SERBIA

CONFERENCE CONVENED BY

LAURA EMMERY

CONFERENCE WEBSITES:

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

EXHIBITION

LAST SONGS: MUSIC IN SERBIA DURING YUGOSLAV DISINTEGRATION
CREATED AND CURATED BY LAURA EMMERY AND IVANA MILADINOVIĆ PRICA

15–30 MAY 2026

УСТАНОВА КУЛТУРЕ “ПАРОБРОД” / CULTURAL CENTER PAROBROD
КАРЕТАН-МИШИНА 6А
BELGRADE, SERBIA

Supported by:

Cultural Center Parobrod
Emory University Initiative for Arts and Humanistic Inquiry

CONCERT
SERBIAN COMPOSERS IN THE DIASPORA

28 May 2026 at 8:00 PM

Установа културе “Пароброд”/ Cultural Center Parobrod
Kapetan-Mišina 6a, Belgrade, Serbia

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <i>Kolo</i> (2009)
<i>Tiba voda...</i> [Quiet Water...] (2026)
Vladimir Milošević, piano | Nataša Bogojević (b. 1966) |
| <i>Duet without You</i> (2011)
Vladimir Milošević and Sofija Prica, piano 4-hands | Miloš Raičković (b. 1956) |
| <i>Il circo</i> for piano (1993)
Vladimir Milošević, piano | Isidora Žebeljan (1967–2020) |
| <i>Балада (за Власту)</i> [Ballad for Vlasta] (2018)
Vladimir Milošević, piano
Nemanja Stanković, cello | Ognjen Bogdanović (b. 1965) |
| “Toccatà” from Suite for Piano (1984)
Nataša Penezić, piano | Igor Gostuški (b. 1966) |
| <i>Vež</i> for solo cello (2005)
Nemanja Stanković, cello | Ana Sokolovic (b. 1968) |
| <i>Danube Etude / Dunavska etida</i> (2021)
for prepared piano with fine metal chains and ping pong balls
Vladimir Milošević, piano | Aleksandra Vrebalov (b. 1970) |

Artistic Director:

Laura Emmery

Supported by:

Cultural Center Parobrod
Emory University Initiative for Arts and Humanistic Inquiry

**DJ SESSION WITH OGGIE B:
40 YEARS OF HOUSE (MUSIC)**

28 May 2026, 9:00 PM – 12:00 AM

Установа културе “Пароброд”/ Cultural Center Parobrod
Kapetan-Mišina 6a, Belgrade, Serbia

Oggie B (Ognjen Bogdanović) browses through the diary pages of his decades-long love affair with house music and takes us on a journey exploring the genre’s finest moments.

Ognjen Bogdanović (b. 1965) is a composer from Belgrade who has been living and working in London since 1991. Most of his small but well-known opus dates from the time of his studies with Vlastimir Trajković. His first recordings in the field of electronic “house” music (which Bogdanović sees as a sub-type of repetitive minimalism) also date from the same period, which, among other things, directed him towards London—at that time, one of the most important centers in the world for the genre, which Bogdanović still pursues with undiminished passion today. So far, the only works he has presented to the Belgrade audience are *Paramour* for harp and strings (2012; commissioned by Jugokonzert) and *Ballad* (for Vlasta) (2018; commissioned by Nemanja Stanković, who is performing the work on this occasion as well). Bogdanović is currently working on a commission by Branka Parlić—Three Night Visions for piano solo, all after the titles of well-known science fiction novels by Arthur C. Clarke, Clifford D. Simak, and Isaac Asimov, respectively: *The City and the Stars*, *Way Station*, and *The Naked Sun*.

Supported by:

Cultural Center Parobrod
Emory University Initiative for Arts and Humanistic Inquiry

CONCERT
ANSAMBL ZA DRUGU NOVU MUZIKU / ENSEMBLE FOR DIFFERENT NEW MUSIC
“ŠARE I ŠAVOVI” / “PATTERNS AND STITCHES”

GUEST ARTIST: NATAŠA BOGOJEVIĆ [NATASHA BOGOJEVIC] (BELGRADE, SERBIA / CHICAGO, USA)

29 MAY 2026 AT 8:00 PM

УСТАНОВА КУЛТУРЕ ГВАРНЕРИЈУС / CULTURAL CENTER GUARNERIUS

DŽORDŽA VAŠINGTONA 12, BELGRADE, SERBIA

<i>Ovo nije Op. 1</i> [This is not Op. 1] (2018) Narrator: Miša Savić	Miroslav Miša Savić (b. 1954)
<i>The Sonorities of Patterns and Stitches</i> (2025)	Nataša Bogojević (b. 1966)
<i>Jaba Music</i> (2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow Hand Blues• Late-night Mambo• Quick Tap Shoes	Dragoljub Ilić Ilke (b. 1956)
<i>Toccata—After the Apocalypse</i> (2025)	Igor Gostuški (b. 1966)
<i>Fade in</i> (2025)	Andrej Negić (b. 1993)

ENSEMBLE FOR DIFFERENT NEW MUSIC:

Dragoljub Ilić, Nada Kolunždija, Andrej Negić, Branka Parlić, Nataša Penezić, Milena Petrović,
Miroslav Savić, and Lidija Stanković on the keyboards



LECTURE RECITALS

DIALOGUE WITHIN A VOID, FANTASY WITHIN A NIGHTMARE: MINIMALISTIC VIOLA SONATAS AT THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

28 May 2026 at 2:00 PM

Установа културе “Пароброд”/ Cultural Center Parobrod
Kapetan-Mišina 6a, Belgrade, Serbia

Vladimir Ryabov (b. 1950)	<i>Sonata-Dialogue</i> for viola and piano (1987)	20'
Georgy Firtich (1938–2016)	<i>Sonata-Fantasy</i> for viola and piano (1988)	20'

Netanel Pollak, viola

Sophie Greis-Pollak, piano

The following program presents two sonatas for viola and piano that were written in the USSR during the last decade before the fall of communism. Even though the anticipated winds of change were evident in Soviet art and everyday life—with increasing Western influence and first signs of commercialism—the 1980s are remembered as a decade of deficit, hunger, crime, and distress. In music, late Soviet composers employed minimalistic devices such as repetitiveness or excessive use of silence to reflect on feelings of impasse and emptiness, respectively. The two sonatas in this program illustrate the use of these devices, combined with musical elements inspired by Western popular music and Orthodox liturgy.

RESONANT IDENTITIES: SOUND, MEMORY, AND HARMONIC FREQUENCIES

29 May 2026 at 2:00 PM

Установа културе “Пароброд”/ Cultural Center Parobrod

In this lecture-recital, composer and pianist **Duke Bojadziew** reflects on personal and cultural transformation through sound. Born in Yugoslavia and coming of age during the final years of the socialist federation, Bojadziew experienced firsthand the profound social and psychological shifts that followed the political changes of the early 1990s. The program combines piano performance, subtle electronic textures, and spoken reflection. Through a selection of original compositions and guided improvisations, Bojadziew explores sound as a medium of memory, identity, and continuity. The presentation also introduces *Harmonic Frequencies*, an ongoing artistic research project developed over many years through Bojadziew’s exploration of sound healing, vibrational resonance, and the psychological impact of music and visual environments. Rather than presenting sound therapeutically, the project approaches frequency and resonance as compositional tools that shape emotional and perceptual experience. Drawing on musical influences from the Balkan region alongside contemporary sonic practices, the recital invites listeners into an immersive space where personal history, cultural memory, and acoustic resonance intersect. The presentation will be interwoven with brief spoken reflections, creating a unified lecture-recital experience rather than a conventional concert format.

CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Kevin C. Karnes

(Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA)

Melita Milin

(Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)

Peter Schmelz

(Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA)

Martha Sprigge

(University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

(Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade)

DAILY PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2026

8:00–8:40 Registration (Piano Hall)

8:40–9:00 Introductory Note: Laura Emmery, Marija Pavlović, Žarko Cvejić
(Parobrod Theatre)

9:00–10:30 Session 1

Session 1A: Post-Communist Eastern European Identity and Cultural Resistance (Annex 1)

Chair: Ivana Medić (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)

9:00–9:30 “Urban Strategies of Resistance in Serbian Rock Discography of 1991”

Srđan Teparić (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

9:30–10:00 “Science Fiction Films in the Eastern Bloc: International Cooperation, Forgotten History”

Jan Topolski (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń / The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland)

10:00–10:30 “The Fall of Communism in the Historiography of New Music”

Ian Pace (City St George’s, University of London, UK)

Session 1B: Russification and Sovietization in the Ukrainian Art Music Scene:

Post-1991 Perspectives (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Peter J. Schmelz (Johns Hopkins University, USA)

9:00–9:30 “Colonialism’s Nuances: A View of Nikolai Roslavets and Soviet Kharkiv after 1991”

Leah Batstone (Montclair State University, USA)

9:30–10:00 “Ideological Compromise as a Strategy of Artistic Survival in the 1920s Soviet Ukraine: The Case of the Mykola Leontovych Music Society”

Iryna Tukova (National Music Academy of Ukraine)

10:00–10:30 “Sovietization as Colonization: A Striking Case of Western Ukraine”

Lidiya Melnyk (Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, Ukraine)

Session 1C: Transitions after 1991 (Annex 2)

Chair: Ivana Miladinović Prica (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

- 9:00–9:30 “Defining Aesthetic Landmarks in Latvian Art Music after 1991: Local Experience of Post-Occupation, Post-Soviet, and Bygone Postmodernism”
Jānis Kudiņš (Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Latvia)
- 9:30–10:00 “Opera Without a Home: Interim Transitions in Latvia, 1991–1995”
Lauma Mellēna-Bartkevica (Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music)
- 10:00–10:30 “Creative and Professional Constraints in the Context of Socio-Political Shifts: Composer Miroslav ‘Miša’ Savić”
Blanka Bogunović & Nikola Dedić (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)
- 10:30–11:00 Break (Piano Hall)
- 11:00–12:00 **Keynote 1** (Parobrod Theatre)
Chair: Laura Emmery (Emory University, USA)

Melita Milin (Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Serbia)
“Serbian Music Under Late Socialism, the Breakup of Yugoslavia, and Imposed Isolation: Continuities and Disruptions (1989–1999)”
- 12:00–2:00 Lunch
- 2:00–3:00 **Lecture Recital** (Piano Hall)
“Dialogue within a Void, Fantasy within a Nightmare: Minimalistic Viola Sonatas at the Fall of Communism”
Netanel Pollak (viola), **Sophie Greis-Pollak** (piano)

3:00–4:30

Session 2

Session 2A: Music Festivals and Cultural Diplomacy (Annex 1)

Chair: Žarko Cvejić (Faculty of Media and Communications, Belgrade, Serbia)

3:00–3:30

“Reimagining Bulgarian New Music through Darmstadt: Cultural Diplomacy, Mobility, and Post-Communist Reintegration”

Joewan de Mattos Caitano (Musikwissenschaftliches Seminar Detmold, Germany)

3:30–4:00

“Finland and Her Neighbors?: From Neutrality to Nationalism at the 1992 Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival”

Nathan Cobb (Emory University, USA)

4:00–4:30

“Audio-Visual Representation of Transition: Reflections of Socio-Political Changes in Popular Music at the End of the Communist Era (1989–1991)”

Marko Aleksić (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

Session 2B: Cultural Heritage and National Identity (Annex 2)

Chair: Jelena Novak (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal)

3:00–3:30

“Lithuanian Music after 1990: From Post-Soviet Condition to the Regime of Presentism”

Rūta Stanevičiūtė (Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania)

3:30–4:00

“The Impact of the Fall of Communism on Ukrainian Music”

Olha Kushniruk (University of Cambridge, Faculty of Music, UK)

4:00–4:30 “From Ideology to Identity: Romanian Children’s Choral Music in the Post-Communist Era”
Natalia Spân (National Academy of Music “Gheorghe Dima,” Romania)

Session 2C: Music and Narrativity in Post-Soviet and Post-Communist Metal and Popular Music

(Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Srđan Teparić (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

3:00–3:30 “Latvian Soviet-era Popular Music in the Memories of its Performers”
Reinis Jaunais & Kaspars Zellis (University of Latvia)

3:30–4:00 “Religion, Nationalism, and Aesthetics: What is ‘Pagan’ about the Latvian Pagan Metal Band Skyforger?”
Agita Misāne & Jānis Daugavietis (University of Latvia)

4:00–4:30 “‘Eti igry ne dla nas’: Playing Metal Music ‘Right’ in (Post-)Soviet Russia”
Dawn Hazle (Independent researcher, Nottingham, UK)

4:30–5:00 Break

5:00–6:00 **Keynote 2** (Parobrod Theatre)
Chair: Pauline Fairclough (University of Bristol, UK)

Peter Schmelz (Johns Hopkins University, USA)

“No Freedom without Constraint, No Constraint without Freedom: Soviet Experimental Music before and after the Fall”

8:00–9:00 **Concert: Serbian Composers in the Diaspora** (Piano Hall)
Vladimir Milošević (piano), Nataša Penezić (piano), Sofija Prica (piano),
Nemanja Stanković (cello)

9:00–12:00 **DJ session** with Oggie B (Ognjen Bogdanović)
“40 Years of House (Music)”

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026

8:00–9:00 Registration coffee (Piano Hall)

9:00–10:30 Session 3

Session 3A: Jazz Influences (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Nathan Cobb (Emory University, USA)

9:00–9:30 “‘Jazz Ongheya’: Mediated Reception of Jazz in North Korea’s ‘National Music’”

