Women's Leadership in Music: Modes, Legacies, Alliances

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Modes, Legacies, Alliances

[transcript] Music and Sound Culture

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Women's Leadership in Music

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Iva Nenić and Linda Cimardi (eds.)

Women's Leadership in Music

Modes, Legacies, Alliances

[transcript]

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This book is dedicated to our diverse, skillful and outstanding research collaborators, as well as to all the girls and women who bravely chose to assert their passion, beliefs and identity through sound, often defying stereotypes and changing the world along the way. Historically and in the present moment, their cumulative acts help enrich and improve the interconnected societies and cultures around the globe andstand out as a powerful model of cultural leadership.

Contents

Introduction. Women's Modes, Legacies and Futures in Music

Iva Nenić and Linda Cimardi

So far, women's participation in global music history has been explored by various disciplines that study music and culture, especially after the expansion of feminist music research in the late 20th century. The gender turn in ethnomusicology and related disciplines, often coupled with feminist theory and practice, initially shed light on gender-exclusive music practices, thus adding insights into the less known domains of female music-related activity to the broader map of the knowledge centered on global sonic cultures (Koskoff 2014). A long line of scholars, musicians and activists put their efforts into correcting the negligent consideration of women's activities in maintaining and creating music cultures by critically discussing the conditions and roles of womanhood in music and society. More specifically, they have highlighted the contributions by female performers, authors and cultural workers, but also pinpointed the constraints and hardship that women face while making music (Herndon and Ziegler 1990; Koskoff 1989; Magrini 2003; Moisala and Diamond 2000; Solie 1993). However, the specific topic of female cultural leadership in relation to music has not been widely examined cross-culturally in contemporary scholarship, especially regarding a conceptual background that avoids the tropes of exceptionality and difference, bringing forth the issues of agency, resistance, collaboration and networking instead. Several locally oriented ethnographic studies (Coe 2021; Downing 2010; Sunardi 2015; Tsitsishvili 2006), as well as more general, cross-cultural edited collections (Mathias 2022), have recently opened up the issues of leadership and gender in music, thus expanding the conventional approaches focused on the figure of a bandleader in music practices (Waterman 1982), the issue of leading roles within ensembles (Clayton and Leante 2015; Dueck 2011) and the intersection between religious and cultural leadership (Gidal 2013), to name a few common research directions. While exceptional female performers were indeed praised and androcentric research perspectives were criticized and corrected within academia, the very idea of leadership-through-sound, which stipulates that women perform from/through their gendered position, remains to be further explored outside the confinement of business-oriented leadership studies and similar fields that promote the corporate models of efficacy and do not investigate cultural leadership related to different communities at stake. As an alternative

and a revision, the concepts of leadership in a wider theoretical sense and in relation to the cultural, economic and political context have been explored through models of transformational leadership (Bass 1985) and situational leadership (Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer 1979) and by analyzing women's leadership in different social domains (Klenke 2016), among other approaches.

More recently, in ethnomusicology, female musicianship has been observed and documented through rich ethnographic accounts highlighting the issue of invisibility in academic and everyday discourses. Moreover, it has identified and analyzed the obstacles encountered by women in relation to ethnicity, race, gender and professionalization (Doubleday 1999; Downing 2019; Hellier 2013; Scharfenberger 2011; Weiss 2019). However, less attention has been paid to the shared structural conditions caused by the ever-changing, but persistent patriarchal ideologies, whose broader analysis could reveal more substantial challenges, struggles and identification processes that women in music currently experience. A critical topic to be investigated is continuity and/or disruption in legacies formed by intergenerational and transnational female networks in a contemporary world where local belonging and global proximity work together in specific manners, influenced by sweeping waves of crises and new alliances informed by feminism and other progressive social movements.

By asking what can today be considered leadership in culture from women's points of view and through a comparative perspective, this volume thus explores various modes of contemporary female cultural, social and political leadership by the means of music and as shaped through their different histories and cultural and political contexts. Another important aim of this book is to deconstruct the very notion of leadership by demonstrating that female agency and negotiations of ideas on gender, intersectionality and power, as well as wider social and political issues through music, should be considered a distinct form of cultural leadership, in contrast to their marginalization common in contemporary societies. As the chapters in this volume show, women doing (things with) music help improve visibility, stimulate empowerment and embody role models in music scenes both within local communities and in the contemporary global music arena. What is more, they also often tackle the "hard" subjects of inequality, misogyny, social justice and conservativism as they are open to discussing those problems because of their own experience of oppression in various renditions of patriarchy still present worldwide. Although the presented case studies mostly adhere to gender models based on the equation female-woman, our approach to gender and femininity rejects sexual determinism and acknowledges them as experiential self-concepts and embodied social constructs marked by fluidity, contingency and relationality with their multiple and complex personal and social renderings both in the historical and contemporary sense. Starting from this multilayered and flexible conception of femininity and womanhood, we endeavor to explore modes, experiences and notions of leadership with a fresh look.

