

Music as Metaphor:

Communist Ideology's Impact on Eastern European Folk Music

By Kristin Fiore

Background

With the decadent freedom of jazz and the rebellious sneer of punk, the concept of music as symbolic of everything from politics to lifestyle is a familiar one in the United States and Western Europe. Censorship is also a recurrent issue, with “explicit lyrics” labels, the family-friendly policies of Wal-Mart and bans on songs and album covers deemed offensive. However, the symbolic power and restriction of music in Communist countries reached levels unseen in democracies – particularly when referring to such abstract elements as rhythm and instrumentation. Censorship laws in Eastern Europe shaped, and were shaped by, such disparate concepts as industrialization and modernity, nationalism and nostalgia, and racial purity and discrimination. In ways that were subtle, overt, even violent, the Communist governments erased and remodeled traditional music to suit their political ideals.

The Balkans, with such a mix of ethnicities and larger populations of Turks and Roma (gypsies), had particularly strict laws. Many aimed to marginalize and demonize a minority or to homogenize a newly-unified group of peoples. Bulgaria suffered the most, given its proximity to both Turkey and the Soviet Union, the arbiter of most cultural policies. The study of these policies in relation to the surrounding political climate offers insights into the power of music as metaphor. A government's policies regarding local and foreign music can often be used to outline its nationalistic and ethnic attitudes. This concept has become increasingly important over the last 30 years, when the experience of music, rather than its formal structure alone, became the prime factor in its meaning (Erlmann, 1996).

In order to develop a complete picture of how the political and cultural spheres interrelate, it is necessary to look at many aspects within and beyond them. Consequently, this paper will discuss the socio-political and musical landscapes before, during and after Communism. The musical aspects are particularly diverse, including instruments, rhythm, scales, lyrics, context, choreography, professionalization, cultural hybridity, dissemination through new technologies and control of the industry itself. However, the paper will also analyze other influential elements, such as the destruction of village life and subsequent rise of industrialization, race relations, religion, national self-image and the secondary economies of the 1980s. The ultimate revelation is the central role of music in every aspect of the private and public lives of those living behind the iron curtain and under an iron fist.

Most of the music considered is that which already existed during World War I – namely, the songs of villages. They represent a collective identity and connection with the past, and they were played by nearly everyone, rather than by a set of professional musicians. Spontaneous variations

on lyrics were common, but the main content and structures were constant. This is a strong contrast with the post-WWII musical landscape. Corollaries in the United States are early country, bluegrass and folk music, though the Eastern European folk songs are considerably older. Their foundation is the opposite of modern rock, which is centered on individuality, or identification with a subculture, and innovation (old styles or songs are discarded). The exception is the rebellious, increasingly wild music of the Roma, whose style is unsurprisingly symbolic of their defiance of Communist authority. The main peoples considered are Bulgarians, Hungarians and the Roma – all of whom had quite different experiences and illustrate varied reactions to the limitations placed upon them. However, other countries, including Czechoslovakia, those that formed Communist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are also discussed.

The concept of national identity and ideology, as well as its marriage to folklore, began in earnest in the late nineteenth century, and could be found all over Europe. Widespread surges of national pride and idealization of the past, the beginnings of folklore as a defined discipline, and the first recording equipment all appeared at that time. The seeds of the industrial revolution, influence of Romanticism and newfound freedom are thought to be primary catalysts (Baumann, 1996). The Balkan states had just won independence from the Ottoman Turks and were proud of their autonomy (Rywkin, 2001). Lingering resentment toward the Turks would factor prominently in post-WWII censorship battles and is indeed voiced today, even among youths, in several Balkan countries (personal communication, Aug.-Sept. 2003). Thirty-five years later, the same surge of nationalism can be seen in the newly-formed Czechoslovakia, finally free of the dissolved Austro-Hungarian Empire (Porter, 1994).

Hungarians, however, were still suffering under Austrian rule in the late 1800s. With no property or voting rights, they and other dominated countries found happiness and identity in music and dance. It was one of the few things they still possessed. Even when they were prohibited by the Czechs from wearing their folk costumes, the underlying traditions and songs managed to survive. Hungarians developed a national identity sooner than other countries, using music as a legitimate claim to their land – noting that the underlying musical similarities throughout the country reflect a unified people. This increased after losing two-thirds of their territory after WWI (Hirsch, 1997).

The early establishment, central role and consistency of Hungarian folk music are likely reasons for its nearly-intact survival through centuries of threatened identity and oppression. They go so far as to equate it with political power and compatibility. The Hungarians' greater borrowing in the exchange of musical influences with Slovaks was considered a "dangerous Slovakian infiltration." And the lack of mutual influence between German and Hungarian music "proves that the difference between their collective souls is almost unbridgeable." Even within the country, those villages that are furthest away from Budapest are thought to be the most authentic. And those in lost territories, such as those in Romania and Slovakia, are "more Hungarian than Hungary." They termed their systematic approach (despite its romantic ideations) "folk music science" and used detailed intellectual and ideological constructs to prove the existence of a "folk soul" (Hirsch, 1997).