Chaeyoung Lee (Korea Institute, Harvard University, USA)

9:30–10:00 “Navigating Eventful Social Change: Adaptive Strategies of Estonian Jazz
Musicians in the Early 1990s”

Heli Reimann (Tallinn University, Estonia)

10:00–10:30 “*Istorija Vizantije* [The History of Byzantium] by Miloš Petrović:
Searching for the (Trans)national Music Identity”

Jelena Janković-Beguš (Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia)

Session 3B: “Foreign” Influences (Annex 1)

Chair: Jan Topolski (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

9:00–9:30 “Pursuing Originality by Articulating *Russki*: Tree of Life’s 1997 Album
Prophetic Dream and the Post-Soviet Dialectic of Cultural Identity and
Foreign Influence”

John Vandevent (Uppsala University, Sweden)

9:30–10:00 “Somebody That I Used to Know: Interruption and Gradual Re-establishment of the Foreign Pop Music Concert Scene in Post-1991 Serbia”
Nikola Komatović (Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia)

10:00–10:30 “Of Falling Walls, Orchestras, and Swimming Pools”
Chris Walton (Hochschule der Künste Bern, Switzerland)

Session 3C: Post-Soviet Decolonization and National Identity (Annex 2)

Chair: Christoph Schuller (University of Music and Theatre Munich, Germany)

9:00–9:30 “Sounding the Steppe: Ethnographies of Musical Heritage and Political Belonging in Contemporary Hungary”
Indira Anna Hajnács (University of Szeged, Hungary / Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Germany)

9:30–10:00 “GDR, Instrument Making, FRG: Markneukirchen before and after 1990”
Ya'qub Yonas N. El-Khaled (University of Music and Theatre Munich, Germany)

10:00–10:30 “Decolonizing Georgian Music History: Georgian Music of Antiquity in Post-Soviet Musicological Discourse”
Gvantsa Ghvinjilia (Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Georgia)

10:30–11:00 Break (Piano Hall)

11:00–12:00 **Keynote 3** (Parobrod Theatre)
Chair: Reinis Jaunais (University of Latvia)

“‘The Spirit of the Time, the Atmosphere of Place’: Hardijs Lediņš in (West) Berlin, 1988/92’

Kevin C. Karnes (Emory University, Atlanta, USA)

12:00–2:00 Lunch

2:00–3:00 **Lecture Recital** (Piano Hall)
Duke Bojadziew (piano and electronics)

3:00–3:30 Break

3:30–4:30 Session 4

Session 4A: Musicology and Scholarship after the Fall (Annex 1)

Chair: Nevena Stanić (Northwestern University, USA)

3:30–4:00 “1991 as a Milestone in Athenian Musical Life: Intersections of Scholarship and Performance”

Magdalini Kalopana (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

4:00–4:30 “Soundtracking the Fall: Autotheory of Becoming a Musicologist after the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”

Jelena Novak (CESEM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal)

Session 4B: Post-Yugoslav Cultural Policies in Serbia (Annex 2)

Chair: Jelena Janković-Beguš (Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia)

3:30–4:00 “Musical Landscape in Flux: The Founding of the International Review of Composers Amidst Yugoslav Disintegration”

Ivana Miladinović Prica (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

4:00–4:30 “Cultural Policy and Musical Life in Serbia in the ‘Year of Culture’ (1995) and Its Operatic Reflection”

Tatjana Marković (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria)

Session 4C: Post-Soviet Musical Reckonings (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Inessa Bazayev (Louisiana State University, USA)

3:30–4:00 “Post-Soviet Hauntology and the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina”

Christopher Segall (University of Cincinnati, USA)

4:00–4:30 “Sacred Sound in a Post-Atheist World”

Christine Tokatlian (The American College of Greece, Athens, Greece)

4:30–5:00 Break

5:00–6:00

Keynote 4 (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Chris Walton (Bern Academy of the Arts, Switzerland)

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

“Stereotypes and Paradoxes as Indicators of the Position of Serbian Music in the Time of Transition—Creation, Interpretation, Manipulation”

8:00–9:00

Concert: Patterns and Stitches

(Cultural Center Guarnerius, Džordža Vašingtona 12, Belgrade, Serbia)

Ensemble for Different New Music

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2026

8:00–9:00

Registration (Piano Hall)

9:00–10:30

Session 5

Session 5A: Cultural Memory and Ruptured Identities (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Nikola Komatović (Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia)

9:00–9:30

“‘The Secret History of Events’: Musical Commemoration of 1956 in Hungary—The Formation and Exhaustion of Ritual Repertoire (1989–1992)”

Ákos Windhager (Hungarian Academy of Arts, Hungary)

9:30–10:00

“Stop the War in the Name of Children: Children and Nation Building Through Croatian Patriotic Music (1991–1992)”

Ivana Polić (Florida State University, USA)

10:00–10:30

“Echoes of Past and Present: Ruth Schonthal’s *The Bells of Sarajevo* as a Transhistorical Reflection on the Yugoslav Wars”

Christoph Schuller (University of Music and Theatre Munich, Germany)

Session 5B: Isolation, Turmoil, and War Trauma (Annex 1)

Chair: Iryna Tukova (National Music Academy of Ukraine)

9:00–9:30 “Milica Paranosić’s Reading of Tea Obreht’s *The Tiger’s Wife*”

Aleksandra Vojčić (University of Michigan, USA)

9:30–10:00 “Goran Kapetanović and the Art of Disintegration”

Ivana Medić (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Serbia)

10:00–10:30 “Sacred Sound at the End of the Cold War: Arvo Pärt’s *Miserere* between East and West (1989–1991)”

Nevena Stanić (Northwestern University, USA)

Session 5C: Ruptured Identities (Annex 2)

Chair: Miloš Bralović (Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Serbia)

9:00–9:30 “Bulgarian Folk Music: From Socialist Standardization to Post-Socialist Transnational Circulation”

Kateryna Ielysieieva (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

9:30–10:00 “Ruptured Identities: Continuity and Change in the Musical Construction of Gender after the Fall of Yugoslav Socialism”

Claudia Mayr-Veselinović (Technical University of Leoben, Austria)

10:00–10:30 “The ‘Last Soviet Generation’: Nino Davadze, Kaisa Ling, and Musical Representations of Soviet Legacies in 21st-Century Georgia and Estonia”

Allison Brooks-Conrad (Haverford College / University of Delaware, US)

10:30–11:00 Break (Piano Hall)

11:00–12:00 Session 6

Session 6A: Georgian Art Music (Parobrod Theatre)

Chair: Rūta Stanevičiūtė (Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania)

- 11:00–11:30 “After the Fall, Before the Future: Georgian Art Music and the Tempo-Localities of 1991–2003”
Nana Sharikadze (Caucasus University, Georgia)
- 11:30–12:00 “Georgian Opera in Transition: The Search for the New Identity and the Political Context of 1991”
Maia Sigua (Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Georgia)

Session 6B: National Narratives (Annex 2)

Chair: Indira Anna Hajnács (University of Szeged, Hungary / Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Germany)

- 11:00–11:30 “Censoring Contemporary Music: Soviet Writings on Prokofiev’s Music”
Inessa Bazayev (Louisiana State University, USA)
- 11:30–12:00 “The Specificity of the National Narrative in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungarian Musicology”
Andrea Olah (Independent researcher, Vienna, Austria)
- 12:00–12:30 Break (Piano Hall)
- 12:30–1:30 **Keynote 5** (Parobrod Theatre)
Chair: Christopher Segall (University of Cincinnati, USA)
Martha Sprigge (University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)
“The Memory Keepers: Composers’ Widows and the Remains of the East German Avant-Garde”

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Kevin C. Karnes

(Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA)

“‘The Spirit of the Time, the Atmosphere of Place’: Hardijs Lediņš in (West) Berlin, 1988/92”

Perestroika and the end of the USSR radically reconfigured the landscape of possibility for Soviet artists, including by easing travel and exchange across geopolitical borders. This talk considers unexpected opportunities and insurmountable challenges presented by these transitions, as seen in a pair of Berlin residencies by the Latvian musician Hardijs Lediņš, co-founder of the legendary underground group NSRD. It examines partnerships formed between West German organizations and the Latvian Artists' Union and KGB, how opportunities provided by Western partners could reinscribe the stark social hierarchies of late-Soviet life, and how their efforts to provide Soviet artists with support could not only open previously unimagined possibilities but also bolster what sometimes proved to be impossible expectations, all but cementing their failures.

Melita Milin

(Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)

“Serbian Music Under Late Socialism, the Breakup of Yugoslavia, and Imposed Isolation: Continuities and Disruptions (1989–1999)”

There are periods in the histories of all states and nations when internal tensions and conflicts begin to rise seemingly without control, the succession of dramatic events becoming ever quicker and heavier in consequences, until some shocking action brings down the arms and a rational solution is reached. Such an exceptionally dark period in the history of Yugoslavia was the last decade of the twentieth century, when the first free multiparty elections after the Second World War did not lead to building a democracy but to disintegration along the country's federal and ethnic borders in the most violent ways. Because of numerous breakups during the 1990s on all levels—political, economic, social, and cultural—a necessary continuity for the survival (physical and psychological) of affected populations had to be enabled and, at least, a facade of normal life provided.

In the urban areas of Serbia—one of the then-federal republics that will be the object of observation in this lecture—efforts were made not only to provide for the elementary needs of the population, increased by a great number of Serbian refugees from the war zones in two neighboring ex-republics, but also to ensure a quasi-normal everyday life, including cultural. In May 1992, the imposition of international sanctions in the field of culture, among others, resulted in expected outcomes, which isolated the country and strongly affected the activities of both institutions and independent artists.

In this keynote lecture, I will examine the quick reaction of the Union of Composers of Serbia to the inflicted sanctions, as well as the strategies applied by that and other musical institutions, and

also by individual musicians and composers, to adapt to the situation. Although the sanctions were lifted for three years after the Dayton Agreement (1995), they were re-imposed when the Kosovo War (1998–1999) began, with minimal benefits, considering the overall negative effects. Since *trauma* could be designated as the common denominator of the 1990s in the country that was falling apart, an attempt will be made to consider the possibility of discerning Elisabeth Kübler Ross's five stages of grieving after a shocking and life-threatening experience: *Denial and Isolation; Anger; Bargaining; Depression; Acceptance*.

This lecture will focus on art music, with occasional references to popular music.

Peter Schmelz

(Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA)

“No Freedom without Constraint, No Constraint without Freedom: Soviet Experimental Music before and after the Fall”

Conventional narratives about the end of the USSR still tout its growing freedoms, the newfound sense of liberation represented by glasnost that unleashed long-repressed creative energies, allowing the silenced to finally speak. Yet counternarratives about the impact of glasnost on the arts—and specifically music—have also circulated for some time. Noted scholar of Soviet jazz, S. Frederick Starr wrote in 1994, “When political reform actually began in the third year of Gorbachev’s rule it was, for the jazz world, at least, anticlimactic.” And musicologist Levon Hakobian, writing about Soviet art music, has observed, “Soviet music could not stand the test of the freedom that came suddenly in the mid-1980s.” According to these readings, freedom both broke the well-oiled machinery of Soviet creative practice and also made redundant the freedoms that had already existed in certain areas of Soviet musicking, jazz and experimental music chief among them. This keynote examines selected prominent figures from the late-Soviet worlds of experimental music to investigate claims of freedom and constraint related to their creation, reception, and significance. It focuses on Sergey Kuryokhin, the former members of the Ganelin Trio (Vyacheslav Ganelin, Vladimir Chekasin, and Vladimir Tarasov), and Tuvan singer Sainkho Namchylak, tracing their work over the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, considering how each navigated the shifting terrain of the period of “transition,” when freedoms and constraints often, and often unpredictably, swapped positions. The changes of the time raise deeper questions about the sociopolitical meanings of ostensibly liberatory musical practices before, during, and after moments of revolutionary upheaval.

Martha Sprigge

(University of California, Santa Barbara, USA)

“The Memory Keepers: Composers’ Widows and the Remains of the East German Avant-Garde”

In the aftermath of German Reunification, East Germany’s most respected artists suddenly found themselves unemployed, attacked, or perhaps worse—completely ignored. As the artistic regime in which they had built their careers collapsed, composers found themselves adrift, no longer supported by the institutions that had garnered their careers and secured their reputations. This presentation examines the work of composers’ wives and widows, who assumed these protective roles and secured their husbands’ archives in the aftermath of the GDR’s collapse. Ruth Berghaus, Stephanie Eisler, Dorothea Medek, and Ute Bredemeyer preserved their composer husband’s material legacies by

engaging in a feminist collectors' impulse that has echoes in the work of Eastern European feminist writers such as Slavenka Drakulić and Jenny Erpenbeck. By focusing on the archival work of East Germany's composers' widows, I develop an intimate history of the Wende and its impact on musical life in the former socialist state, providing a feminist counterweight to prevailing geopolitical analyses of the Eastern bloc's collapse and its impact on the arts. For though East German music scene was dominated by men, its legacy was shaped by their wives.

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

(Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade)

“Stereotypes and Paradoxes as Indicators of the Position of Serbian Music in the Time of Transition—Creation, Interpretation, Manipulation”

This lecture examines the status of Serbian music within the circumstances caused by the change of socio-economic formations in the country: the collapse of socialism and its replacement by the basic principles of liberal capitalism. Chronologically speaking, a “stretchable” time span from the late 1980s to the present is taken into account. The issue raised by this topic is considered from a perspective that relies on relevant factual material (often even controversial), but it is not intended to discuss it in terms of chronological “unraveling,” its subject-matter classification, explanation, or “ranking” according to meaning and importance. The chosen perspective focuses on considering the sphere of Serbian art music in the context of some socio-political and artistic stereotypes and paradoxes; those *with which*, or, one could even say *under which*, Serbian music lives its transitional life.