In addition to culture-specific or genre-centered observations in individual chapters, the book offers a transdisciplinary outlook on the issue of leadership, ranging from ethnomusicology, musicology and cultural management to sociology and anthropology and specific sub-fields such as heritage and disability studies. The complex of chapters presents various female collectives and individuals from a cross-cultural perspective, approached through the conceptualization of female musical leadership, agency and trans-

gression. The topics range from artistic or popular music critique performed by women to the proactive role of female musicians, the emancipation of women in music, the position of female amateur musicians in carrying a music legacy, women as cultural mediators in world music venues, female music aesthetics, contemporary networking of female musicians, combating sexism and racism by music performance, the role of women in contemporary music industries, and more.

The chapters are organized into five sections. The first section presents the stories and voices of female musicians working across cultures and genres, often taking the role of a leader, activist and mediator in that process. The book opens with a study by Iva Nenić about the very concept of female music leadership, regarded as a possibility for the betterment of the female music labor and creativity, but also as a living and palpable practice facing numerous social pressures and stereotypes. These issues are observed through the work, struggles and goals of female neotraditional and popular music performers in Serbia. It is followed by the chapter by Linda Cimardi that presents the artistic and personal itinerary of Sarah Ndagire, a Ugandan-UK female singer, and her strategies for negotiating between the rules of the international world music system and the music scene "at home", while embedding her musical work across various genres and socio-cultural contexts. The third chapter in this section, by Ying-Hsien Chen, discusses how the Finnish instrument *kantele* is appropriated by female musicians in Japan and "reimagined" in connection with the cultural tropes of creativity and freedom evoked by the image of the Other.

The second part of the book highlights the intersectional character of the oppression that female musicians often face, as well as their strategies to acquire freedom of creativity and give voices to marginalized communities, by disclosing their fascinating and complex biographies and histories. Carol Silverman introduces three female Romani singers from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia and discusses how they faced and challenged the stereotypes tied to their gender and ethnicity within their professional careers, along with the negotiation over their roles as Romani women within their respective communities and in the wider society. Diane Kolin's chapter also comprises three case studies discussing the experience of women musicians with disability in the USA and Scotland and, focusing on their activism, appeals for inclusion and role modeling. The third chapter in this section, by Talieh Wartner-Attarzadeh, explores how women in Iran take an important part in Iranian-Arab Shi'a rituals as *umlāli* music leaders, yet they remain silenced because of the official politics of restriction of female public activities. The fourth chapter, by Blanche Lacoste, documents the music activities of Eastern European migrant female household workers in Italy (*badanti*), who take a leading role in Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Christian liturgical practices within their communities in Rome, which not only contrasts the usual discursive depiction of their labor and social position, but also challenges the religious mores regarding the role of women in music.

The third part of the book examines the challenges and changes of the institutionalized, formal and organizational aspects of female music-making through the lens of leadership and feminism. Clementina Casula writes about the gender-related stereotypes faced by Italian female woodwind and brass players in the field of European classical music, but also in jazz and other music domains. She considers the gender seg-

regation pushed by the institutional educational context, as well as how female musicians challenge the tropes and acts of discrimination both in their organizing sound and claiming leadership roles. The following chapter, by Laura Hamer and Helen Julia Minors, presents the case of WMLON – The Women's Musical Leadership Online Network, a supporting initiative based in the UK aiming at improving the position of women in music education and industries, as well as the headline of performance practices, through the application of feminist knowledge and strategies. The concluding chapter of this section, by Tatjana Nikolić and Katarina Mitić Minić, draws on the research on the effect of cultural policies on young female musicians in Serbia and other parts of Southeastern Europe and presents the case study of the application of feminist cultural management concepts to a concert by female musicians organized in Belgrade. Based on their analysis, the authors argue for the further implementation of feminist cultural policies focused on young women in music.

The fourth thematic section of the book is dedicated to the sustainability and change in traditional music cultures, as observed through the activities and interventions of female musicians. The chapter by Sanja Ranković interprets the historical and present role of female *tambura* players in the Serbian region of Vojvodina. They have remained relatively invisible in the local and regional research of *tambura* music practice, yet often occupy multiple roles simultaneously, being acclaimed music teachers and excellent leaders of the ensembles. The following study by Bahar Gjuka concentrates on a traditional Turkish song about the suffering caused by an early (child) marriage and traces its path from local traditional music to the intercultural context of her artistic and personal research and presentation performed abroad. Mirjana Zakić writes about the young women who take part in *kaval* playing in Serbia, observing their role in the current preservation efforts and within the revivalist practice of *kaval*, as well as in new, neotraditional and world music settings.