Both of these situations – newfound sovereignty and continual oppression – found an expression in folk music. Collectors, folklorists and festivals sprang up as the twentieth century loomed. These also appeared in reaction to modernity in western European countries, which developed sooner than their eastern neighbors. Tourist-judged alphorn festivals appeared in Switzerland as early as 1806. The ideological aspects, though, were absent (Baumann, 1996). Classical

composer/musicologists such as Hungarian Bela Bartok and Czech Leos Janacek began incorporating folk themes into their pieces and studying their origins.

These were the beginnings of folklore becoming “folklorism,” as those one step removed were studying and preserving, rather than experiencing it firsthand (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo, 1999) . These studies were the forerunners of the ubiquitous Folklore Institutes of the Academies of Science the soviets opened all over Eastern Europe. Several were created in the 1950s, as the soviet propaganda machine shifted into high gear. These institutes held archives of music and scholarship, both real and fabricated. Other earlier archives and institutes occasionally existed, but the Institutes were the first large-scale archives of folklore. But in spite of the intelligentsia's tendency to trap it amber for study, living village music was still the heart of national identity and social interaction until the 1950s.

Urbanization

The pre-Communist world of the Balkans was one of freedom and privately-owned farms and villages, where men were shepherds and women worked in the home. Goods were generally bartered, not sold. Eighty percent of Bulgarians and 75 percent of Yugoslavians lived in villages between 1920 and 1944. Rural Bulgarians dropped to only 35 percent in the years following World War II (Rice, 1994; Porter, 1994). Celebrations all over the Balkans revolved around holidays, whether Christian (*Djurdjevdan*, or St. George's Day), Muslim (*Bajram*), seasonal rituals (*koleda*, celebrating the sun's return; *Kukerovden* , a fertility ritual) or rites of passage (weddings; funerals). Music permeated all of these events – shepherds passed the time by learning the *gajda* (bagpipe) or shepherd's flute, women sang while they wove or harvested, and there were literally hundreds of songs for religious and secular holidays (Rice, Porter and Goertzen, 2000) . Instruments were homemade from animals, plants and trees. Due to the slower pace of life, weddings often lasted a week, and the music and dancing never stopped. In Roma weddings, musicians often played for 30 hours straight.

All of this began to change with the advent of Communism, whose aims included modernizing, homogenizing and controlling the people. With the exception of Poland and Yugoslavia, all of Eastern Europe was forced to collectivize its agriculture. This turned generations-old family farms over to the state, leaving families with no personal stake in the land, no initiative to work it earnestly, and no heritage to leave their children. Mechanized agriculture rendered many useless. Consequently, many peasants migrated to the city to work in the new factories (Creed, 2000). This shift devastated the traditional way of life and the traditions based on it. Demoralized villagers no longer had the urge to play music.

Men working in factories did not have time to be musicians, make instruments or host week-long weddings (Rice, 1996). Widespread education, while one of the achievements of the Communists, meant women were now in school instead of learning songs, so the tradition largely died out within one generation. For Croatian folk festivals of the 1960s, such songs were taught to singers by professionals unfamiliar with their original context (Ceribasic, 1998). The songs they performed were ubiquitous in villages in the 1930s, only 30 years before. In most countries, they were learned in professional music schools. One ethnomusicologist returning to the remaining Bulgarian villages found the shepherds reading newspapers instead of playing shepherd's flutes (Rice, 1994).

Long-time friendships and traditional female roles were broken as women relocated. They left gatherings, working bees and the songs that went with them behind in villages that were increasingly dilapidated and deserted. The only remaining ritual or tradition was a shortened form of the wedding, and the only unit left for learning music, aside from the classroom, was the immediate family. There was rarely time. The fertility and harvesting rituals performed each year had no relevance in a world of concrete.

Soon this was not an issue, however, as the rituals and their songs were indicative of a “backwards way of life” and subsequently banned by the Communists, along with all religious practices and music. Industry and party had replaced village and god. Even if the people had the time or will to sing, there were very few “legal” songs left. Suddenly the traditions venerated only a decade before had come to symbolize a parochial, outdated way of life considered an “obstacle to change” (Marosevic, 1998). It was to be discarded in favor of modernity and industrialization. And the music, seen as “muddy” and simplistic, was to be replaced by songs that elevated the people and brought them forward into the new age the Communists envisioned – a country devoid of classes and regionalism, ethnic impurities, and ultimately, dissent.

Censorship

In order to sell such a vision for the future, the party had to put a falsely positive spin on the present and recreate the past. Each of the above areas – class and country unity, ethnic purity and party allegiance – required different forms of manipulation. Unity required the creation of a national culture that cultivated the taste of the proletariat and introduced a palatable version of folk culture to the intelligentsia. Ethnic purity required the real or imagined removal of all foreign and minority inhabitants and culture. Party allegiance demanded that all forms of religion be eradicated and even love of country be secondary. It also meant the termination of any thoughts, actions or songs not dedicated to the party or its ideals. Increasingly, the party became synonymous with the Soviet Union, whose stranglehold on Eastern Europe by the 1950s and 1960s was formidable.