With this methodological approach, the *stereotype* is treated in the most general sense of the phenomenon: as a kind of cliché with countless forms of its appearance and their positive and negative effects. The *paradox* is treated as an absurd, but true, real situation; an absurd, but real insight and conclusion. Both phenomena—stereotype and paradox—are present in the sphere of Serbian music in the time of transition. They either arise *from the music field itself*, primarily from the creative area and process itself, or they influence the music sphere *from the outside*, intervening with some tested external means. In the first case, stereotypes and paradoxes are determined by the degree of complexity and originality of the creative process, both in the field of creation through sound and through the word about sound. In the second case, they appear mainly as socio-politically suggested aesthetic and value attributions. When based either on insufficient knowledge of the real state of Serbian music and its multiple contexts, or on their deliberate neglect or underestimation, these attributions most often aim to encourage superficial and narrow-minded *interpretations* as a means of political *manipulation*. Furthermore, there is a strong cause-and-effect relationship between the two previously mentioned sources of stereotypes and paradoxes.

Therefore, the method of processing the proposed topic is based on considering the dynamics of relationships within the “pairs” of selected stereotypes and paradoxes, as possible indicators of the position of the art music sphere in transitional Serbia. Consequently, the applied method results in a formal articulation of the lecture. It is based on the alternation and correlation of the examination findings of those “pairs,” meaning: stereotype $x \leftrightarrow$ paradox x ; stereotype $y \leftrightarrow$ paradox y . The conclusion might turn out to be paradoxical.

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Marko Aleksić

(Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

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“Audio-Visual Representation of Transition: Reflections of Socio-Political Changes in Popular Music at the End of the Communist Era (1989–1991)”

This paper explores the intricate relationship between popular music and the historical and political context during the disintegration of communist regimes in Europe between 1989 and 1991. The research focuses on the analysis of three genre-distinct compositions: the Austrian pop song “Keine Mauern mehr” (Simone), the Soviet hard rock track “Bang” (Gorky Park), and the rock ballad “Wind of Change” (Scorpions). The primary objective of the study is to decipher the complex mechanisms through which explicit and tacit messages regarding the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of the Cold War, and the ideological transformation of Eastern Europe are articulated through both textual content and the visual narratives of music videos. The analytical focus is on the contrast between the metaphorical language of pastiche, exemplified by Simone’s Eurovision performance, and the explicit historicism found in the work of the Scorpions. Special emphasis is placed on the group Gorky Park, whose political stance is communicated not primarily through lyrics, but through the visual semiotics of their music video—a syncretism of Western hard rock aesthetics and traditional Russian symbols that functionalizes the concept of “perestroika.” The methodological framework of the study is grounded in the popular music studies of Vesna Mikić, with a particular focus on transcultural aspects and musical analysis within an ideological context, as well as the research of Dean Vuletic regarding the political history of the Eurovision Song Contest. By examining how these media artifacts—disseminated through dominant platforms such as MTV and Eurovision—constructed a new European cultural identity, the paper demonstrates their role as both sonic and visual documents of a pivotal turning point in contemporary history.

Leah Batstone

(Montclair State University, New Jersey, USA)

“Colonialism’s Nuances: A View of Nikolai Roslavets and Soviet Kharkiv after 1991”

Of the many justifications employed for the Russian claim on the musical innovations of Nikolai (Mykola) Roslavets are his Russian-language writings and his active membership in the Russian Bolshevik party. Although less compelling as evidence of “Russianness,” his education at the Moscow Conservatory and his mature career in Moscow from 1922 until his death in 1944 (except for 1932–33 when he worked in self-imposed exile in Tashkent), add to this claim. Yet the life and work of Roslavets—long dubbed the “Russian Schoenberg”—offer an example of the nuances that colonialism easily exploits. Indeed, even Ukrainians have not always accepted Roslavets—to borrow Richard Taruskin’s controversial labeling of another Ukrainian composer, Dmitry Bortniansky—as a “native son.” Since 1991, two strands of scholarship have developed that facilitate an understanding of Roslavets’ contributions to Ukrainian culture without denying or ignoring the facts of his life. The first is the work of art historians, such as Myroslava Mudrak and Tetyana Filevska, who have rebutted

the Russian narratives of figures such as Davyd Burljuk (the ostensible “father of Russian futurism”) and Roslavets’s friend from childhood, Kazymyr Malevych. By contextualizing the careers of Ukrainian artists made in a Russian colonial system, the work of these scholars presents a model for accepting certain Russian facts while unearthing Ukrainian foundations. The second body of scholarship engages the literature on independent Ukrainian leftist history, pioneered in English primarily by Myroslav Shkandrij. Through Shkandrij’s reconstruction of the credos of the Ukrainian Communist Party and the native Ukrainian Borotbists, an alternative context for reading and understanding Roslavets’s political positions, including those expressed in his “On Pseudo-Proletarian Music,” emerges. Challenging both imperial narratives and reactionary counter-narratives, this paper will consider Roslavets’s importance to Ukrainian musical and cultural history by confronting the complexities of his biography and accepting the complexities created by the colonization of Ukrainian culture in the early Soviet period.

Inessa Bazayev

(Louisiana State University, USA)

“Censoring Contemporary Music: Soviet Writings on Prokofiev’s Music”

“Tonal and diatonic music offer many more possibilities than atonal and chromatic music” (Prokofiev 1948). These words are taken from the now iconic apology letter, in which the recently denounced Sergei Prokofiev pleads with authorities for forgiveness for being a so-called “formalist” composer. The letter addresses a grand ceremony at the Kremlin that took place on 10 February 1948, in which Prokofiev was going to be promoted to the prestigious status of People’s Artist [*narodniy artist*] of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The event, however, took a strange turn and, for perhaps inexplicable reasons, “the regime almost simultaneously lauded and condemned [Prokofiev], branding him and Shostakovich—who attended the same ceremony—both a People’s Artist and anti-People Formalist” (Morrison 2009). My talk contextualizes Prokofiev’s quote within Soviet writings, especially by renowned Soviet theorists, who often use familiar, tonal language to conceal Prokofiev’s musical language that does not easily fit into a tonal framework. I argue that this was done in an effort to protect and save contemporary Soviet music by these scholars. I provide an overview of Soviet writings (Berkov 1958, 1962; Kholopov 1961, 1967; and Skoryk 1972) that have not been previously translated into the English language to show how their work—especially that of Kholopov’s twelve-tone tonality [*dvedtistupennaya tonalnost*]—finds a unique way to champion and codify contemporary music that enabled them to use tonal terminology to conceal Prokofiev’s creativity within Soviet censorship.

Blanka Bogunović and Nikola Dedić

(Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

“Creative and Professional Constraints in the Context of Socio-Political Shifts: Composer Miroslav ‘Miša’ Savić”

This interdisciplinary study focuses on the minimalist composer Miroslav “Miša” Savić, who played a significant role in the emerging avant-garde movement within the specific framework of the intersecting social, political, and cultural systems during socialism in Yugoslavia (1975–1995). We follow his creative and professional development during two challenging decades (1991–2010). During

this period, the former Yugoslav societies underwent a dramatic transformation—not only the disintegration of the common state but also a shift from a socialist to a capitalist social order. This restructuring was accompanied by extreme nationalism, wars, and ultimately, a transformation of property relations. We aim to (1) learn more about the impact of the demanding period bearing new socio-political adversities on the artistic life of Miroslav “Miša” Savić, and (2) compare its consequences with those of the previous socialist period. We conducted a qualitative research study based on semi-structured interviews. Results highlighted general lines of withdrawal, daily existential mimicry, and authentic, divergent development shaped by the extraordinary context. The focus of Savić’s creative activity turned toward relative hermetic work in solitude—on creation “between four walls” and/or collaboration with a small number of like-minded people. Unlike during the previous decades, Savić was unable to integrate his work into a broader artistic setting and into non-functional cultural institutions. We may conclude that the socio-political milieu and the limitations it imposed shaped not only his everyday life and profession but also the path of the creative process. He sought new identities within new barriers, experiencing art creation as a kind of “escape hatch” from reality. In this way, the environmental constraints became an incentive to form new connections and broaden the threshold of his own possibilities. So, creating art became a path to communication, and vice versa.

Allison Brooks-Conrad

(Haverford College, Pennsylvania / University of Delaware, USA)

“The ‘Last Soviet Generation’: Nino Davadze, Kaisa Ling, and Musical Representations of Soviet Legacies in 21st-Century Georgia and Estonia”

In an oral history interview in March 2023, as anti-Russian protests rocked the center of Tbilisi, Georgian composer Nino Davadze described herself as a member of the “last Soviet generation.” However, Davadze was born in 1991, as the USSR fell. She explained how she grew up in a world defined by the legacy of the USSR’s policies and cultural norms, especially those shaping women’s roles in Soviet society. In her view, patriarchal Soviet attitudes and policies shaped her life in an independent Georgia that was, in reality, never truly independent of Soviet influence. In this paper, I take seriously Davadze’s provocation to consider her and her peers as members of the “last Soviet Generation” through an analysis of her electroacoustic composition, *The Geometry of Soviet Women*. I place Davadze’s composition in conversation with contemporary Estonian composer Kaisa Ling’s composition, the vaudeville blues-inspired *The Feminist’s Handbook for Eastern Europe*. Through musical analysis and oral history interviews, I examine these artists and their compositions to trace the legacy of Soviet feminism and its Georgian and Estonian iterations to the present, while also considering the role historical memory plays in their different musical representations of the Soviet past. Furthermore, I argue that Davadze and Ling differently understand the Soviet legacy from which they compose and explain how the “Soviet” moniker performs distinct ideological work for both of them in their respective compositions. In both Ling’s and Davadze’s compositions, the artists complicate the usual periodization of a Soviet and post-Soviet binary that hinges on the events of 1991. Instead, Davadze’s *Geometry* provides a retelling of history in which the Soviet era has not yet ended, while Ling offers a musical reflection in *Handbook* on the ways the “post-Soviet” label is rendered inconsequential by the continuities that persist between previous generations and the present day.

Nathan Cobb

(Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA)

“Finland and Her Neighbors’: From Neutrality to Nationalism at the 1992 Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival”

In the sweltering summer of 1992, the small town of Kuhmo, Finland, nearly quadrupled in size as 36,000 people arrived for the 23rd annual Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival. The festival was organized this year around the theme of “Finland and Her Neighbors,” and it accordingly featured numerous performers, composers, and musical works from the bordering countries of Norway and Russia. In this paper, I draw on materials from the Kuhmo Festival’s archives to show how event organizers recognized the shifting position of post-Soviet Finland with regard to “geography, politics, the idea of nationalism, and the relationship with Europe” (Korhonen 1992) and sought to disentangle Finnish cultural identity from Russia and the Nordic countries. This effort—pursued with strategic festival brochures, programming and commissioning decisions, and practitioner engagement—takes on a decolonial significance in light of Finland’s historical subjugation to Sweden (1323–1809) and Russia (1809–1917), and its coerced neutrality during the Cold War. As I suggest in this paper, the 1992 Kuhmo Festival thus paralleled Finland’s contemporary maneuvering on the global stage, as President Mauno Koivisto’s administration sought to consolidate diplomatic ties with Western Europe following an extended period of official Cold War neutrality. By taking the Kuhmo Festival as a microcosm of Finland’s transforming foreign policy, this paper provides insight into a precarious time in the country’s history, when it was struggling to adapt to the economic and political aftereffects of the collapse of the USSR and seeking to define its national identity as a wholly independent state in the newly post-Soviet landscape.

Ya'qub Yonas N. El-Khaled

(University of Music and Theatre Munich, Germany)

“GDR, Instrument Making, FRG: Markneukirchen before and after 1990”

With the fall of East-German Communism and reunification on 3 October 1990, Markneukirchen, a small town in the Vogtland region of Saxony, became part of the Federal Republic of Germany. Markneukirchen has a long tradition in musical instrument making of more than 300 years and remains home to over 100 instrument-making companies employing more than 1,000 people, despite a population of only around 7,000. While instrument making has been a constant throughout the town’s history, its economic conditions have changed significantly over time. After the first violin and lute makers settled there in the seventeenth century, a flourishing accessories and instrument-making industry emerged in the nineteenth century, making Markneukirchen one of the wealthiest towns in Saxony around 1900. As a result of the two World Wars and the town’s incorporation into the socialist GDR, its economic situation changed fundamentally. Today, like much of the former GDR, Markneukirchen is considered part of Germany’s structurally weak regions, and musical instrument making continues to be shaped by the long-term effects of GDR economic and trade policies and by the (negative) image associated with its products. This paper presents life histories of individuals from Markneukirchen belonging to different generations and their perspectives on fundamental political change, conflict, and post-communist challenges after 1990. What they all share is active participation in local musical life, both past and present. The oldest individuals experienced the collapse of the GDR during their professional lives and lived through the transition between political systems. The

middle-aged generation completed schooling and vocational training in the GDR but had to adapt to life in the Federal Republic as young adults, while the youngest were born in the FRG. The paper thus presents East German perspectives on personal and local history, as narrated to a “Wessi” who moved to the region.