In the fifth, concluding section of this volume, the thematic frame encompasses the transgression of gender-coded music domains by powerful acts of claiming agency, voice and loudness. The chapter by Bojana Radovanović presents the participation and significance of female performers in Serbian metal music, with a special focus on the technical, affective and symbolic aspects of the female voice in metal, the history of the local metal scene and frontwomanship. It is followed by the study by Nasim Ahmadian that investigates the relation between all-female music ensembles in Iran, gendered domains of music making and aesthetics of sorrow by presenting the struggles of female musicians in the male-dominated realm of Iranian classical music and through the author's autoethnographic insights. Articulated in the work of Serbian hip-hop/trap artist Mimi Mercedez who operates in several "modes" of leadership within the post-socialist Serbian music industry, the empowerment mixed with the appropriation and ambiguous and ironic overturning of social stereotypes related to womanhood is the focus of the concluding chapter of the book by Adriana Sabo.

Although the music scenes, genres, forms and modes of female participation in various cultural, ideological, ethnic and racialized contexts presented within this book by all means vary, we hope that the readers will find a common thread, in addition to learning about sometimes hard, but also fascinating, inspiring and remarkable endeavors of female musicians worldwide. While no universal and transhistorical feature could "cover"

all the trajectories of female musicians in various localities around the globe in gaining visibility, voice and power, their passion to push over the borders persists and wins more freedom in a right and ripe moment of change, a *kairos* of female musicians' self-awareness and claiming agency. We believe that this process needs to be fully supported and understood if it is to withstand the opposing trend of conservative backlashes, disastrous patriarchy and various crises within eroding capitalism and blossom further, taking women as performers and creators, as well as music scenes, industries and communities in boundless promising directions.

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Uneven Terrains of Struggle: Towards the Transformative Notion of Female Music Leadership[1]

Iva Nenić (University of Arts in Belgrade)

Abstract: *Ethnomusicology and the related disciplines have devoted much effort to affirm female musicians, most often through the lenses of feminism, gender studies andidentity politics. The topic of female leadership within various socio-musical arenas, especially in the "micromusic" contexts, or in diverse subcultural, non-hegemonic cultural scenes and landscapes, remains relatively underresearched. Observed in terms of equality, power to act andpromoting wider social interests, female music leadership is often overlooked, but its relative marginalization in the cultural lacunae outside of major power arena doesn't mean that the struggles and the achievements are less real. Rather differently to the prevailing neoliberal concept of high individual achievement, the notion of transformational female leadership within music could lead to answers to a few fundamental questions. Firstly, what does the female assuming of the leading position and power within the immediate surroundings and wider actually produce, being always-already situated within the gendered expectations and constraints? What are the historical and present forms of female musical leadership, in a range from inter-group communication and decision-making to cultural leadership and musical activism? What kind of support is required for the female music leadership? The multisited ethnography performed with women of various personal, cultural, ethnic andgenerational backgrounds in Serbia, as well as the comparison with wider set of worldwide examples, would serve as a ground to seek those answers.*

Keywords: *female leadership, Serbia, world music, rock music, women, cultural leadership.*

While shaped by changing historical circumstances worldwide, female music-making is still shadowed by the overarching patriarchal presumption that culturally desirable femininity is a precondition that must be acknowledged, affirmed or reflected in the social dimensions of music practices. From different and changing gender-based divisions of music in traditional, pre-industrial and late agrarian societies (Doubleday 2008; Koskoff 1989; Nenić 2013), to contemporary global music stars often being presented as perfect

1 The research for this chapter and the production of this volume was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, PROMIS, grant no. 6066876, project *Female leadership in music* (FLIM).

simulacra of idealized womanhood,[2] the hegemonic concepts of femininity serve not only as an identity position, but more often as a requirement, a fact that must be socially reproduced in a correct manner, although, as Judith Butler (2006) puts it, the very performatives in the form of various material acts retroactively constitute what we perceive as a palpability and reality of gender. Thus, various sonic-based acts of simple non-conforming by female musicians or their intentional disruption of social expectations are retroactively framed as disturbing transgressions of the naturalized patriarchal worldview. Gender-related expectations are also ingrained in occupational gender segregation in music industries, and within creative and technical aspects of music producing, the latter being more frequently claimed by men (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015). Although the participation of female musicians in local and international music scenes and industries has raised substantially during the 20th century up to the 2020s, and the possibilities for female musicians have diversified together with the greater inclusion of feminist viewpoints in the presentational discourses regarding women in music and to an extent, regarding the material conditions of female music labor, the backlash against progressive ideas on womanhood and gender is still an ongoing issue. It can be the resurfacing of various gender-related stereotypes when female artists step too close to the position of power, or it can take the form of toxic fandom or "cancel culture"[3], as new phenomena brought by the global media and contemporary digital cultures of consumption. Simultaneously, within the constraints of local communities, national and regional cultures, female musicians still face numerous obstacles while trying to maintain professional careers and visibility and balance between private and public aspects of life that could be historically shaped and context-specific.