The big exception was Hungary, where the long-established, revered and unified state of its folk music was undoubtedly a factor in its survival. Since the sixteenth century, and particularly during and after the Romantic period of the late 1800s, music had been a part of national culture and a symbol of unity (Frigyesi, 1996). The upper class never snubbed its peasant class or the folk music it generated. The folk and art worlds traded elements and the folk influence was, and still is, palpable in avant-garde theater and music. Hungarians also enjoyed a more open cultural policy, particularly after the revolution of 1956 that made Janos Kadar president. There was still censorship, but musicians were not used as mouthpieces for government ideology (Andress, 2002). In fact, the Communist era was less noticeably propagandistic than previous times, notably the Revolution of 1848 and the early twentieth century fascist movement. Both had dominant political parties that used the arts to push their agendas. However, as they were not the government, they could not employ censorship or utilize the people.

For the other countries, however, the Communists' restrictions and ideological focus was new. The biggest step toward an elevated national culture was the creation of folk ensembles – choirs and orchestras whose repertoires consisted of classicized versions of folk songs, many of them with new lyrics. Their purpose was to familiarize the peasants with high culture and more complex arrangements, while simultaneously introducing the upper classes to folk traditions in a

manner they would accept. The most popular examples are the *tamburica* orchestras of the Soviet Union and Croatia, and the Bulgarian State Women's Choir (Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares).

National folklore festivals followed and were often termed “living museums” for their presentation of sanitized spectacles of the past. Many songs performed in festivals mixed the styles of different regions, picking elements that would please the audience. This meant the structure, not only the context, was lost. In the last several years, the question of authenticity in folk music and festivals has become a central issue. It has many ethnomusicologists arguing as to whether it is better to have only the remnants of something real or an impressive reenactment that skews reality. While some of these festivals were created as nationalist statements, other existing ones, such as the Latvian *ligo* (summer festival), were banned for being *too* nationalistic. These ensembles and festivals were filled with contradictions – nostalgic yet condescending toward village life, stylistically westernized yet against the West, nationalistic yet loyal to the party above all.

The new style of music did not succeed with the urban elite, rural proletariat or the musicians and singers forced to perform it. Still, several of the best musicians from villages became professionals in these government-funded groups. It was the first time one could make a living as a musician. Music was no longer a localized peasant pastime, but a national commodity (Rice, 1994). In many ways, they were the opposite of what musicians had experienced until that time. Village music was regional, spontaneous, informal and based on rituals. The musicians followed the pace of the dancers. Instruments were homemade and groups were constantly changing. The ensembles had a fixed repertoire, formal presentation and songs glorifying Communism or the country. Context and regional styles had no place. Instruments were manufactured and there was a fixed list of musicians and singers. This music was constantly pushed on radio and television and in festivals.

Western string instruments were introduced, and traditional ones such as bagpipes, gudulkas, and kavals were arranged en masse to create the sections of a classical orchestra. Complex harmonies replaced single or double-voice melodies. Their style was “conformist, artificial and sanitized – what Milan Kundera described as ‘fakelore.’” (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo, 1999). Countless recommendation lists of such folk music were distributed in the Soviet Union and folklore ensembles were expected to follow them. Those who refused to adhere to these strict standards were fired. Dance choreography also changed, as the closed circles and repetitive steps of traditional folk songs were not exciting enough for an audience. Formations that put dancers' backs to an audience had to be rearranged. Consequently, complex choreography of changing formations and open circles with everyone facing mostly front were designed (Rice, 1994).

Song lyrics were the most overt example of government meddling. Revolutionary songs become socialist worker's songs. Some only changed words here and there, such as Macedonia to Bulgaria, farm to *kolkhoz* (the soviet term for collective farm) or religious holidays to secular ones. St. George's Day became Day of the Shepherds at a time when shepherds were disappearing. This is a typical example of references to real folk life replacing that life. Similarly, the intelligentsia often claimed peasant roots, though they had no familiarity with that life. It was an identification with an idealized symbolic past that was only acceptable as metaphor. To really be a peasant was undesirable. In general, governments claimed to be preserving folklore when they were actually destroying it by purifying it, using it to promote nostalgia for a past that never existed.

Other lyric changes were not so subtle. In a Latvian recording from 1951, there are added stanzas that thank the soviet government, the party and the “great leader Stalin” for the good lives they have (which were anything but) (Putelis, 2002). This is an interesting contrast with some African countries, where music in the 1950s was also considered “an effective medium of social control and political influence” (Rhodes, 1990). Names and text were rewritten, but it was to criticize the government rather than to defer to it. Lyrics attacked both domestic and foreign leaders (or peoples) and had politicians scared, or at least humiliated. Africans used music to keep those above in check, while Communists universally used it to take control of those below.

However, this control over eastern Europeans only tended to work in public or high-profile situations. Those families that still did sing traditional songs sang the old version in private and ignored the Communist changes. In Latvia, singing folksongs was considered a symbolic rebellion (The collapse of Communism was called the “singing revolution”). Singing in private was popular until the early 1990s, when these clandestine songs were finally available on record, making singing unnecessary (Putelis, 2002). The folk and Roma movements moved underground in many countries to avoid restrictions, which saved at least some of the music. Out of the eye of the party, or out of the city, some traditional songs and wedding festivities managed to survive, and despite threats of fines and imprisonment (many of which were carried out by the KGB), people celebrated their holidays and played their music their way.