Gvantsa Ghvinjilia

(Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Tbilisi, Georgia)

“Decolonizing Georgian Music History: Georgian Music of Antiquity in Post-Soviet Musicological Discourse”

After the collapse of the USSR, Georgia articulated its own geopolitical mission, initiating a process of cultural decolonization linked to European integration. During the Soviet period, Georgian music was studied as a local phenomenon within a rigid center-periphery framework. Consequently, international research on Georgian music expanded after the 2000s, when archival access enabled the study of previously taboo fields, including Georgian music of antiquity, medieval polyphony, the modernist art of the First Republic, and the reassessment of Soviet musical heritage. The presentation focuses on a single case study: How post-Soviet Georgian musicology has approached Georgian music of antiquity—foundational to national musical thinking—long constrained by ideological taboo. This taboo stemmed, first, from Russian imperial ideology, for which acknowledging the colonization of a culture older than its own was politically inconvenient and undermined the narrative of a supposed “civilizing mission.” Second, Georgia’s centuries-long engagement with ancient Greek and Roman culture produced a rich cultural synthesis that revealed continuous connections with the Classical world since antiquity—connections that have long underpinned Georgia’s aspiration toward European cultural and political integration. Postcolonial interdisciplinary research, crucial for identifying Georgia’s European cultural belonging, demonstrates that ancient Greek and later Roman presence positioned Georgia as a cultural crossroads, where long-term exchange profoundly shaped ritual practices, theatrical traditions, and choral forms. This historical process decisively oriented Georgia toward European cultural values, later reinforced by medieval polyphony, contacts with Catholic missionaries, and close ties with Byzantine culture. Within this context, Georgian musicology has examined why post-Soviet Georgia—unlike some Caucasian and Central Asian former Soviet republics—did not hesitate in its cultural and geopolitical orientation. Long-standing historical and cultural connections sustained a strong sense of European belonging, enabling a reassessment of Georgian art music within a primarily European framework and explaining its openness to European compositional techniques from the 1960s through the post-Soviet period.

Indira Anna Hajnács

(University of Szeged, Hungary / Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Leipzig, Germany)

“Sounding the Steppe: Ethnographies of Musical Heritage and Political Belonging in Contemporary Hungary”

“Come on, let’s strengthen our eastern roots” has become a recurring slogan among Hungarian musicians engaged in a distinctive folkloresque genre since the early 2010s. Táltos-drums (shamanic drum) appear on public television, throat singing is incorporated into performances, nomadic

horsemen drink from horns in music videos, and Turkish-Hungarian co-productions are increasingly common. This paper examines the political, social, and economic conditions that have enabled the reinvention and revalorization of proto-Hungarian musical traditions in contemporary Hungary. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among musicians, audiences, cultural agents, and sites of memory, the study analyzes the cultural and political dynamics surrounding the metaphor of “strengthening our eastern roots.” The phrase circulates widely in artistic and public discourse and intersects with the government’s geopolitical project of “Eastern Opening,” which frames the West as a historical colonizer. Through musical performances, narratives of heritage and belonging are reimagined and mobilized within contemporary nationalist discourse. Conceptualized through the lens of “perverse decolonization” (Mamedov 2021), the paper demonstrates how claims of decolonial self-assertion become entangled with illiberal political projects (Mihelj and Stetka 2024; Laruelle 2022) and right-wing hegemony-building (Éber 2025), transforming sound into a medium of contested memory, identity, and belonging.

Dawn Hazle

(Independent researcher, Nottingham, UK)

“Eti igry ne dla nas’: Playing Metal Music ‘Right’ in (Post-)Soviet Russia”

Heavy metal music emerged in Soviet Russia in the early to mid-1980s. As an archetypal form of resistance and subversion, it remained largely unofficial, its performers amateurs. The Soviet welfare system encouraged amateur musicians since they could focus on their music instead of having to work to survive. Bands sang in Russian as a way of localizing the music, in stark contrast to many Western countries, such as West Germany. After a brief crackdown immediately before Gorbachev’s reforms of glasnost and perestroika became widespread, metal music eventually became somewhat mainstream, able to be enjoyed via TV and radio, and records were produced by the state record company. That all changed in 1991, when hypercapitalism forced bandmembers to work more and play less, if at all. Many bands simply disappeared, unable to keep up with inflated rent and food prices; some would later reform as Russia’s economy stabilized. Bands began to sing in English to try and gain some traction outside of Russia and the former Soviet states, but metal’s popularity had waned in the West. The Russian metal scene almost ceased to exist, but the bands that survived really thrived. In this paper, I establish the reasons behind the rise and fall of Russian metal, from its socialist emergence to capitalist near-death, and why the bands that made it into the mid-1990s were so successful among wider audiences. I explore the specific Russian cultural influences that made melodic metal chime with Russian audiences, and how similar these bands are to some of the most successful Western Anglophone bands. This paper also investigates the particular features of Russian metal, which made it appeal to Russian audiences but failed to appeal to audiences outside of the Russian-speaking world, despite the similarities to Western music.

Kateryna Ielysieieva

(Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

“Bulgarian Folk Music: From Socialist Standardization to Post-Socialist Transnational Circulation”

This paper examines the transnational circulation of Bulgarian musical folklore from the socialist to the post-socialist period, using the case of the ensemble Pirin. During the socialist era, folklore was

institutionalized as a tool for nation-building, cultural policy, and ideological communication, with state ensembles standardizing repertoire, choreography, and visual presentation to convey a cohesive national identity. Despite this highly regulated framework, ensembles maintained artistic vitality and developed professional systems that enabled the preservation and stylization of regional traditions. The fall of socialism in the 1990s introduced a new context: post-socialist societies faced nation-building challenges, global cultural flows, and the rise of international media. Folklore ensembles like Pirin navigated these transformations by sustaining their institutional structures while adapting to global audiences, festival circuits, and media dissemination. This dual dynamic—on the one hand, reinforcing national and regional identity, and on the other, participating in transnational circulation—demonstrates the resilience of institutionalized folklore. The study emphasizes how musical folklore functions simultaneously as a marker of cultural identity and as a flexible resource for creative and performative adaptation in new socio-political and economic contexts. Ensemble Pirin exemplifies how standardized repertoire and professionalized artistic practices established under socialism became platforms for post-socialist innovation, enabling collaborations, recordings, and performances that engage both local and global audiences. By tracing these developments, the paper highlights the interplay between national consolidation and transnational circulation, showing that institutionalized folklore can survive political transitions while remaining relevant and dynamic.

Jelena Janković-Beguš

(Independent researcher, Belgrade, Serbia)

“*Istorija Vizantije* [The History of Byzantium] by Miloš Petrović: Searching for the (Trans)national Music Identity”

In this article, I explore the significant turning point in the creative opus of the Serbian composer, pianist, harpsichordist, and author Miloš Petrović (1952–2010) that occurred at the onset of the turbulent last decade of the twentieth century in Yugoslavia. An artist whose works, at his own admission, “occupy stylistically distant spaces,” Petrović began his activity as a composer during the 1970s as a member of the “New Generation” of Serbian avant-garde artists, gathered around the Students Cultural Center in Belgrade, at the same time commencing his prolific activity as a jazz musician, and even dabbling in rock music during the 1980s. While his early “cosmopolitan” opus is characterized by an individual use of certain elements of the European postwar avant-garde techniques and achievements of the American experimental tradition, in 1990 Petrović made a shift toward the reimagination of the (non-existent) Serbian music history, embodied in the creation of his “alter ego” Mihailo iz Peći [Michael from Peć]. His “cult” work *Prva svita za klavir Mibaila iz Peći* [First suite for harpsichord by Michael from Peć], premiered in October 1990, and subsequent solo piano album *Istorija Vizantije* [The history of Byzantium] (Sorabia Disc, 1991) launched this new stage of his professional music career, in which he blended his experiences as a classical/Baroque and jazz pianist and improviser with quasi-folkloric inflections to create a unique “soundverse.” His largely improvised works of ethno jazz and ethno Baroque—for which he later coined an encompassing term, “New Balkan Ethno Classic Style”—are immortalized on his albums and as partly indeterministic music scores, and they are also accompanied by several literary works (two novels and a collection of short stories), which create a fascinating fictional universe of Serbian “lost” music tradition. The guiding questions of this research concern the construction of an artistic identity on the borderlines of the global and local, transcultural and national, and nomadic and deeply rooted music traditions, and the exploration of the reasons behind this artistic “reinvention,” which has remained Petrović’s lasting contribution to Serbian contemporary music at the turn of the millennium.

Reinis Jaunais and Kaspars Zellis

(University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia)

“Latvian Soviet-era Popular Music in the Memories of its Performers”

One of the central issues of public discussion in post-Soviet Latvia is the assessment of the national cultural heritage created during the Soviet era. This paper examines how the Soviet period is remembered and interpreted by performers and authors of popular music today. Collective memory theorist Jan Assmann wrote that “music is itself an art of memory; it requires memory to be perceived, enjoyed, and understood; it creates and activates the memory of the imagined listener” (2010). Holocaust music researcher Shirley Gilbert acknowledges that music is not only a historical subject, but also a bridge that can serve to transmit memories (2005). In our interviews, the opinions expressed by musicians about the studied period tend to differ drastically. Some describe the so-called tariffication concerts (an obligatory annual concert for all so-called vocal instrumental ensembles in Latvian USSR to qualify for performing publicly; they played in front of a committee that consisted of professional musicians and Soviet party representatives) as an oppressive instrument of censorship, others—as “get-togethers” with like-minded people. Some even say that tariffication concerts should be reintroduced today to raise the quality of young people’s musicianship. Some musicians remember the period of the USSR occupation as a gloomy period with limited opportunities for creative self-expression, while others emphasize that the musician profession was well respected in society, and, if it entered the right circle, it was a well-paid job. Assuming that Soviet-era “light music” (pop, rock) is a carrier of memory, the paper asks: What are the tactics of this memory and how does it fit into the framework of contemporary collective memory? Does communicative memory find confirmation in archival memory?

Magdalini Kalopana

(National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

“1991 as a Milestone in Athenian Musical Life: Intersections of Scholarship and Performance”

The year 1991 marks a pivotal moment in Athenian musical life, symbolizing both continuity and transformation. Two landmark developments—the establishment of the Department of Music Studies at the University of Athens and the inauguration of the Athens Concert Hall—represent intersecting trajectories of scholarly advancement and artistic excellence. Together, they embody a dual commitment: the institutionalization of musicology and advanced musical education, encompassing theory, research, and practice, and the long-term cultivation of high-level artistic programming within a space designed to meet ultra-modern standards. This presentation examines the interaction between these two institutions and their connection with the broader musical ecosystem of Athens. It addresses critical questions: How did these new centers of musical life communicate with one another? To what extent did they engage with pre-existing Athenian musical institutions? How did their influence radiate beyond the capital, and in what ways did they participate in international musical networks across Europe and the world? Furthermore, it considers the impact of the fall of communism in 1991 on these developments and on the evolving musical landscape in Athens. Focusing on 1991 and the years that followed, the study highlights the complex interactions that shaped Athenian musical life at both local and global levels, particularly in the spheres of institutional scholarship and performance.

Nikola Komatović

(Independent researcher associate, Belgrade, Serbia)

“Somebody That I Used to Know: Interruption and Gradual Re-establishment of the Foreign Pop Music Concert Scene in Post-1991 Serbia”

In addition to having one of the most developed domestic pop-rock scenes in Europe, Socialist Yugoslavia gradually became a destination of choice for nearly all major jazz, pop, and rock acts worldwide. From the cautious arrivals of Louis Armstrong and The Platters in the 1960s, through Paul McCartney and Wings and Queen performing in Zagreb in the 1970s, to a triumphant finale with Tina Turner playing in Belgrade at the height of her popularity in 1990, it seemed that Yugoslavia was on the verge of becoming a major hotspot for international music stars. As is well established, the bloody breakup of SFRY between 1991 and 1995 led to a complete isolation of most of Yugoslavia, with Serbia being entirely ousted from the international community. However, only days after the UN embargo was lifted, some of the major acts of the 1990s (such as The Prodigy) performed in Belgrade, which came as a complete surprise to the domestic public. While the Serbian capital hosted several other major musicians in the following years, it was not until the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in 2000 that the substantial re-establishment of the foreign pop music concert scene became possible. This paper aims to analyze Serbia’s transformation from a shunned territory to a desirable European destination for international pop music acts. I also seek to determine whether the socialist Yugoslavia or the post-breakup democratic and capitalist states were more likely to attract foreign musicians.

Jānis Kudiņš

(Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Riga, Latvia)

“Defining Aesthetic Landmarks in Latvian Art Music after 1991: Local Experience of Post-Occupation, Post-Soviet, and Bygone Postmodernism”

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, allowing for the final restoration of independence for the Baltic states, including Latvia, and marking the beginning of the transition from the Soviet totalitarian socialist system. However, cultural decolonization from the long-standing systemic dependencies of the former totalitarian superpower seems not yet to have been fully completed, at least in Latvia. For instance, in Latvian art music, paradoxically, the locally peculiar postmodernist neoromanticism that flourished in the 1970s as a compromise between the requirements of the Soviet occupation regime’s socialist realism dogmas and the desire to create a new aesthetic paradigm, including (moderate) modernist experience and symbolizing national cultural values, has still not lost its relevance. Since the 1990s, this local stylistic paradigm has, in some cases, acquired and maintained the status of an internationally recognizable brand, for example, in the music of Pēteris Vasks (b. 1946). At the same time, at the end of the postmodern era in the 2000s, the first historically broad representation of the (post-)avant-garde was fixed in Latvian art music. In turn, later, this trend partly transformed into stylistically new forms of neoromantic expressiveness. Thus, an interesting dialectical interaction of two streams (“old” and “new” neoromanticism) was born, reflecting a new, perhaps metamodernist (Vermeulen and Akker 2010) glocalization process in current Latvian art music. How can the significant aesthetic landmarks and characteristic features of the local style in Latvian art music be defined in this process of changing past and present cultural contexts? The analysis of these questions will be the focus of this paper.