In the contemporary humanities, the interest in female leadership in arts and culture has steadily grown during the recent years. The usual approach is informed by feminism and strives to separate the very idea of leadership from its usual associations with masculinity, autocracy and power, while it "yet [has] to describe the complex leadership exhibited by the women leaders in the arts" (Brodsky and Olin 2018: xxv), by not falling into the trap of gender essentialism or citing various "leadership styles", which is often the practical focus of corporate leadership studies. The concept of female musical leadership has not been thoroughly explored in the global context, and needs to be addressed

2 This often includes able-bodiedness, cis- and heteronormativity as the standards to be repeated and embodied.

3 For example, important female artists of the nineties are now sometimes questioned because of their reluctance to declare themselves as feminists, avoiding to be named as "female artists" or not being enough sensitive to the issues of intersectionality, race representation etc., according to contemporary standards. While today gender mainstreaming, the archival practices on the internet and the rise of broad discussions in the online social media allow for such retroactive interpretations, sometimes they miss the context and unnecessarily paint the musicians as not being emancipated or aware enough. Many artists like Björk or Tori Amos who were the champions of the non-conforming female artistry and musicianship at the time could sometimes not express themselves fully as feminists because of the atmosphere in the industry where the word "feminism" was seen as loaded, and actually avoided to be referred as "female artists" because that could put them in the niche of "exception", or being thought to repeat certain representational codes tied to the socially dominant view on femininity.

both by paying attention to the locally based, idiographic studies, minutely documenting particular instances of music making (Rice 2010: 108 et passim) and also to "interlocal theory about musical processes in related communities" (ivi: 120 et passim), that in the latter case could, following Rice's model, help discern a complex global interconnection of music practices where women participate, ideas on womanhood, fourth wave feminism and various forms of anti-gender backlash and retraditionalization working against hard won rights of women. This chapter is an attempt to incite both – while being focused on multiple case studies of female musicians in Serbia, it also interweaves the discussion of that particular local situation with regional and global instances of female musicianship, starting from the presumption that there are shared structural preconditions for women's expression and agency through structured sound, as well as the shared experiences of inequality common in the present moment.

Although the praise of the achievements of many female musicians became increasingly common in the official discourses on music as well as on female music stardom on a global scale, these victories are not a guarantee that the freedom of expression and the value of female musical labor are to stay unchallenged, or a history of female musicianship brought forward, despite the great joint efforts by culturally oriented feminism, as well as ethnomusicological scholarship directed towards promoting female musical creativity and work. A recent online hatred directed towards major pop star Madonna aptly illustrates that: the visual appearance and the behavior of a singer who uses digital filters for her photos and videos on social networks, openly speaks on sexuality of older women and, in general, presents herself by refusing to conform to social standards of modesty and "fading" from the public eye expected from aging people have been heavily condemned on online forums and in internet communities. The Queen of Pop has successfully sailed the rough seas of the demanding global popular culture by introducing new music trends, served as a role model for other female musicians, spoken openly about sensitive or problematic issues related to different oppressed communities, publicly presented non-conforming female sexuality and freely morphed gender expression and agency,[4] thus embodying a striking example of female musical leadership. Yet, by reaching a certain age and choosing not to silently retire, her public presence seems to be a red beacon, provoking misogyny, ageism, vile comments and the retroactive dismissal of her manifold achievements and battles fought in the global music industry known as often being hostile towards women. In a world where constantly morphing misogyny, increasingly alienated enjoyment of music and the resistant patriarchal *status quo* cast a long shadow over seemingly transient, yet powerful affective experience such as the act of music making and experiencing music, what can prominent female musicians, music

4 While many scholars and critics indeed see Madonna's position as liberating and gender-non conforming, there are also opposing interpretations, framing her public acts as reproducing the common tropes of female eroticism and the stereotypical vision of seductive femininity. However, as Sara Martín (2022: 36) points out, the public persona of the singer is complex, as "many see […] her as a major feminist icon and others as a power-hungry, controlling, manipulative diva, though perhaps these two images are complementary or even the same one". Public personas like Madonna often have to negotiate between the socially desirable and transgressive visions of femininity, which might be a strategy to success, while simultaneously undermining the very traits that are being depicted.