In the public sphere, though, the party was very effective at quelling all dissidents. They controlled every level of the music industry – from labels and distributors to performances and radio play lists. Everything produced for public consumption had to be approved. The Bulgarian government once required a certain percentage of songs performed in a restaurant to be Russian in a show of solidarity. Radio material that was deemed “not Bulgarian enough” was banned from the air (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo, 1999). Songs in the Croatian national radio archives had warnings such as, “God is mentioned in this song, so be very careful about using it,” (Pettan, 1998). Roma musicians were forced to water down their untamed sound before recording an album, if they were allowed to record at all. Solos, fast tempos, chromatic key changes and modern instruments were not allowed.

Young adults in the Czech Republic today talk of friends and parents sent to jail for a few years for playing a folk song in a café that angered a party member (personal conversations, 2003). In front of 4,000 fans, a popular soviet musician urged the crowd to rebel against the government, as they were destroying the country. Unsurprisingly, he was immediately fired and taken to the KGB. The government then erased all evidence of his band's existence in radio and television archives (Levin, 1996). To date, there is no trace of them prior to 1982. The “disappearing” of dissident artists was not uncommon.

Other Music Censorship

While folk and ethnic music was hardest hit by censorship, other genres and related areas were attacked as well, some of which had repercussions in the folk world. Classical pieces, while not as linked to ethnicity and therefore a lesser threat, were sometimes changed after the fact and without notification. In an early soviet recording of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, “God Save the Czar” (being doubly-banned for mentioning a former government *and* a deity) had been replaced with an appropriately patriotic Russian tune (Perris, 1985). Some composers were actually forced to create songs at gunpoint. In the Soviet Union, several prominent folk narrators were threatened

with a revolver and deportation to Siberia if they did not produce a new folk song within six hours (Porter, 1994). These songs were nonetheless promoted as a free expression of the people's will.

An unavoidable reaction to such threats and sabotage is self-censorship. The classical realm was more susceptible to self-censorship, because composers wrote their own material. Folk musicians dealt with old material that was organized for a group, so they did not have much say in the content or style of the material performed. In need of work and afraid of retaliation, composers created pieces that were inoffensive, homogenous, melodic and cheerful. By 1936, the most advanced composers in the Soviet Union had reverted to nineteenth century styles.

Those who did not, such as Shostakovich, were reprimanded. His hugely successful opera *Lady Macbeth* infuriated Stalin, who had an anonymous article appear in the party-controlled *Pravda* (Truth) denigrating it as vulgar and dissonant. Artist groups supported the review and began to avoid Shostakovich (Perris, 1985). He subsequently apologized and wrote the more traditional and uplifting *Fifth Symphony*, which was well received. Less lucky musicians include Lovro Maticic, a well-known composer and principal for military music in the Independent State of Croatia. Due to his bourgeois and political affiliations, he was sentenced to death in 1945 (it was converted to a prison sentence) (Pettan, 1998). Other musicians were blacklisted, forced into menial labor jobs or protested.

These situations were particularly common for Czechs, as they endured the most severe rock censorship laws in eastern Europe, particularly in the 1970s (a result of the soviet crackdown following the Prague Spring in 1968). In 1976 twenty-seven musicians were arrested after a festival put together by the seminal punk band Plastic People of the Universe, and many were jailed for up to six months without a trial. The next year a few incensed artists drafted Charter 77, including playwright Vaclav Havel. Thousands of artists signed this declaration of human rights, which was eventually translated and printed around the world. The signers were threatened and forced to sign an anti-charter praising socialism. Those who refused were blacklisted or worse. Havel, a co-founder and central figure, was thrown in jail.

Marta Kubisova, the most popular Czech singer of the late 1960s, was one singled out as a warning. Working through promoter Pragokonzert, the soviet government barred her from performing for 20 years, shredded her recording contract, circulated pornographic pictures they claimed were her and confiscated her passport. Until the regime fell, she was forced to work for a company building socialist tower blocks (Andress, 2002). Today, those who braved ruined careers and prison are revered. Havel became Czechoslovakia's first president in 1989 and was the president of the Czech Republic from 1992 to 2003.

The government also targeted ethnomusicologists. They were not allowed to publish or promote traditional folklore, and many were forced under threat of violence to write fabricated papers. Their only hope was smuggling work out of the country to be published in the United States or Western Europe. This echoes the well-known book bannings all over Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In the strictest era, the 1950s and 1960s, the local KGB sent for Lithuanian ethnomusicologists and told them not to propagandize or teach youth about folklore, not to arrange festivals or concerts, and not to establish folk ensembles in the cities: "Be quiet and calm, and we will tolerate you!" (Porter, 1994). Scholars with international ties were deprecated and expelled from universities. Many scholars have since written about the connections between cultures and misinformation of the Communist era. Their aim is to set the record straight and right the wrongs done to minorities, particularly Turks and Roma.