Olha Kushniruk

(University of Cambridge, Faculty of Music, Cambridge, UK)

“The Impact of the Fall of Communism on Ukrainian Music”

The fall of communism at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s marked a fundamental turning point for Ukrainian academic music. During the Soviet period, this sphere was tightly controlled by ideological regulations, particularly the doctrine of socialist realism, which limited artistic freedom, stylistic diversity, and thematic depth. After the collapse of the communist system, Ukrainian composers gained freedom from ideological constraints. This allowed them to explore philosophical, existential, tragic, and religious themes that had previously been censored or discouraged. The disappearance of political pressure fostered a pluralism of artistic approaches and individual creative voices. An important consequence of this period was the restoration of suppressed cultural heritage. Works by composers who had been marginalized, repressed, or ideologically criticized—such as Borys Lyatoshynsky and Vasyl Barvinsky—returned to concert programs, academic curricula, and scholarly discourse. This process contributed to the reconstruction of a continuous national musical history. The opening of borders enabled Ukrainian academic music to re-enter the European cultural space. Composers began to actively engage with contemporary compositional techniques, including serialism, sonorism, aleatorics, minimalism, and electroacoustic music. As a result, Ukrainian music moved away from a single “official” aesthetic toward stylistic diversity and experimentation. Another significant development was the rethinking of national identity. Rather than superficial folklorism, composers adopted a deeper conceptual engagement with Ukrainian musical traditions, historical memory, and cultural symbolism. Folk and sacred elements were integrated into modern musical language as tools of reflection rather than decoration. The revival of sacred music became especially prominent. With the restoration of religious freedom, composers created liturgies, requiems, and sacred choral works, leading to a renaissance of choral culture as a carrier of spiritual and national meaning. Despite economic challenges and reduced state support, new festivals, independent initiatives, and international collaborations emerged, facilitating Ukraine’s integration into the global academic music scene.

Chaeyoung Lee

(Korea Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA)

“Jazz Ongheya”: Mediated Reception of Jazz in North Korea’s ‘National Music’”

This paper examines the Ŭnhasu Orchestra’s 2010 jazz-styled rendition of the farmers’ folk song “Ongheya”—popularized online in 2019 as “North Korean Jazz”—to analyze how North Korea selectively adopts foreign, particularly American, musical elements within a state-directed aesthetic. Drawing on close listening and contextual analysis of North Korean cultural policy within the global musical Cold War, I ask how “Jazz Ongheya” became possible on a stage that once condemned jazz as bourgeois “decadent capitalism” and proscribed instrumental music lacking ideological text. I argue that the performance’s acceptability rests on three interrelated strategies: (1) grounding the arrangement in an ideologically safe folk tune that celebrates labor; (2) subordinating foreign sonorities to nationalist priorities—evident in the layering of swing over chajinmori rhythmic cycles and the reliance on pentatonic materials; and (3) transforming the signifiers of jazz—improvisation, groove, and big-band timbres—into a tightly choreographed, collectivist display through synchronized gestures and pre-planned solos. Furthermore, I introduce the term tchae-zz (derived from the North

Korean pronunciation of “jazz”) to designate undesirable foreign music from the North Korean state’s perspective, distinguishing it from jazz as it is globally understood. “Jazz Ongheya” shows how the regime reinterprets the latter while rejecting the former, producing a domesticated, ideology-oriented hybridity. Placed within Cold War cultural politics, this case parallels other socialist contexts where jazz oscillated between prohibition and instrumentalization. More broadly, it reveals how sound functions as a site where ideology and aesthetics intersect, encapsulating the paradox of North Korea’s musical modernity—simultaneously open to and defensive against global influence.

Tatjana Marković

(Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria)

“Cultural Policy and Musical Life in Serbia in the ‘Year of Culture’ (1995) and Its Operatic Reflection”

This paper examines cultural policy initiatives in Serbia during 1995, officially designated as the “Year of Culture,” set against the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the fall of communism, and the Milošević regime. Against the backdrop of war, international sanctions, the Srebrenica genocide, hyperinflation, and mass brain drain, Minister of Culture (1994–1998) Nada Popović-Perišić launched the campaign “*Lepše je sa kulturom*” [It’s nicer with culture]. She had completed her undergraduate studies in Belgrade and her doctorate in Zagreb, and she held a French Government scholarship at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, where she studied under Roland Barthes. Her initiative aimed to counter the dominance of turbo-folk—a genre closely associated with nationalist politics and regime-supported figures—and to promote art music and “high culture” beyond Belgrade’s elite circles. The campaign employed extensive advertising through videos, posters, and media appearances featuring the Lepenski Vir figurine as its emblem, organized concert tours to provincial towns, and revived neglected cultural institutions. Despite significant state investment and media mobilization, the campaign ultimately failed owing to its superficial approach, the absence of meaningful economic and political reform, and the regime’s continued support for turbo-folk on private television stations. The “Year of Culture” represented a struggle between competing Serbian identities and exposed the limitations of cultural policy divorced from substantive political change. This period of transition and moral decline was later depicted in the opera *Zemlja sreće* [The land of happiness] (1997) by Vladimir Pejaković, with a libretto by Dušanka Stojanović. The period ended with the 78-day NATO bombing of Yugoslavia—an operation named “Merciful Angel.”

Joevan de Mattos Caitano

(Musikwissenschaftliches Seminar Detmold, Paderborn, Germany)

“Reimagining Bulgarian New Music through Darmstadt: Cultural Diplomacy, Mobility, and Post-Communist Reintegration”

This paper examines the historical, institutional, and aesthetic connections between the Darmstädter Ferienkurse and Bulgaria from the early Cold War to the post-1991 period of political transformation. It reconstructs a transnational network linking the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (IMD) with Bulgarian cultural and academic institutions, including the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Union of Bulgarian Composers. Drawing on extensive primary materials preserved in the IMD Archiv—such as unpublished correspondence, registration forms, program notes, and

concert photographs—together with interviews and specialized literature, the study critically reassesses canonical narratives of center–periphery relations in European new music. Particular attention is devoted to Bulgarian composers and performers who engaged with Darmstadt across different ideological moments, including Konstantin Iliev, Iwan Spassov, Vasil Kazandjiev, Nikolai Badinski, Bojidar Spassov, Milena Valcheva, Valentin Valchev, Tatiana Koleva, and Krassimir Sterev. Their trajectories reveal diverse modes of participation, ranging from Cold War cultural diplomacy and controlled artistic mobility to post-communist reintegration into Western European networks of contemporary music creation, performance, and pedagogy. The fall of communism represents not merely a chronological milestone but a profound epistemic shift that transformed the symbolic meaning of transnational circulation. Rather than confirming a linear narrative of “liberation” from ideological constraints, the paper demonstrates how the post-1991 context generated new challenges—including precarity, institutional reconfiguration, and shifting hierarchies of artistic legitimacy—while simultaneously enabling new forms of belonging within European musical modernity. By juxtaposing archival traces with personal testimonies, the study conceptualizes the Darmstädter Ferienkurse not only as a Western avant-garde stronghold but also as a dynamic intercultural laboratory in which Bulgarian musicians negotiated aesthetic identity, institutional alignment, and the evolving politics of post-socialist Europe.

Claudia Mayr-Veselinović

(Technical University of Leoben, Leoben, Austria)

“Ruptured Identities: Continuity and Change in the Musical Construction of Gender after the Fall of Yugoslav Socialism”

The collapse of socialist Yugoslavia and the subsequent political, economic, and cultural transformations after 1991 profoundly reshaped the conditions under which popular music was produced, circulated, and interpreted. This paper examines how representations of gender identity and homosexuality in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav popular music both anticipated and responded to the systemic rupture associated with the fall of communism. Methodologically, this study employs a diachronic comparative analysis of two distinct periods: the “late socialist” era (1980–1990) and the “transitional/post-socialist” era (1991–2001). Data collection involves a purposive sampling of seminal pop and rock compositions, selected for their lyrical and performative focus on gender non-conformity. Using qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis, the paper categorizes strategies of “attribution,” questioning how sexual identities are assigned by society, and “self-attribution,” questioning how artists claim these identities within shifting ideological frameworks. During the 1970s and 1980s, Yugoslav popular music operated within a comparatively liberal socialist context. While heteronormativity remained dominant, artists utilized the “grey zones” of socialist censorship to address homosexuality indirectly through irony, subcultural coding, or lyrical ambiguity. Following 1991, the disintegration of the common cultural space and the rise of ethno-nationalism redefined these boundaries. The analysis highlights how the shift toward a market-driven media landscape, alongside the aggressive “hyper-masculinity” of the war years, altered the framing of these themes. This transition enabled more explicit, camp, or provocative forms of self-attribution, which challenged the new nationalist heteronormativity. By tracing these continuities and ruptures, the study argues that popular music served as a sensitive indicator of changing power relations, highlighting its role as both a mirror and an agent of post-socialist cultural transformation.

Ivana Medić

(Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)

“Goran Kapetanović and the Art of Disintegration”

Goran Kapetanović (1969–2014) was one of the most authentic artistic figures to emerge from the ruins of the Yugoslav cultural space following the events of 1991. Graduating in composition from the class of Zoran Erić (Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade) during a period of total social and ideological decomposition, Kapetanović became a key chronicler of post-communist chaos through his small yet radical body of work. This paper analyzes his music as a direct aesthetic response to the trauma of the country’s disintegration, international sanctions, hyperinflation, and the loss of the former value system. Kapetanović’s work is examined through the lens of his introduction of a new sensibility that operated through elements of sardonic irony, parody, paroxysm, and ludic nihilism. The paper focuses on his orchestral composition, *Speed* (1996), which articulates accelerated historical time and the response of a generation trapped in isolation. Furthermore, his award-winning piece, *A Brief Account of the Inexorable and Tragic Course of Destiny Which Led the Little Mermaid’s Fragile Being into Total Disaster*, is interpreted as a metaphor for the fragility of the individual and high culture amid the brutal circumstances of transition and war. Special significance is given to Kapetanović’s unique educational background, which combined mathematics and music, enabling him to construct “order within disorder” and articulate the complexity of post-1991 reality without resorting to escapism. Even his sudden withdrawal from musical life in the late 1990s, his transition into literary translation, and his tragically premature demise can be interpreted as a paradigm for the fate of the era’s most gifted artists, whose creative continuity was brutally severed by historical rupture. Kapetanović’s small but striking compositional output remains a testament to aesthetic resistance in the decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the socialist states.

Lauma Mellena-Bartkevica

(Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Riga, Latvia)

“Opera Without a Home: Interim Transitions in Latvia, 1991–1995”

This paper examines the early 1990s as a formative period of rupture and adaptation in Latvian musical theatre, focusing on opera-related processes that reshaped artistic careers in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR. Between 1991 and 1995, the Latvian National Opera—symbolically central to national culture—was closed for extensive reconstruction, forcing the company to operate without a permanent institutional base. This displacement coincided with economic instability, shifting cultural policies, and the opening of international mobility, profoundly affecting musicians’ professional trajectories. Up to the present day, this is an under-researched topic. Drawing on archival sources, press materials, a few existing publications, and interviews with singers, conductors, and administrators, the paper explores how this period functioned simultaneously as a moment of precarity and opportunity. For some opera artists, the loss of institutional stability resulted in interrupted careers, financial insecurity, and professional marginalization. For others, increased exposure through international career development facilitated artistic recognition abroad and long-term professional advancement. These divergent outcomes reveal how post-communist transition reconfigured professional hierarchies, labor conditions, and concepts of artistic success. Methodologically, the paper aims to address the challenges of researching a recent past characterized by fragmentary documentation and selective memory. It critically engages with inherited Soviet-era musicological

narratives and draws on debates surrounding the decolonization of knowledge to reassess dominant interpretations of continuity, achievement, and “success” in Latvian opera history. By situating Latvian opera within broader post-1991 cultural reordering, the paper argues that institutional displacement and interim modes of operation became defining conditions shaping artistic mobility, professional differentiation, and cultural memory in post-communist musical theatre.

Lidiya Melnyk

(Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, Ukraine)

“Sovietization as Colonization: A Striking Case of Western Ukraine”

The rapid advance of Soviet troops into Western Ukraine in September 1939, precipitated by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, was accompanied by an equally swift process of cultural colonization, more precisely, the Sovietization of territories lacking any prior affiliation with Russian or Soviet cultural traditions. From a contemporary perspective, this historical situation may be interpreted as a kind of “laboratory” of cultural colonization, in which mechanisms of ideological and cultural control were implemented with exceptional speed and severity. This paper aims to examine the principal strategies employed in the Sovietization of musical culture in Western Ukraine. These strategies included a comprehensive language policy, the falsification of historical narratives in order to legitimize imperial domination and marginalize indigenous cultural traditions, and cultural unification and ideological standardization. In the art music scene, specific strategies also included targeted interventions in the repertoire policies of musical institutions, the instrumentalization of the media, and reforms in the educational sphere, particularly through the systematic revision of textbooks. Prominent figures of the Western Ukrainian musical milieu, such as Stanislav Liudkevych and Vasyl Barvinsky, among others, were unable to accept these imposed transformations and sought, in various ways, to resist the regime. Despite the intensity of Soviet cultural policy and the comparatively limited duration of Soviet rule in Western Ukraine (approximately fifty years), the processes of decolonization initiated after 1991 cannot be regarded as fully successful. A key reason was the long legacy of cultural domination during the rule of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, which promoted Russification and marginalized the Ukrainian language and culture. In the early years of independence, political elites often pursued cautious cultural policies to avoid internal social tensions. Economic crises of the 1990s also limited state support for cultural development. Furthermore, Russian media and cultural products remained highly influential. More active decolonization policies intensified after 2014.