workers and educators offer – both with respect to their own stance and in relation to the communities they represent, and how can they maintain their position, despite all the obstacles that keep showing up? In case of less visible, but still highly influential female music makers who belong to smaller local or subcultural communities, what kind of situations are there to be solved and what contributions are being made, in the specific articulation of leadership in micromusic settings outside the domain of dominant music cultural networks and industries? The answers to these questions may vary, but if a wider platform for female musical leadership is to be pursued, it must include the varied positionalities of women in music, with many shared aspects as well as the differences that might call for context-related actions in promotion and support directed towards the betterment of female music making, labor and sound-based activism. Similar to the tropes of transgression and / or rebellion, Burns and Lafrance (2002) posit the intriguing theoretical metaphor of "disruptive divas", which include the intentional artistic questioning of dominant systems from a countercultural position, the assuming of music's affective powers by female musicians in order to create the feeling of uneasiness for the listeners by letting the suppressed traumas and experiences of the artists emerge, the rearrangement of the norms and codes of music practices in order to directly "disrupt musical and narrative norms", and the claiming of technical skills and wider control over the processes of music's creation (ivi: 2, 3). Although Burns and Lafrance refer to the notable female musicians of the nineties belonging to the wide realm of indie / alternative orientation, like Tori Amos or PJ Harvey, their ideas could be applied to other historical and contemporary figures as well, as an approach to leadership taking into account the gendered specificities of fandom and presentational tactics influencing the mainstream culture, with the attention devoted to sonic and poetic strategies of disruption.

Female Leadership in Serbian Contemporary Semi- and Independent Music Scenes: Historical, Ideological and Cultural Standpoints

The possibilities offered to female music performers within contemporary music scenes and communities in Serbia depend on local beliefs regarding female social roles, but also increasingly on global ideas of womanhood, female intersectional identities and female expression and agency claimed through music. The source for the latter is the wide range of female musical and social involvement happening globally. Leadership tactics, in this sense, pertain to responses of female artists to the #me too movement, addressing gender inequality via music, taking an active role in preservation and change of local music and heritage, pushing towards responsible cultural and, more recently, environmental management through music and practicing models of feminist separatism as a tactical position in relation to art and music, to just name a few.

Historically, the local cultural mores in Serbia and in the Balkans regarding gender and music stressed that it was not common for women to assume the public role of a professional musician. Women were less common as folk music players in villages and the choice of professional career of singers or instrumentalists in urban vernacular music has been linked to lower social status and "questionable morality": however, both positions can be contested as the effect of the patriarchal representational tropes in popular

culture and in music scholarship. Take the example of the epic songs with *gusle*[5] accompaniment, typically represented as a national music culture related to masculinity, national history and the heroic acts of past. Although there were many female *gusle* players in Serbia and in other parts of the Balkans, the official version of local music history put them aside almost to the point of invisibility, despite communities being aware of such women or some scholars portraying their work through short case studies in 20th century. Their position has been usually approached through tropes of exceptionality and firstness, thus effectively rendering the possibility to learn of female-related history of *gusle* playing highly unlikely, both in everyday and official scholarly discourses. However, notable early folk music collectors like Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1878–1864) observed that there were many women who were able to play the instrument, blind female *guslarke* were common and earned money on the street and by travelling until the late 19th century, and later on, during the 20th century female *gusle* players such as Milena Živadinović or Stevanija Dragaš, to just name a few instances, were also role models and teachers in their respective local communities (Antonijević 1960; Barjaktarović 1954). Another Serbian female *gusle* player of the 20th century, Darinka Dobrosavljević, according to press accounts, continued to play and sing even as an octogenarian: in addition to the traditional repertoire consisting of epic songs that she learnt from her father, she also composed her own songs like 'Lađa od pirinča' ('A ship made of rice') and 'Lađa od đonova' ('A ship made of shoe soles'), thus showing her agency and capacity to insert her authorship in the traditional corpus otherwise bound to the topics of bravery, heroism, male nobility and the battles for freedom, which was considered at the time, as it still would be nowadays, a very bold gesture. This kind of silence surrounding female music acts that seemingly transgress the "norm" was transferred across subsequent music genres, ensuring that talented women are written out of the history, devalued, or put in the position of an exception at best (Nenić 2015). I remember one particular instance of stumbling upon one unnamed Yugoslav all-female pop / rock band formed long before the 1990s that wasn't documented by the local rock historians: the archival black-and-white photo of female band members with guitars in knee-long skirts smiling at the camera silently screamed the "fact" that even nowadays all-female music groups cannot easily learn about their female forebears and are still commonly depicted as "the first and only".