Ethnic Censorship

The flipside of manufacturing pure national music is banning foreign music, festivals and other more tangential aspects of culture. In Bulgaria, the performance or consumption of any ethnic and foreign music – namely Turkish, Greek, Roma and Serbian – was not allowed. Those listening to Turkish music could be fined, arrested and have their cassette players confiscated. Serbian folk-pop, however, was commonly traded underground. Turkish, Kazakh and many Central Asian epics were prohibited, as they glorified feudalism and heroes of whom the Communists disapproved. Only Russian epics were allowed. From 1934 to 1980 there was not one Kazakh song competition (Porter, 1994). When they were reintroduced they had been drastically altered to include Communist propaganda. Muslim names in songs were changed to Slavic ones, and dances like the Roma-influenced *kyuchek* (*cocek* in Serbian) were banned. Occasionally, the dance remained but the name changed, which was either acceptable or not noticed by letter-of-the-law authorities.

Musical instruments and rhythms were also prohibited, occasionally to curb their supposed allusions to the backwards past, but mainly to deny foreign or minority influences. Ethnically heterogeneous music was common in the Balkans, and Turkish influence was strong, particularly in Bulgaria. This connection was never mentioned in print, however, as it tarnished the image of a “pure” Bulgarian people (Petrovic, 1994). The *zurna* (end-blown reed instrument) is played throughout the East and is one of the most typical instruments of southwestern Bulgaria. It was prohibited at a 1985 (some sources say 1984) folk festival because it was considered Muslim and Turkish.

Perhaps the defining trait of Bulgarian folk music is its unusual and complex rhythms, such as the *kyuchek*. *Krivo horos* (crooked dances) consist of one group of triplets and any number of couplets. For example:



7 beats per measure

11 beats per measure

These rhythms are also called *aksak* (even in reference to Bulgarian rhythms), which is Turkish for “limping.” It is a reference to the appearance of the dance that accompanies them. They are also occasionally found in Romania, Serbia and Macedonia. Yet officials claimed that Turkish music “left hardly a trace among the local Bulgarian populace” (Silverman, 1989). When one considers that folk music was the focal point of identity and rebellion in the face of the Ottoman Empire, it is clearer why traces of Turkish influence would be undesirable.

Yugoslavia, having less severe political attitudes regarding Roma and Turks, had different musical policies. One Croatian ethnomusicologist even acknowledged Muslims and the Middle

East as the strongest influence on their music, namely in Bosnia, Herzegovina and the Muslim populations (some used the terms Croatia and Yugoslavia interchangeably) (Pettan, 2001) . In Macedonia economic, political and cultural policies were more lenient. Several Roma in Macedonia were politically active, and some were even on the (capital) Skopje town council by 1948. Macedonian radio broadcasted Roma music and hired them on staff, Serbia had Roma-language radio programs, and the language was taught in Kosovo and Tetovo, Macedonia . Instruments like the *zurna* and *tapan* (two-sided) drum were played in ritual and political events and released on record. While the Roma were still a minority and given second-tier status financially and politically, they enjoyed relative freedom during the Communist era. The Yugoslavian authorities intended to decrease the animosity and differences between the various countries, languages, religions and heritages (Habsburg and Ottoman).

They went so far as to ban songs praising an individual country and demanded the Croatian national anthem “Lijepa Nasa” be performed only in conjunction with the Yugoslavian anthem “Hej Slaveni.” The alternative was a two-month prison sentence (Pettan, 1998). A more absurd example is a folklore ensemble that were punished because their belts had the red, white and blue of the Croatian flag, but lacked the Yugoslavian red star. Through these measures, the Yugoslavian government hoped to integrate its peoples into one people. While the Bulgarian government also aimed for an ethnically and culturally unified country, their motivations and actions were different. They wanted to expel and erase all but the *one* “true people.”

Unsurprisingly, Bulgarians targeted many other elements of Turkish and Muslim life. Speaking Turkish or Roma or wearing *shalvari* (women's baggy pants) was prohibited. In 1985, the Bulgarian government decided that one-million-plus Turks out of 8.5 million Bulgarians was just too much. Additionally, there were 75,000 Pomaks (Muslim Bulgarians) and 400,000 Roma, which brought the total Muslim population to 17 percent (Silverman, 1996). To remedy the problem the government forced all Turks to change their names to Bulgarian names. This may sound as intelligent as putting a long tail on a deer and calling it a horse, but it is better than the gun-brandishing and imprisonment methods used with other undesirable groups.

Ibryam Hapazov, a Turkish Rom, clarinetist and the most famous musician in Bulgaria in the 1980s and 1990s, became the pure-bred Bulgarian Ivo Papasov. He and his band were arrested at a wedding in 1987 for indulging a request for Roma *chalga* music (Turkish for “music”) The official charge? Hooliganism, a surprisingly common offense (Buchanan, 1996). In a few countries, many Roma and Turkish musicians were taxed, fined or arrested by the KGB for playing their own music at their weddings. Others were forced to give a list of their repertoire or audition for the government to prove they knew enough nationalistic songs. Some waited until the sun went down to play Roma music, but most were particularly defiant, celebrating and playing what they wanted to regardless of the laws (Rice, 1994). This was expressed in their musical style and clearly picked up on by the authorities.