Ivana Miladinović Prica

(Faculty of Music of the University of Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)

“Musical Landscape in Flux: The Founding of the International Review of Composers Amidst Yugoslav Disintegration”

At the dawn of the 1990s, the Union of Yugoslav Composers’ Organizations (SOKOJ) projected an ambitious vision: hosting the ISCM World Music Days in 1993. This initiative intended to showcase Yugoslavia’s unique geopolitical position as a site for the synthesis of Eastern and Western European musical traditions. However, the violent dissolution of the state and the ensuing wars abruptly terminated these plans. SOKOJ, which had long served as an institutional microcosm of the Yugoslav federation, held its final session with all constituent republics in February 1991. The subsequent

dissociation of the republic associations symbolized the disappearance of the Yugoslav artistic space and the de(con)struction of the Yugoslav identity. Despite this crisis, SOKOJ supported the Composers' Association of Serbia in founding the International Review of Composers in Belgrade in 1992. Conceived as a direct replacement for the Yugoslav music festival in Opatija (Croatia), the new festival emerged as a vital necessity in a time of broken relationships. Its founders envisaged the Review as a type of symbolic public forum allowing a critical viewpoint. At the Review's first edition, all participants signed an open letter to the public, which strongly protested the ruling regime and its war policy. Informed by archival materials, this paper demonstrates how these musical institutions functioned as platforms for articulating dissent, positioning contemporary music as a site of ethical and political resistance within a society burdened by war and identity crisis.

Agita Misāne and Jānis Daugavietis

(Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, Rīga, Latvia)

“Religion, Nationalism and Aesthetics: What is ‘Pagan’ about the Latvian Pagan Metal Band Skyforger?”

Skyforger, formed in Riga in the mid-1990s and still active, is a recognized and respected pagan/folk metal band on the global scene. Over time, the band has shifted toward a more traditional heavy metal sound, but in terms of lyrics and image, they have retained two principal themes present already in their demo album *Semigalls' Warchant* (1997), namely, Baltic pre-Christian mythology and warfare, often delving into heroic resistance of the Baltic tribes against foreign intruders. The choice of themes can be explained by the zeitgeist of the 1990s—a search for a new identity among urban alternative/underground youth, which would be an antithesis both to the earlier Sovietization (and Russification) policy and the new pressures of globalization. As it was believed that the core of ethnic Latvian identity was found in folk songs and mythology, Skyforger has always used them in their repertoire (both lyrics and melodies), gaining broad popularity and a high public profile. However, the band members are not practicing pagans. They can be considered a significant phenomenon that can help understand the transformations of post-Soviet Latvian identities, both national and religious. This paper, based on interviews with bands' current and former members, and analyses of song lyrics, will discuss Skyforger's attitude to religion and mythological imaginary, asking “How ‘pagan’ is this case of pagan/folk metal?”

Jelena Novak

(CESEM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal)

“Soundtracking the Fall: Autotheory of Becoming a Musicologist after the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”

During my lifetime, communism fell when my grandfather, the Yugoslav People's Army colonel Vlastimir Stojanović, the bearer of many medals, including three for bravery in his unwavering fight against fascism, one day placed a photograph of Philip Glass, hands on his forehead, into the frame where a picture of Marshal Josip Broz Tito had previously been standing for years. With that unexpected curatorial gesture, he paid tribute to the enthusiasm with which I was exploring Glass's music and the music of other minimalist composers. Never have I seen my grandfather allow anything to be elevated to the rank of the Marshal, who embodied his most sincere communist convictions. I

was delighted, even though I didn't yet understand that my private communism had, in that moment, been replaced by another ideology. Beginning my musicology studies in Belgrade in 1993, I was part of the first generation of students whose curriculum included Serbian, rather than Yugoslav, music history. In some way, this shift represented the divide left by the Fall. I was neither a witness nor a historian of the Fall in any formal sense; I simply lived through it. In my paper, I propose an autotheoretical analysis of what it meant and entailed to become a musicologist in the sociological and cultural turmoil in post-communist Serbia. Theoretical, musical, and personal moments that shaped my musicological becoming are turned into footnotes that reveal a formation born out of the disintegration of one world.

Andrea Olah

(Independent researcher, Vienna, Austria)

“The Specificity of the National Narrative in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungarian Musicology”

Examining major monographs in Hungary that have influenced historiography and music criticism since the 1950s reveals that two keywords, “close to the people” and “national,” were pivotal in shaping the narrative of these works until the 1980s. However, the national narrative formed in the wake of the Prague Decree has remained intact to this day, bearing the tradition of an anti-formalist aesthetic. This results from the superimposition of aesthetic standards, which was not resolved by a sharp paradigm shift, but rather reinterpreted in the spirit of historiography and musicology striving for continuity. Therefore, rather than from an ideological-political sense, the nature of the national narrative should be questioned in terms of its long-term detrimental effects on music-philosophy and aesthetics. In its current form, this framework hinders the rediscovery of the ontology of music as artwork and the re-entry into the tradition of modern philosophical aesthetics. The contribution demonstrates the overlap between the theories of “national” and anti-formalism and examines the historical contexts of the terms. Anti-formalism was accompanied by the ostracism of the tradition of bourgeois art philosophy and its connection to music aesthetics in Hungarian cultural circles. Nationalism tends to be somewhat provocatively linked with biologism. Detlef Gojowy associated the term with positivist predispositions, which have been applied since the early 1920s to explain models outside idealistic viewpoints. Clearly, today's musical trends require a distancing from established national narrative. This narrative should be expanded upon to include an understanding of the cultural sphere, since cultural bonds exist under the same cultural and epochal conditions.

Ian Pace

(City St George's, University of London, UK)

“The Fall of Communism in the Historiography of New Music”

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe was self-evidently a major historical and political event, but the issue of how this impacted new music composition (and performance, institutions, etc.) is complex. In this paper, I analyze a range of historical writings on music beginning at the end of the 1990s through to the present day—Whittall (1999), de la Motte-Haber (2000), Deliège (2003, 2012), Bras (2003), Cook and Pople (2004), Richard Taruskin (2005), Ross (2007), Griffiths (2010), Auner (2013), Rutherford Johnson (2017), Brodsky (2017), Perchard, Graham, Rutherford-Johnson and Rogers (2022), and Heile (2024)—to survey precisely how they conceptualize music both before and

after the fall of communism, whether they posit a significant shift at this point, and how they argue for a connection if not necessarily coincidence between political and musical developments in such a manner. Relevant to these considerations are the constructions of “Eastern European music” prior to the end of communism, and how central a role is played in the histories by the modernist traditions which were most prominent in Western Europe and North America during the Cold War period. The origins of what I call the “Cold War theory of modernism” (that modernism flourished as a direct result of the Cold War, and as such its history and relevance can be contained in this context), of which I am profoundly skeptical, are outlined briefly and critiqued. I end by suggesting some other ways in which the fall of communism might be profitably integrated into music-historical writing, which include some retrospective re-modelling of East/West divisions and assumptions that permeate earlier historical models.

Ivana Polić

(Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA)

“Stop the War in the Name of Children: Children and Nation Building Through Croatian Patriotic Music (1991–1992)”

While histories of ethnic conflicts and nationalism focus mainly on adult actors, this study seeks to shed light on the importance of children and their centrality to post-socialist nation-building through popular culture. Looking at what in Croatia is known as the War of Independence (or Homeland War), the project focuses on a particular, thus far almost completely unexplored, aspect of Croatian nation-building: the role of children in the production, dissemination, and impact of Croatian patriotic music. During the war in Croatia, musicians of all genres joined the effort of “defending the homeland through music,” and their songs and videos were incessantly broadcast on national television and radio stations. Existing studies analyzing Croatian patriotic music in this period consider it mostly from the perspective of a cultural and regional identity marker, while the interest in exploring music as a political tool has become a nascent field only in the past two decades. Although a few studies have attempted to explore depictions of male and female genders within this discourse, no studies have so far examined the role of children as an impact factor via this type of art. Through a media analysis of music production materials, this article shows that numerous patriotic songs and videos included children, whether as singers or background participants, who became actively involved in promoting the Croatian cause at home and abroad, and were therefore one of the essential agents of creating a distinctively Croatian national identity.

Heli Reimann

(Tallinn University, Estonia)

“Navigating Eventful Social Change: Adaptive Strategies of Estonian Jazz Musicians in the Early 1990s”

The Singing Revolution led to the restoration of Estonia’s independence and initiated a period of profound and rapid social change marked by the collapse of state socialism and the transition to a market economy. Drawing on Pjotr Sztompka’s theory of social change, this paper conceptualizes the early 1990s as an eventful and transformative period in which existing social structures disintegrated and new, yet uncertain, institutional frameworks emerged. In the musical field, the shift towards a

market-oriented system resulted in the breakdown of state-regulated cultural infrastructures, a decline in public financial support, and the disappearance of stable employment opportunities in restaurants, cafés, and Soviet performance circuits. Estonian jazz musicians were thus confronted with a situation of structural instability, normative uncertainty, and heightened personal risk—conditions that align with Sztompka’s notion of cultural trauma and structural chaos during periods of accelerated change. Based on oral history interviews with Estonian jazz musicians, this presentation examines the adaptive strategies through which musicians navigated these changes. The analysis highlights musicians’ active agency in navigating the transition, including the creation of new professional networks, diversification of income sources, adaptation to Western cultural markets, and redefinition of artistic and professional identities. By applying Sztompka’s processual understanding of social change, the paper demonstrates how musicians were not merely passive victims of systemic collapse but active participants in the reconstruction of social and cultural life during Estonia’s post-socialist transformation.

Christoph Schuller

(University of Music and Theatre Munich, Germany)

“Echoes of Past and Present: Ruth Schonthal’s *The Bells of Sarajevo* as a Transhistorical Reflection on the Yugoslav Wars”

The German-American composer Ruth Schonthal (1924–2006), born into a Jewish family in Hamburg, experienced firsthand redefined senses of identity and belonging, and with existential force. In the wake of the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933, which rapidly and fundamentally reordered German cultural life, Schonthal and her family were forced into exile in 1938. After several stages of flight, she ultimately settled in the New York area for the remainder of her life. Existential experiences of exile, loss of homeland, and challenges of identity are particularly evident in Schonthal’s statements as well as in her work. Set against the backdrop of major geopolitical transformations—including German reunification and the collapse of Eastern European communism—her late compositional output of the 1990s reveals increased political reflection that engages both historical memory and contemporary events. *Die Mauer (vorher und nachher)* [The Wall (before and after)] (1994), a large-scale work incorporating spoken dialogue, reflects on German division and reunification not as an exclusively affirmative celebration, but by intertwining biographical memory with skepticism toward notions of historical rupture. *The Bells of Sarajevo* (1997) for clarinet and piano responds to the Yugoslav Wars and seeks a transhistorical perspective on political violence in the twentieth century. Here, paradigm shifts that abruptly overturn established orders intersect with memories of better days and longings for peace. Schonthal’s biography and oeuvre—like those of many twentieth-century exile composers—remain relatively neglected in musicological research. Nevertheless, she articulates an interesting aesthetic position in which individual experiences of temporal relations (before/after, past/present) and political history are inextricably combined. The proposed paper provides an analysis of *The Bells of Sarajevo*, drawing on previously unexplored sources and sketch materials, and examines how an outsider’s perspective, aesthetic idealism, and moral aspiration are articulated within this work of engaged music.

Christopher Segall

(University of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA)

“Post-Soviet Hauntology and the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina”

“The time is out of joint.” In coining “hauntology” in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Jacques Derrida fixates on how the ghostly visitation in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* destabilizes the present through the unresolved trauma of the past. The failed promises and shattered ideals of Soviet communism are emblemized by post-Soviet Russia’s continued avoidance of reckoning with the auto-genocidal legacy of Joseph Stalin’s Terror. Cultural historian Alexander Etkind writes of the persistent impossibility of closure: “The living and the undead develop an uneasy friendship that needs to be noticed, articulated, and recognized.” I read Sofia Gubaidulina’s (1931–2025) compositions of the 1990s as reflecting a hauntological attitude in the post-Soviet context. Gubaidulina emigrated to Germany following the Soviet dissolution and the concomitant loss of state privilege. Building on interdisciplinary research in spectrality studies, I characterize hauntology in music through defamiliarized timbres, disintegrating quotations, and disrupted temporality. In *Meditation on the Bach Chorale “Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit”* (1993) and *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002), half-remembered quotations from J. S. Bach fail to fully materialize, conjuring ideals of a departed classical tradition that cannot be sustained. In the String Quartet No. 4 (1993), *Music for Flute, Strings, and Percussion* (1994), and *Quaternion* (1996), two groups of instruments tuned a quarter-tone apart afford distorted echoes, irreconcilable sound worlds, and liminal positioning. Hauntology, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s gloss, is “a learning to live at the seam of the past and the present.” The crisis of the USSR’s collapse and the reinscription of its citizens within a capitalist system provoked musical depictions of trauma. I complement existing work on the religious basis of Gubaidulina’s music with an interpretive frame outside her conscious intentions, reading her works as mourning losses that will never be restituted.