During the 2000s, changes took place in the field of Serbian popular music. The rise of the pop folk[6] in the early nineties after the breakup of Yugoslavia reached its peak, by becoming the dominant vernacular musical culture spread through Serbian and regional

5 *Gusle* (Serb. гусле, pluralia tantum) are a one-string folk bowed lute, typical for Serbia and the wider Balkan region. The history of *gusle* playing points to a transregional culture with many historical and local articulations of their music practice, but since the 19th century's formation of the nation-states in the modern sense, those traditions continued to unfold separately, as largely being framed by the exclusivist discourses of national culture and heritage.

6 Pop folk, sometimes called "turbo folk" by the critics and the members of educated elites, and "narodnjaci" (the folkies) by the listeners, is the largest mainstream popular music culture in Serbia that brought together the aesthetics and production of contemporary global pop music industry and the way of singing nowadays vaguely associated with the previous ruling music culture of *novokomponovana* (newly composed) folk music, the latter being a modernized form of folk songs and ballads created during Yugoslav period. Much like *novokomponovana* music, it has continued

TV stations, powerful music industry like Grand Production record label, and later on, the digital media and music sharing services. The post-Yugoslav neoliberal music market created a great disproportion between the massive pop folk industry and independent music scenes. The depiction of female musicians within these two highly asymmetric sociomusical strata – mainstream pop folk vs alternative culture – shared conventional gender tropes, but also exemplified profound differences. The typical construct of pop-folk female music star employs the imagery of sexiness, youth and conventionally understood female beauty, with song topics mostly about heteronormative love, and visual presentation often hinting at the luxurious lifestyle and seductiveness of the singer, although the performers sometimes undermine the conventional reading of their otherwise stereotypical "delivery" of gender by certain material and discursive gestures (Nenić 2009). On the other hand, in the Serbian independent music scene, the possibilities for female performers may seem more varied and in a dialectical opposition to the pop folk's figure of *diva*, but certain restrictions and constraints tied to local cultural norms and expectations regarding gendered behavior are still in place.

In the case of late millennial and older female musicians, the influences can be both local and international. This web of interlaced local conditions and global trends shapes the possibilities and agency of music performers in a gendered way, by confronting or mixing changing local ideologies with the dominant models of gendered behavior circulating within the global musical "superculture", to borrow Slobin's term (1993), thus giving rise to a specific articulation of female agency through music. Asked to single out female role models, the interlocutors cited both foreign music stars and fellow Serbian female musicians, but also the teachers, activists and famous women musicians of earlier generations who belonged to a similar background or a local community, in a wide range from Florence Welch, lead singer of the band Florence and the Machine, to late Margita Stefanović of EKV, a keyboardist, artist and a symbol of progressive Yugoslav rock scene endowed with nostalgia, to regional prominent alternative pop singers like Croatian Ida Prester of the band Lollobrigida who often speaks about pressures faced by female artists and motherhood and supports LGBTQ+ people. The ex-Yugoslav pop and rock female musicians are often cited as the earliest exemplary instances of successful female participation in alternative music culture. Margita Stefanović, a keyboardist and supporting vocalist of new wave band EKV, or folk accordion player Radojka Živković who was the first highly popular performer and author on that instrument within the field of modernized folk music during Yugoslav socialism are often mentioned in that context – both performers were seen as exceptionally gifted, but were mostly surrounded by fellow male musicians, and described as not-so-typical women who rose to fame by being "different" and were treated as such, which, again, exemplifies the discursive gesture of masking the exclusion with the veil of exceptionality.

My research of contemporary independent scenes in Serbia has been carried out in several sociomusical settings and during the last two years specifically through the research project titled *Female leadership in music: a cross-genre research of women's roles, agency*

to blend various local folk music styles, locally incorporated influences of Ottoman culture and newly imported melodies from the Middle East.

and collaborative music-making practices in Serbia. I have been observing the activities of female musicians belonging to musical scenes of neotraditional music, world music, rock, pop and jazz, with various in-between genres falling to these loose categories, being outside the music mainstream and with smaller and dedicated audiences who treat music as a social "mark of distinction", but also increasingly as a social arena for seeking viable alternatives, and sometimes, for articulating dissatisfaction and anger. Our team's research informants were predominantly of Serbian, but also of Romani, Slovak, Croatian, Hungarian, Vlach, Bunjevci and interethnic background, and belonged to different age cohorts. In defining leadership in operational terms and choosing the informants, we have combined the criteria of visibility and impact as seen by the communities and our external observations on how certain female musicians, as well as the women related to the music industry and cultural institutions, claim the agency and push for visibility.