Hungary's experience with minorities differed from that of the Balkans. Their disapproval of Roma was based more in their refusal to assimilate than the fact that they were Roma. The Boyash and Vlach Roma both came from Romania in the mid-nineteenth century. The integrated Romungre Roma have been in Hungary for more than 400 years and are welcome participants in the national and folk culture. The Vlach Roma kept their Transylvanian-Romanian influences and Roma language in their music and were consequently marginalized. The Boyash adopted the new Hungarian folk song style and fared better (Sadie, 2001). This again illustrates the importance Hungarians place on unity.

Urban Roma music was actually the favored music of the intelligentsia and nobility by the end of the nineteenth century and used as a symbol of true Hungarianness. With the Communists' rise to power, however, it was a symbol of the upper classes and therefore considered inferior to the workers' folk music. Even strings, the instrument of choice among the Roma, lost favor (Frigyesi, 1996). Young Hungarians eventually turned away from Roma music and toward the new folk music of the revival in the 1970s.

Wedding Music and the Folk Revival

While popular with Roma and Slavic peoples alike, wedding music was a prime target for the party and the intelligentsia, who saw it as urban “bourgeois culture” and a threat to the new folk music. The folk style was described as “sweet,” “pure” and of a reasonable, danceable tempo. Wedding music, however, was dissonant, fast, loud and aggressive. Its scales were Middle-Eastern and Roma, rather than major or minor. It had rapidly changing keys and tempos and virtuoso solos. “Aggressive” is much more than an aesthetic term – it suggests the rebellious stance of the Roma. As an enemy of “pure” folk music, wedding music was by definition impure, as were those who created it. Complex solos, where musicians interrupted each other, ran against the Communist values of equality and submission. Their spontaneity symbolized freedom, another indication of the Roma's so-called aggression.

In addition, Papasov included international and modern influences, such as jazz fusion, Turkish melodies, saxophones, clarinets and accordions (accordions and clarinets have been played in Bulgaria for more than 100 years, but they were still considered western and therefore banned). Roma in Kosovo shared these tendencies, seeing music “not as a ‘frozen’ product, but rather as a living and ever-changing organism” (Pettan, 1998). The Roma did not value tradition and cultural purity, which were the hallmarks of folk music. This is precisely why their music has stayed relevant in the modern, multicultural world of post-Communism, while folk music is largely a relic.

The periods following *glasnost* and *perestroika* brought wealth and prestige to the already popular Roma wedding musicians. The governments had relaxed their fiscal policies and allowed secondary economies – small private ventures that began in the early 1980s. As there was still not much to buy in the stores, families spent their earnings on spectacular weddings and the best wedding bands, often going into debt. The governments were incensed that Roma musicians were now making several times the state musicians' salaries, so they were heavily taxed. This was useless, as the musicians were given massive tips instead. Wedding music's popularity rose throughout the Communist era and exploded after 1989, particularly in Serbia and Bulgaria. It signaled a desire for a multi-ethnic, modern, urban culture that included Roma.

The introduction of cassette recorders all over Eastern Europe meant that fans could pass around copies of live performances rather than subsist on the sanitized folk and wedding bands offered by official record labels like Balkanton (Bulgaria), Hungaroton (Hungary) and Supraphon (Czechoslovakia). The government had finally lost the little control it had had over Roma music. The spread of bootleg rock recordings began at this time as well and is still a huge industry.

Governments also tried to control festivals and contests that sprang up. They asked performers to audition and chose the more traditional bands, which were always the least popular. They forced bands to play certain songs and put a nationalistic, rather than rebellious, spin on the event. A fine

example in Serbia is Guca, the “Serbian Woodstock” held each year in the village of the same name. Since 1961 Guca has been a festival of Serbian (largely Roma) marching bands. The origin of the brass orchestras is thought to be the Turkish military bands of the mid-1800s, which explains their eastern sound. Roma and South Serbian brass bands constitute the bulk of the bands and are the ones who define the sound. Nonetheless, they were relegated to smaller stages or not allowed to perform at all. Their live recordings sat on the floor in Guca's House of Culture (part of the government's Ministry of Culture), while those of their white, western counterparts were released.

Only in 2001 was a double-disc set released (*Golden Brass Summit*) that collected the best “previously unreleasable” material. Generous liner notes discuss how half of the repertoire was government-imposed during Tito's heyday (until 1975), including tributes to Tito and patriotic songs. These pieces were not included in the anthology, which focuses on the freer performances not controlled by the government, and songs that exhibit the truer influences –Turkish, Roma, Egyptian and most of the Balkans (save the West-oriented Croatia and Slovenia).

The Porta Festival, called the “Czech Woodstock,” is a similar event, but for electronic folk music. It began five years later (1966) in Czechoslovakia and attracted more than 30,000 visitors in the years preceding the Velvet Revolution of 1989. In general, the 1960s saw the formation of several festivals and a revival in the people's interest in folk music, something partly inspired by the concurrent folk music movement in the United States.