Nana Sharikadze

(Caucasus University, Tbilisi, Georgia)

“After the Fall, Before the Future: Georgian Art Music and the Tempo-Localities of 1991–2003”

Between 1991 and 2003, Georgia’s musical landscape existed in structural suspension, caught between imperial periphery legacies and struggles for sovereign statehood. This period embodied a paradox: while Soviet dissolution and collapsed state patronage created immediate peril, these same conditions opened precarious possibilities for cultural reorientation. Far from a linear transition toward liberal-democratic consolidation, this era functioned as a field of active negotiation where composers responded to extreme institutional fragility, shifting networks, and territorial fragmentation. Recent studies, including Biljana Milanović, Melita Milin, and Danka Lajić Mihajlović’s *Music in Postsocialism* (2020) and Rūta Stanevičiūtė and Malgorzata Janicka-Slysz’s *Music and Change in the Eastern Baltics Before and After 1989* (2022), highlight regional asymmetries, challenging Russia-centric narratives. Building on this scholarship, the paper asks how Georgia’s post-1991 condition produced prolonged suspension and how composers navigated musical production within an institutional vacuum. Drawing on Madina Tlostanova’s concept of “tempo-localities,” it frames the 1991–2003 period (leading to the Rose Revolution) not as a linear transition between stable states, but as temporal and institutional liminality where structural precarity shaped cultural production and artistic agency. The analysis examines two generational trajectories: Soviet-trained composers Giya Kancheli and Josef Bardanashvili transmuted their cultural ethos—forged amidst the challenges of the post-independence era—into the broader professional and creative spheres of the West through strategic emigration (1991; 1998). In contrast, Eka Chabashvili and Maka Virsaladze established professional identities during the first decade of independence, working without institutional or state support. Rather than

interpreting their work primarily as expressions of trauma, the paper examines compositional strategies as practices through which composers actively inhabited structural precarity. By moving beyond Russia-centric frameworks, this study demonstrates how Georgian composers asserted cultural sovereignty by transforming suspension into a form of decolonial agency. Georgia's "suspended" decade emerges as a distinct historical condition, revealing how continuity, innovation, and mobility coexisted within a precarious yet formative cultural landscape.

Maia Sigua

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"Georgian Opera in Transition: The Search for the New Identity and the Political Context of 1991"

Georgian opera developed as a major cultural expression of national identity, with musical markers predominating, while narrative elements less frequently carried symbolic weight. Soviet cultural policies imposed strict constraints on Georgian opera, leading to stagnation in both musical language and narrative, and keeping the genre confined within early nineteenth-century Italian models. Substantive changes did not occur even during the so-called "thaw" period. The paper argues that the search for a new identity in Georgian opera began in the 1980s and is connected to two interrelated factors: on the one hand, the effective marginalization of the Soviet regime in Georgia and the significant weakening of its ideological control; on the other hand, the development in the 1970s of a critical (yet sanctioned), allegorical, and self-reflexive theatrical language in dramatic theater. It was precisely this theatrical practice that penetrated opera in the following decade, making it possible to rethink the boundaries of the genre. In this context, 1991 acted as a political turning point that granted full freedom and legitimacy to ongoing aesthetic processes as well as to the development of a new identity in Georgian opera, allowing both to continue and evolve independently. Within this framework, Georgian opera began to critically engage with historical, literary, and mythological layers, serving not only as an aesthetic experiment but also as a means of constructing new forms of national identity. Examples include: Bidzina Kvernadze's *It Was the Eighth Year* (1984), which reinterprets one of the earliest works of Georgian literature through a process of desacralization; Giya Kancheli's *Music for the Living* (1989), in which a marker of national identity is manifested at the level of language; *Alexi Machavariani's Medea* (1991); and Kvernadze's *Daughter of Colchis* (1997), where interest in the mythological figure is motivated by ethnonational explorations of Medea's character and is read within the context of 1990s nationalist discourse. The paper relies on musicological and cultural analyses and concludes that the new identity of Georgian opera emerges not through the rejection of tradition, but through its critical reappraisal and sustained dialogue with the changing political and cultural context.

Natalia Spân

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"From Ideology to Identity: Romanian Children's Choral Music in the Post-communist Era"

This paper explores Romanian children's choral miniature as a musicological phenomenon situated at the intersection of political ideology, cultural memory, and educational practice, focusing on the impact of communism and its collapse on the genre's aesthetic and social functions. Emerging in the early twentieth century through the efforts of composers and educators such as Dumitru Georgescu Kiriac, children's choral repertoire was initially conceived as a vehicle for musical literacy and national

identity, drawing extensively on folk idioms, melodic clarity, and accessibility. Under the communist regime, choral music for children underwent a significant semantic shift. Its musical structures, textual themes, and institutional circulation were increasingly subordinated to state cultural policies, transforming the genre into an instrument of ideological dissemination. Concepts such as collectivism, labor, and political patriotism became embedded in repertoire and performance practice, contributing to what can be understood as a form of cultural trauma, in which artistic expression was constrained yet persistently negotiated. Despite these limitations, composers and pedagogues preserved core musical values, allowing choral works to function as repositories of post-communist memory once ideological frameworks began to dissolve. The fall of communism in 1989 initiated a process of identity reconstruction within Romanian choral culture. Freed from centralized control, children's choirs reoriented their repertoire toward stylistic plurality, intercultural exchange, and renewed engagement with both national and international traditions. Contemporary institutions such as the National Choral Association of Romania and the Cantus Mundi program exemplify this shift, redefining choral singing as a participatory and inclusive practice that fosters social cohesion and European cultural belonging. By approaching children's choral miniatures from a musicological standpoint, this study demonstrates how the collapse of communism transformed a genre once marked by ideological function into a site of cultural renegotiation, where sound, memory, and identity intersect in post-communist Europe.

Rūta Stanevičiūtė

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“Lithuanian Music after 1990: From Post-Soviet Condition to the Regime of Presentism”

The ideological tensions and political constraints of the Cold War affected all the fields of Lithuanian music culture: composition, performance, national and international dissemination, and reception. Regardless to which date of political transformations we will relate the beginning of the post-Soviet cultural transformations in Lithuania, either Perestroika (1985), or the establishment of the Lithuanian Revival Movement (“*Sąjūdis*”) (1988), or the restoration of the independent state (1990), it is not difficult to trace certain logic of political and cultural transformations common to or at least similar in the whole post-communist space. The early period from the mid-1980s until approximately the year of 1991–92 was, first of all, the time of ideological and cultural transformations. Weak institutions and a belief in supposedly natural self-regulation of culture as a symbolic body of the nation are characteristic of this period. For this reason, this period is traditionally described as a time of individual initiatives and creation of new biographies. After 1991–92, the tendency of the strengthening of institutions, a new openness to the international musical environment, coincided with both enthusiasm and trauma of otherness inspired by the transition to the European political and economic space. However, the times of change and the 1990s are becoming a remote historical epoch in Lithuanian cultural memory and tend to be de-heroized and frequently made exotic. Drawing on the scholarly debates about contemporary regimes of historicity, I discuss the transformation of Lithuanian music from post-Soviet condition to post-nationalism and omnipotent presentism (Hartog 2015). Therefore, I will examine the Lithuanian music's contribution to the articulation of (non)musical past, present, and future as references to change in individual and collective experiences.

Nevena Stanić

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“Sacred Sound at the End of the Cold War: Arvo Pärt’s *Miserere* between East and West (1989–1991)”

In 1989, Arvo Pärt visited his homeland, Estonia, for the first time since emigrating in 1980. That same year, he revealed his long-hidden score, *Calix* (1976), and incorporated it into his new work, *Miserere*. *Calix* is one of the first pieces in Pärt’s tintinnabuli style. The setting of the Dies Irae symbolically foreshadowed the composer’s exile that followed this artistic shift and the composer’s turn to Orthodox Christianity. By juxtaposing Psalm 51 with *Calix*’s Dies Irae, *Miserere* is an eschatological meditation on judgement, repentance, and hope, closing a trilogy of large-scale works composed in West Berlin alongside *Passio* (1982) and *Stabat Mater* (1985). Premiered by its dedicatees, Paul Hillier and the Hilliard Ensemble, only months before the anti-communist revolutions of 1989 and released by the Munich-based ECM label in 1991, just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, *Miserere* can be heard as a symbolic prophecy of the fall of communism and the composer’s position between East and West. In its historiographical and analytical framing, the paper links *Miserere* to *Calix* and its Soviet-era premiere, situating them within Pärt’s emigration and the music’s reuse amid the social turmoil of 1989–1991. By examining the ECM’s distinctive sound aesthetic in *Miserere*—long reverberations, digitally sculpted acoustics, and resonant silences—this paper argues that performance and recording practices are integral to the work’s meanings and reception. *Miserere* earned Pärt his second Grammy nomination in 1991, anticipating the popularity of Górecki’s Symphony No. 3 the following year, and the commodification of “holy” minimalism on its emerging global market. The conditions surrounding the creation of *Miserere* from its formation in *Calix* to its recognition, through the recording industry in the West, portray both intimate and social conditions under which sacred music operated during and after communism.

Srđan Teparić

(Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia)

“Urban Strategies of Resistance in Serbian Rock Discography of 1991”

This paper explores the transformation of the Serbian rock scene during 1991, identifying it as a pivotal turning point where music ceased to exist as a dominant cultural mainstream and transitioned into a form of spiritual and cultural guerrilla warfare. By analyzing key studio releases from this “Year Zero” of the war—ranging from the dark pacifism of Ekatarina Velika (*Dum Dum*), the minimalist noise of Disciplina Kičme (*Nova iznenađenja za nova pokolenja*), and the raw street fury of Ritam Nereda (*Nikad više*), to the escapism of Van Gogh (*Svet je moj*) and the nostalgic peace of Momčilo Bajagić (*Četiri godišnja doba*)—this study demonstrates that rock music did not fall silent in the face of rising nationalism. Two paradigmatic examples illustrate this cultural shift. Ekatarina Velika’s track “Dolce vita” from *Dum Dum* delivers a grim diagnosis of the era, seeking the “secret of defeat” [*tajna poraza*] amidst the “scent of a disintegrating time” [*vreme što se raspada*], capturing the collective anxiety of the urban elite. Simultaneously, Rambo Amadeus’s *M.P.P.K. (Smrt popa Mila Jovovića)* repurposes the traditional decasyllabic [*deseterac*] code for ironic deconstruction of epic narratives, critiquing encroaching war psychosis and media manipulation. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the paper links these sonic strategies to specific historical events, such as the March 1991 demonstrations and the October call-up of over 100,000 reservists signaling military mobilization. It concludes that the

rock scene of 1991 succeeded in preserving the urban identity of a generation precisely by retreating underground and launching direct sonic assaults on war propaganda.

Christine Tokatlian

(The American College of Greece, Athens, Greece)

“Sacred Sound in a Post-Atheist World”

The collapse of Soviet communism brought not only political transformation but the disintegration of two powerful organizing frameworks: state-enforced atheism and imperial cultural authority. This paper examines the music of Tigran Mansurian as a response to this dual loss, proposing his post-Soviet aesthetic of cultivated restraint, silence, and sonic vulnerability as conditions for moral attention. Focusing on selected instrumental and sacred works composed after the late Soviet period, the paper argues that Mansurian redefines sound as an ethical encounter—one that resists domination, ideological certainty, and monumental expression. Situating Mansurian within broader post-communist artistic discourses, this paper suggests that his work exemplifies a post-imperial and post-atheist sensibility in which sound functions as witness rather than proclamation. Through this music reorientation, Mansurian’s music participates in the wider reimagining of identity, belief, and belonging in the aftermath of communism.

Jan Topolski

(Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń / The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland)

“Science Fiction Films in the Eastern Bloc: International Cooperation, Forgotten History”

Science fiction offers a unique opportunity for technological and social speculation in the format of a typical spectacular film. During the Cold War, titles of this genre were produced in most countries of the Eastern Bloc, providing an alternative to Western productions—in the form of comedies and musicals, usually with a pacifist and socialist message. At the same time, they created opportunities for international co-productions and exchanges of experience between studios in various republics of the USSR, or between East Germany and Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Polish-German film *The Silent Star* (1959) brought together the talents of composer Andrzej Markowski and director Kurt Maetzig. For the soundtrack of *Мечте навстречу* [Towards a dream] (1963), produced at Kinostudio Odessa (Ukraine), Vano Muradeli’s socialist realist songs were intertwined with Eduard Artemyev’s electronic effects. In *Pilot Pirx’s Inquest* (1979), an unprecedented collaboration took place between Eugeniusz Rudnik (Polish Radio Experimental Studio) and Arvo Pärt (co-producer’s choice, Tallinnfilm). Finally, in the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav film *Visitors from the Arkana Galaxy* (1981), animation master Jan Švankmajer designed a Mumu monster for director Dušan Vukotić. After 1991, most of these musical and film achievements were forgotten, as was the scale of science fiction production, which united Eastern countries in competition with the West. Except for Natalija Majsova’s book *Soviet Science Fiction Cinema and the Space Age* (2021), Lucie Česálková’s anthology *Czech Cinema Revisited* (2017), and scattered articles (Sonia Fritzsche, Jonáš Kucharský, Simon Spiegel), there are virtually no English-language publications on this output and its international, collaborative aspect. I will map the original aesthetics of these films, quite different from their American counterparts, with

the aim to decolonize cinema history. Expressionism, surrealism, and grotesque filtered through socialist realism? We will see, we will be amazed, and we will laugh.