Younger performers who use the platforms of YouTube and Tik Tok to learn about music trends, female musicianship and socio-politically engaged genres and songs are often not fully aware of the local history of female musicianship, but easily reach global instances of music-mediated critique of various issues, like racism, misogyny or the exploitation by contemporary capitalism, among others. The intersectionality of racial and gendered oppression is a topic investigated by the all-girl Romani activist band Pretty Loud who address multiple issues related to the experiences of Romani women.[7] The band's members have pointed out that the song 'Energy'[8] by Zambian female rapper Sampa the Great, is something "[they] listen all the time" (Pretty Loud, interview, Niš, 26 April 2021), which, coupled with their interest for online feminism and intersectionality of ethnicity and gender, gives an explanatory background to their experiences of oppression, a call to end the practice of child marriage and promote women's rights discussed in their own songs. When I carefully introduced the word "feminism" during our group interview session, one of the more outspoken band members almost jumped with joy and quickly explained to me why feminism matters and how she and other band members discovered it:

> I've seen it on social networks. I saw the comments telling that the feminists are sick women who hate men. No, that is not a point of feminism. The point of feminism is the equality (Pretty Loud, interview, Niš, 26 April 2021).

The same young informant continued to explain the feminist position by highlighting the fight against the oppression of women and racism:

> I was always saying that the feminism is [related to] man and woman, there shouldn't be that the man is above or that the woman is above, but equality. I feel sorry when daughters are treated differently than sons when it comes to to having a partner, going

7 Pretty Loud is a Belgrade / Niš based performance collective gathering Roma girls and young women, whose songs speak against early arranged marriages in Romani communities in Serbia, deal with issues such as racism against Roma people, but also include everyday topics of interest for young women. Their formation and subsequent work has been supported by the GRUBB foundation, facilitating educational and artistic projects aimed at Roma children and youth in Serbia. For a detailed case study of Pretty Loud, see Carol Silverman's chapter in this volume.

8 The lyrics stress "feminine energy", "female energy" and "female libation".

> out, going to school […] There are our texts where we rap 'I am a woman and I will have a voice. Why shouldn't I have a voice?' (Pretty Loud, interview, Niš, 26 April 2021).

Young Roma people, as well as some elders within the Serbian Romani community strongly relate to the experience of oppression depicted in the songs, but also to the criticism and the messages of empowerment. Sometimes the audience refers to a certain band member as an imaginary female character of one of their songs, 'Samanta', a girl being forced to marry young, by calling them by her name and seeing the performer as an embodiment of that position (the lyrics go "And that's how Samanta got married / But everybody knew that's not what she wanted / She will never be happy / But her father will carry her burden"). The members of Pretty Loud have been praised as activists and promoters of women's rights by the wider community, which led them to receive many formal recognitions, such as the prize titled "Bring the noise" granted to the band on the 8 March 2021 by the feminist association BeFeM (Belgrade) for the fight for the voice of Romani women.

Although local world music and folk music revivalism differ from indie / alternative music in many ways, both are largely outside the dominant music industry in Serbia and the region, and offer a different experience and sense of belonging in comparison to highly stylized pop folk forms, thus being, as David Hesmondhalgh and Leslie M. Meier put it, "strongly linked to ideas of aesthetic, institutional and political alternatives" (Hesmondhalgh and Meier 2015: 2). Those two domains also share a historical position of women not being readily granted importance and power to act. This often meant that female participation was preferred in a collective form or as a supporting position. During Yugoslav socialism, the preferred way of presenting folklore included female *a cappella* traditional folk music groups, but comparatively less instrumentalists, while in pop and rock music, apart from the position of lead singers, women were often backing vocalists in the bands, less represented as players and sometimes not being fully credited for their overall role in music's production that could include composing, arranging and other tasks. If they tried to make a living based on music and hence become more visible in the mainstream media, they often faced criticism and did not receive enough support, which is often a case even today. A prominent pop singer, composer and producer Aleksandra Kovač described that situation and how that effort led to the feeling of exclusion, but also of perseverance:

> The underground scene sees me as a part of the mainstream and the mainstream scene sees me as a part of the underground. I don't belong to either fully, I belong to both […]. My music will fall under my microcosm, my scene, my publishing company, my production company. I will gather in the craziest possible way the audience that will understand that I am now a small islet floating in the vast ocean and trying to survive (Aleksandra Kovač, interview, 20 February 2022).