Though the folk revival swept through many countries, none had a more vibrant and singular scene than Hungary . Hungarians have been unique in their ability to keep folk music and dance a living entity, rather than something dusted off for annual festivals. The youth of the 1970s wanted an avant-garde sound that expressed their dissatisfaction with Communist folk music. Ironically, they found it in the old traditions remembered by their elders. As the songs were passed down, they retained the original context and sound (Frigyesi, 1996) . Modern influences have been incorporated, but they retain a Hungarian core, recalling the concept of a “folk soul.”

The music has been embraced by all elements of society – upper and lower class, urban and rural – much as Hungarian folk music was widely accepted and never shunned as peasant music. In fact, the dance house is more a part of the intelligentsia and its songs are shaped by the aesthetic ideas of the upper classes. The working class often tends toward *lakodalmas*, or wedding rock, which is similar in its multicultural make-up to electronic Balkan wedding music (Sarosi and Wilkinson, 2001). And though a product of Stalin's horrific cultural policies, the amateur folk dance groups remain popular, even with urban youths. Many teach and perform in the dance houses all over Budapest, which attract dozens of enthusiasts of all ages.

The Modern Era

The 1980s and 1990s are defined in most eastern European countries by a loosening of the government leash and an influx of modern culture and technology. Most were highly influenced by western bands in the 1970s and blended their more modern, electronic sound with traditional folk styles. Some countries experienced a surge in nationalism and others opened themselves to new cultural influences. Often, what was popular during the Communist era was now (unofficially) banned and vice versa. Many bands that were ostracized, ignored or jailed enjoyed success in the 1990s.

The immediate heroes after Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution of 1989 were the musicians penalized or jailed because of Charter 77, as the country turned away from their Communist past. At the same time and for the same reason, many of the dance groups and ensembles in former Czechoslovakia, as well as academic collaborations, disappeared. Western influences prevailed, such as the American cowboy and the 1960s folk singer. Country dance balls appeared in Moravia, where they relived a past they had never known. This "nostalgia without memory" (Kurkela, 1993) is also an apt phrase for the post-Communist ignorance of pre-war music traditions. The Czech Republic and Slovakia were soon inundated with western culture and reacted against it by turning again to regional folk traditions and festivals. By 1994 there were more than 12,000 active members of folklore ensembles, according to the Folklore Association of the Czech Republic.

Hungary's ensembles began to proliferate with the 1970s dance house scene, though most of those kicking, twirling and stomping until all hours are ordinary teens and adults. The Opening Dance House Ball in late September packs hundreds into several rooms until five a.m. With food, liquor and swarms of teenagers in drenched Metallica t-shirts shouting unintelligible phrases in unison, it could be any rock club. Dance houses also benefited from the surge in nationalism after 1989, a reaction to the influx of foreigners (Sadie, 2001).

Several locations throughout the week host smaller Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Turkish dances – many taught by young people from those countries. No similar traditions were found in Serbia, Croatia or the Czech Republic (personal observations, Aug.-Dec. 2003). Not only do the Hungarians keep their own traditions alive, but they also participate in the musical heritage of other countries. Because they lack the antagonistic history with other eastern European or Muslim countries, they do not exclude them. Hungary's interest in other cultures is also reflected at Fono – a record label, CD store, studio, performance space and dance house. On the outskirts of Budapest, it is the heart of the music and dance house scene. Their schedule and catalog include musicians from all over Europe. Many albums have songs from several countries played by an equally international group of musicians.

Serbo-Croatian songwriter Goran Bregovic popularized electronic versions of folk songs from all over the Balkans in the films of director Emir Kusturica. Kusturica's Roma-starring movies are Serbia's biggest cultural export and have made their wedding bands an international commodity. At the Guca festival in Serbia, old-style military bands compete with boom boxes that blast Bregovic's brass-and-keyboard anthems.

Despite the nationalism that has caused endless violence in former Yugoslavia, there are efforts to promote the concept of the Balkans as a mix of cultures that all borrow from each other. Music that mixes folk, jazz, rock and multi-cultural influences can promote a new kind of political outlook. Belgrade radio (B92) put together a compilation of international Roma songs and two of Serbian music. They aim to preserve "ancient musical forms for the future" and record events of everyday people to transpose into myth (Ambrozic, Dragan. Liner notes. *Srbija: Sounds Global 2*, 2002). This combines the early twentieth century notion of preserving folk songs with the original purpose of those songs – to capture and celebrate daily life.

Bulgaria finally openly embraced the sounds of its eastern neighbors, and one can hear elements of *arabesk* (Turkish folk-pop) and Roma music in their modern songs, as well as the electronic influence of the West. Ivo Papasov is on Amazon.com. Ironically, by 1989 the Turks were so exasperated with Bulgaria's discrimination that several emigrated to Turkey. The folk traditions

survive in groups like singers Trio Bulgarka and renowned musicians Bulgari, who play and sing traditional folk songs at a professional level.

Collectively, the state and presence of true folk music in these countries today is largely that of an heirloom – something valuable whose story has been partially lost along the way, something best kept tucked away for important or nostalgic occasions, yet something it is possible to borrow from the way everything from fashion to architecture makes the old new again. Altered continuations of traditional styles, such as Balkan wedding and Hungarian dance house music, incorporate foreign or personal aesthetic modifications. They create something new that is both a direct descendant of the past and relevant to modern life. This is in contrast to Communist ensembles or pop songs that take sonic bits and leave behind the basic structure and context.