Iryna Tukova

(National Music Academy of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine)

“Ideological Compromise as a Strategy of Artistic Survival in the 1920s Soviet Ukraine: The Case of the Mykola Leontovych Music Society”

The Ukrainian musical scene of the 1920s began to be studied systematically and without ideological bias only after 1991, following the restoration of Ukraine’s independence. During the Soviet period, the political and artistic processes of this decade were deliberately silenced or interpreted in accordance with the dominant ideology. This situation was closely connected with the specific historical conditions of the period. Politically, the consolidation of Soviet power and the gradual suppression of national and social resistance to Moscow were implemented through the policy of *korenizatsiia* (Ukrainization), which functioned as an instrument of control: while outwardly accommodating national aspirations, it simultaneously imposed loyalty to an increasingly aggressive communist doctrine. At the same time, within the constrained framework of Ukrainization, national art developed dynamically, asserting its Europe-oriented character and modernist orientation. Many artists of this generation were later accused of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism and subjected to repression. From 1921 to 1928, the Mykola Leontovych Music Society functioned as the center of national musical life in Ukraine. Notably, its activities were entirely absent from Soviet scholarly and educational literature and began to be examined only after 1991. Initially, the Society operated as an independent interdisciplinary civic organization aimed at shaping Ukrainian national culture. From 1924 onward, following the adoption of the slogan “October into music!,” it was transformed into a purely musical organization that attempted to balance Soviet ideological demands with national cultural aspirations. In 1928, the Society was reorganized into the All-Ukrainian Association of Revolutionary Musicians; Leontovych’s name was removed, and its earlier activities were subsequently labelled bourgeois-nationalist and counterrevolutionary. This paper analyzes the process of the Sovietization of the Leontovych Music Society through the concept of “Ketman,” as proposed by Czeslaw Milosz in his *The Captive Mind*. It argues that any survival strategy was ultimately doomed to failure under the dominance of communist ideology in the Soviet Union. The history of the Mykola Leontovych Music Society clearly demonstrates how the Soviet system gradually eliminated everything that was ideologically unacceptable to it, including independent modernist Ukrainian art.

Aleksandra Vojčić

(University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA)

“Milica Paranosić’s Reading of Tea Obreht’s *The Tiger’s Wife*”

The fantastical setting of Tea Obreht’s novel *The Tiger’s Wife* (2011) is set in an unnamed Balkan country after a war and weaves in multiple stories (“secret rivers”) and intergenerational narratives derived from both autobiographical and societal sources. Milica Paranosić, an expatriate from Belgrade (Serbia) like Obreht, found that the novel “sang to her” and planned to write an opera. This paper examines compositional parameters and choices in Paranosić’s operatic overture *The Tiger’s Wife: Prologue* (2012) and highlights the effects of trauma and war on the composer. The novel’s concept of

fuzzy memory and the mixing of attributes and strands is embedded in the overall form of *Prologue*. Deceptively simple when domains are examined separately, the substantial layering of lines, formal attributes, visual and aural signals, and the interaction between acoustic and electronic ensembles all point to an intricate web of relations. Like the war stories, sectional boundaries in *Prologue* differ when considered from distinct vantage points. My analysis also shows how Paranosić prominently revisits music she composed after the 1999 bombing of Serbia, which includes sounds of wailing by professional mourners, a war-drum ostinato, and a rendition of Serbian *kolo* (round dance), *Crne Oči/Go/Kolo* (1999). The use of the gusle, a traditional instrument used to accompany Serbian epic poetry, is prominent from the onset of *Prologue* and ethnically situates the story, deliberately unspecified in Obreht's novel. I argue that the thirteen years intervening between her two works show little abatement of the traumatic experience the composer experienced after her native country (Yugoslavia) fell apart and violence encompassed an entire decade.

Chris Walton

(Hochschule der Künste Bern, Switzerland)

“Of Falling Walls, Orchestras, and Swimming Pools”

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had consequences far beyond Europe. The apartheid regime in South Africa had survived economic and social chaos in the 1980s, not least thanks to its status in the West as a bulwark against communism. But once communism ended, apartheid had no more *raison d'être*. Nelson Mandela was soon freed, all racial laws repealed, and in 1994 the African National Congress won the first democratic elections. However, the collapse of communism also presented opportunities to the outgoing apartheid authorities. Concerned about the high birth rate among the Black population, they had long practiced an open-door policy to encourage mass white immigration. When a whole new swathe of “white” countries opened up their borders after 1989, South African orchestras embarked on a campaign to attract (white) musicians from behind the former Iron Curtain. Dozens of top-class orchestral players soon began arriving from Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and elsewhere. Several of them were given jobs in the Chamber Orchestra of Bophuthatswana, a Black “homeland,” whose independence was recognized by no one except the apartheid regime that funded it. The Chamber Orchestra was based in Mmabatho in the middle of a semi-desert, 250 km from the nearest metropolitan center, and unsurprisingly gave very few concerts. But they did have access to the world's most modern recording studio and its two Fazioli pianos, also incongruously in Mmabatho, and also funded by the apartheid regime. Eastern European immigrants thus found themselves transported from economic chaos into high-paying orchestral jobs with accommodation (and swimming pools), but with almost no work and in a country that did not really exist. Using interviews with the musicians themselves, this paper will trace a story of music and musicians to reveal another facet of what J.M. Coetzee has called “the madness of apartheid.”

John Vandevent

(Uppsala University, Sweden)

“Pursuing Originality by Articulating *Russkii*: Tree of Life's 1997 Album *Prophetic Dream* and the Post-Soviet Dialectic of Cultural Identity and Foreign Influence”

Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Russian popular music underwent a decade of rapid change as foreign influences, including rap, flooded the country. This paper explores the reconfigured pursuit of articulating Russian cultural identity after 1991 by analyzing the 1997 album *Prophetic Dream* by the alternative rap group, Tree of Life. Working both through and apart from the prevailing stylistic trends of their day, Tree of Life's album blends reggae-fusion and gangster rap, and it is shaped by three compositional rules (no swearing/slang, minimal sampling, and only Russian language). By 1991, as the decade progressed, considerable popularity had amassed, and a growing discussion arose about what it meant to create Russian (*Russki*) rap. As my paper argues, *Prophetic Dream* contributed to one of the strongest dialectics in the post-Soviet Russian space after 1991, namely US cultural influence and its domestic ramifications for the development of a Russian cultural identity. However, this contribution arose from a dialectical relationship with post-Soviet global-local relations, which did not negate foreign influence but rather did not regard it as part of local culture. I argue that this is intrinsically connected to Tree of Life's relationship to the mid-to-late 1990s Moscow rap scene and the growing autonomy of not only Moscow rap culture but Russian Hip Hop culture itself. Theoretically, my paper will draw on popular music cultural literature on the notion of scene, intersected with Victor Roudometof's notion of dialectical localization (a recovered localism) that challenges global-centric ideations of glocalization. Asking, "How did Tree of Life localize rap amidst the culture's rapid expansion and widespread commercialization?" I will analyze *Prophetic Dream* using Michael Kramer's interdisciplinary methodology, "the multi-track model," to provide a context-rich evaluation of both the group and album's aesthetic life.

Ákos Windhager

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“‘The Secret History of Events’: Musical Commemoration of 1956 in Hungary—The Formation and Exhaustion of Ritual Repertoire (1989–1992)”

When October 23 became a Hungarian state holiday in 1989, a new national ritual demanded new musical repertoire. Yet after forty years of enforced silence, the question of what music could authentically represent 1956 proved difficult to answer. The three state commemorations between 1990 and 1992 illuminate both the possibilities and the limits of constructing collective memory through music. The first freely elected government's inaugural ceremony in 1990 featured Szokolay Sándor's newly composed *Magyar zsoldtár*, framed by Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* and Zoltán Kodály's *Budavári Te Deum*. Avoiding direct reference to 1956, the work addressed Hungarian history broadly, received mixed critical reception, and was never performed again. In 1991, two works emerged from "drawers." Szabados György's *Az események titkos története* (1984), a free jazz composition with prepared piano and "prepared text," represented the most radical artistic response to 1956. Performed with a shamanic vocal style, it remained abstract and inaccessible, never entering the commemorative repertoire. Lajtha László's *Symphony No. 7* (1957), banned since 1958, finally premiered at the Opera House. Though appropriated as a "Revolutionary Symphony," recent scholarship reveals deeply personal gestures beyond any political program. Despite critical acclaim, it has received only around twenty performances since its premiere. By 1992, organizers returned to Kodály's *Zrínyi szőzata*. With drawer works exhausted, newly commissioned pieces remained occasional compositions. The ritual's musical language quickly depleted itself: Beethoven and Kodály emerged as the default "winners," creating a paradox—a new holiday had been established, but no living musical tradition existed to sustain it.

BIOGRAPHIES

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Marko R. Aleksić is Assistant Professor at the Department of Music Theory, Faculty of Music of the University of Arts in Belgrade, where he received her Ph.D. in Music Theory. His areas of professional interest are harmonic and interpretive music analysis, as well as popular music studies. He presented his work at numerous conferences in Serbia and abroad. So far, he has published over 25 works in domestic and international journals and publications. He was a scholarship recipient of the Republic Foundation for the Development of Scientific and Artistic Youth of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the Royal Norwegian Embassy. He served as editor and co-editor of several publications in the field of music theory. He is a member of the Serbian Society for Music Theory and the Serbian Musicological Society.

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Dr. Leah Batstone is Assistant Professor and Area Head of Music History at Montclair State University. Her research focuses on the intersections of music, politics, and philosophy in Central and Eastern Europe. Her first book, *Mahler's Nietzsche: Politics and Philosophy in the Wunderhorn Symphonies*, was published by Boydell and Brewer in 2023. Her scholarship has appeared in numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *Music and Letters*, *19th Century Music*, and the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. Her forthcoming article, "When Imperial Narratives Fail: Constructing a History of Ukrainian Musical Modernism," will appear in the next issue of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. She is currently working on a monograph about Ukrainian musical modernism as well as a handbook to Stefania Turkevych's Symphony No. 1 (1937) for Cambridge University Press. In 2020, she founded the annual Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival in New York City.

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Inessa Bazayev is the Paula G. Manship Professor of Music Theory and Music Theory Area Head at Louisiana State University, where she has been teaching since 2009. Her research focuses on Russian and Soviet music, Russian Futurism, Prokofiev, and music theory pedagogy. Her articles and reviews

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Blanka Bogunović, with a Ph.D. in Psychology and a BA in Music Performance (flute), is a Professor of Psychology and Education Science (retired) at the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade. Her research interests include the psychology of music, the psychological aspects of giftedness in music, especially motivation and personality, the development of music performance skills, emotional and creative processes in making music, and interdisciplinary studies in music. Bogunović is a (co)author of six books, including *Musical Talent and Successfulness* (2008/2010), for which she received the National Award “Dr Borislav Stevanović” for outstanding contribution to Psychology in Serbia (2009). She publishes extensively in national and international journals and proceedings and gives presentations at conferences in Serbia and abroad. Bogunović is a co-founder and coordinator of the Regional Network Psychology and Music (RNPaM, 2020) and the founder of the Psychology and Music—Interdisciplinary Encounters Conference (Belgrade 2019, 2022; Zagreb 2024; Ljubljana 2026).

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Duke Bojadziew is a composer and pianist whose work moves between concert music, film scoring, and interdisciplinary sonic practice. Born in Yugoslavia and raised in Macedonia, he studied medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje before pursuing music studies at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts (USA). Bojadziew has built an international career composing for film, theater, and concert performance, collaborating with artists and institutions across Europe and the United States. His music often combines classical piano traditions with contemporary sound design and improvisation, creating atmospheric works that explore memory, identity, and cultural space. In recent years, his artistic focus has expanded toward the exploration of resonance and perception through the project Harmonic Frequencies, an ongoing research-based practice examining the relationship between sound, vibration, and psychological experience. Through performance, composition, and immersive listening environments, Bojadziew's work seeks to create spaces where sound becomes a bridge between personal history, cultural memory, and contemporary artistic expression.

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Allison Brooks-Conrad is a scholar of music and gender in the former Soviet Union. She received her Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2025. Her research examines the intersection of gender, labor, and socialist policy in different scenes of musical production in the Soviet Union. She argues that through women's lives and their everyday musical practices, we can better grasp how individuals negotiated identity at ethnic and national levels, as well as at a Soviet level. Her current book project examines questions of identity, ethnicity, and belonging in the context of women's musicking in the Baltics, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia during the late socialist era of the Soviet Union. Her research has been supported by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Stephen F. Cohen-Robert C. Tucker Dissertation Research Fellowship and the Wolf Humanities Center at the University of Pennsylvania doctoral fellowship.

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Nathan Cobb is an Assistant Professor of Music Theory at Emory University. His research engages with science and technology studies, critical theory, and timbre studies to consider how material conditions impact contemporary popular and avant-garde musical practices. Nathan is currently working on a book project titled *Synthesizing Utopia: Technology and Humanism in Kaija Saariho's Creative Practice*, which draws on archival research at the Paul Sacher Foundation (Basel, Switzerland) and at IRCAM (Paris, France).

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