As nationalism increases in response to tourism, American throw-away culture and a general awareness of ethnicity, the question arises again: how will traditional music be seen and used in the current socio-political climate? Many young people shun it as irrelevant or worse, a reminder of Communism and a dark past. Some enjoy it at home but do not like the public performance aspect of it. Some embrace it as is (whatever form that may be) and others use it for their own ends, dissolving it in a mix of styles and countries. This may most accurately reflect the kaleidoscope of cultures and eras that is modern experience.

Communist policies, from the destruction of village life to folk ensembles, drastically altered the musical landscape of Eastern Europe, and their impact continues today. It helped to destroy the lifestyles that created and passed on traditional music; it falsified and rearranged its aesthetic and historical elements; and it soured much of the population on the version that remained. As societies continue to explore and exchange ideas, it is possible that regional, even national, differences may disintegrate. What will remain are only records of the songs, dances and stories preserved since the late 1800s, when the whole concept of nationalism began. The role of folk music and its modified iterations will continue to change. Those in control, be they governments or businessmen, may determine its style and function, but they can not control its meaning. Ultimately, “the song belongs to those who sing it” (Ambrozic, 2002).

Works Cited

Ambrozic, Dragan. Liner notes. *Srbija: Sounds Global 2*, FreeB92, 2002.

Andress, Mark. "Czech Music's Political Hangover." *Billboard* (2002): 1, 73-74.

Baumann, Max Peter. "Folk Music Revival: Concepts between Regression and Emancipation." *The World of Music* 38.3 (1996): 71-86.

Broughton, Simon, Mark Ellingham, and Richard Trillo, eds. *World Music: The Rough Guide*. Vol. 1. London: Rough Guides Ltd., 1999.

Ceribasic, Nalia. "Folklore Festivals in Croatia: Contemporary Controversies." *The World of Music* 40.3 (1998): 25-49.

Creed, Gerald. "Folklife." *Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism*. Ed. Richard Frucht. New York: Garland Pub., 2000. 270-72.

Erlmann, V. "Music: Anthropological Aspects." *The Social Science Encyclopedia*. Eds. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1996. 10252-55.

Golden Brass Summit: Fanfares en Delire, Network, 2002.

Frigyesi, Judith. "The Hungarian Revival Movement." *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ed. Mark Slobin. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 54-75.

Hirsch, Eric. "Voices from the Black Box: Folk Song, Boy Scouts and the Construction of Folk Nationalist Hegemony in Hungary, 1930-1944." *Antipode* 29.2 (1997): 197-215.

Kurkela, Vesa. "Deregulation of Popular Music in the European Post-Communist Countries: Business, Identity and Cultural Collage." *The World of Music* 35.3 (1993): 1993.

Levin, Theodore. "Dmitri Pokovsky and the Russian Folk Music Revival Movement." *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ed. Mark Slobin. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. 14-36.

Marosevic, Grozdana. "The Encounter between Folklore Studies and Anthropology in Croatian Ethnomusicology." *The World of Music* 40.3 (1998): 51-81.

Perris, Arnold. *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade and to Control*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985.

Pettan, Svanibor. "Encounter with 'the Others from Within': The Case of Gypsy Musicians in Former Yugoslavia." *The World of Music* 43.2-3 (2001): 119-37.

---. "Music and Censorship in Ex-Yugoslavia: Some Views from Croatia." *1st World Conference on Music and Censorship*, Nov. 20-22, 1998. Copenhagen, 1998.

Porter, James, ed. *Folklore and Traditional Music in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Proceedings of a one-day conference, May 16, 1994. UCLA, Los Angeles: UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology.

Putelis, Aldis. "Voices from the Past, Voices for the Future: The Sound Collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore." *IASA Journal* 19 (2002).

Rhodes, Willard. "Music as an Agent of Political Expression." *The Garland Library of Readings in Ethnomusicology: Music as Culture*. Ed. Kay Kaufman Shelemay. Vol. 3. New York: Garland, 1990. 98-105.

Rice, Tim. "The Dialectic of Economics and Aesthetics in Bulgarian Music." *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ed. Mark Slobin. Durham: Duke University, 1996. 178-99.

---. *May It Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Rice, Timothy, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen, eds. *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: Europe* . Vol. 8. New York: Garland, 2000.

Rywkin, Michael, ed. *Encyclopedia of Nationalism: Leaders, Movements and Concepts* . Vol. 2. San Diego: Academic, 2001.

Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* . 2 ed. Vol. 11. New York: Grove's Dictionary, 2001.

Sarosi, Balint, and Iren Kertesz Wilkinson. "Hungary: Recent Trends: Dancehouse Movement." *Grove Music Online* ed. 2001. Available: < <http://www.grovemusic.com> >. Accessed March 22 2004.

Silverman, Carol. "Reconstructing Folklore: Media and Cultural Policy in Eastern Europe." *Communication* 11 (1989): 141-60.

Slobin, Mark, ed. *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.