The Articulation of Female Musical Agency and Leadership in Serbian Music Scenes: Echoes of the Past, Multiple Presents

As a concept, leadership has been appropriated by the neoliberal discourse of exceptionality, the authority equated with masculine traits and high individual achievements. In contrast to that, I start with an idea of leadership as either individual or shared action taking and assuming responsibility for different communities and affinity groups in need. Moreover, it is not only a pure act of gaining power, but also a tactical rearranging of the given set of meanings, values and qualities attached to a certain identity position in order to stretch or overstep the boundaries, to evoke Judith Butler's ideas on disidentification. In addition to celebrating the individual accomplishments of notable female figures like major music stars who succeeded in not-so-friendly cultural and media environments, there are many things done by women in music and for the communities that perhaps deserve equal attention, and also rethinking of what basically constitutes leadership in today's world crippled by inequalities, rapid changes and uncertain future. Can it be related to informal and non-hierarchical "autonomist leadership" of leaderless movements (Western 2014: 680) where there is a loose but wide group "without movement" (e.g. female music artists and cultural workers) with similar aims, but without a common agenda that can perform "individualised collective leadership" together (ivi: 693), or is it more easily related to the concept of transformational leadership (Klenke 2011), where the outstanding figures incite the change within their immediate communities? One can easily differentiate between several possible models of leadership in music: intragroup and intergroup leadership within the immediate context (a band, cultural institution, network of fellow musicians), community leadership (presenting and safeguarding the music for a particular social group), cultural leadership (promoting a cultural identity through music) and transformational leadership (understood differently from the corporate slang of "leading and inspiring", as sonic activism, changes of music scenes and the wider society through music). Also, as regards the shaping of the agency, there are individual and collective, as well as hierarchical and horizontal, modes of leadership to be observed. Leadership can also be a failed or a budding possibility – the first is often the case with the women who were not able to obtain a necessary support network and the latter is a frequent situation with young female musicians. Olga Kovačević, an educated woman and a daughter of a Serbian Orthodox priest from Vojvodina[9] (northern Serbia) who lived in the 19th century and was a self-taught *gusle* player, is an example of the arc between two possibilities – namely, of growing into a leadership position and sadly losing it, due to the lack of support for "overstepping" a traditional female role and being ahead of time. Olga gained popularity as a young girl within the national movement of United Serbian Youth. It was not common for an upper class woman to publicly play *gusle*, however Olga gave several notable public performances since she was 14 years old, where she was greeted with ovations due to her skillful singing and playing, but also as an epitome of national ideals of femininity, in the context of the 19th century Serbian national revival. In her diary entries (*Beleške*) published after her death, she eloquently

9 While seeking to establish the national culture in line with prevailing national romanticism discourse of the 19th century, United Serbian Youth also supported female emancipation.

expressed her views on culture and women that could be seen as openly feminist and ahead of her time. She also wrote about her unfulfilled wish to create a school of *gusle* playing for women (Kovačević 1912), which was an idea that radically challenged the 19th century's ideal of womanhood, primarily connected with the modesty, respectability and the private sphere of home. Without the formal support and quickly forgotten after the sharp rise to a relative fame within the national movement, she could not fulfill her vision, which stands out today as the first noted attempt to create an informal music education hub for women in Serbia that would transgress traditional gender boundaries. In her own words, it was hard to motivate other women to learn *gusle* playing (ivi: 24), as most of them saw the piano playing as the "modern" European music practice, standing at a more desirable intersection of class and gender.

In the most immediate context, the leader can be one person who is also externally perceived as such, or, in some cases, the true leader would be a person who performs the most important tasks, but "stays behind" the public view. Then, leadership could be also shared and fluid, with several musicians dividing the responsibilities and decisions – sometimes, this is the case with all-female bands whose members often recognize multiple subtle, yet real difficulties brought upon female artists by the society and strive for equality within the group by dividing the tasks and occasionally "rotating" the leadership roles in a horizontal manner. Speaking of sharing creative and managerial labor in her all-female melodic death metal band Nemesis, the drummer Selena Simić stated:

> There are different hierarchies for different things. Regarding my band, I like to see that one of them has warmed up for something particular. Be it a shooting, a video, a song, I like to let it go of control and to trust that they will do everything well. When we were filming the music video for "The War is On", our bass player was totally into finding a location and coming up with something. I also had a myriad of ideas, but I didn't want to force it, because I think that, when somebody is into something, you should let her go on and fulfill her own idea because afterwards she would appreciate both the thing we did and the band itself. […] There are different types of hierarchies, but I know that the band expects from me to manage things. I always negotiate with the guy in whose studio we rehearse. When we travel, I am the one to talk to organizers (Selena Simić, interview, 8 October 2021).

Belgrade-based Nemesis is often presented with a reference to the gender of its members – an all-female band, *sveženski*[10] *bend*, the girls [that] can play fast and furious music ("praše death metal").[11] The band quickly went from playing covers to creating their own

10 *Sveženski* (adj.) is a calque of "all-female", a loan translation, standing in-between an archaic tone and a playful meaning in modern Serbian. The use of this adjective in many newspaper articles mentioning the band, thus, subtly indicates the underlying mechanism of representation, that takes a note regarding the gender of the performers, but also leaves space for interpretation of the gendered positions as unusual or even funny.

11 Highlighting the band's ability to play in an energetic and powerful way, common for the death metal, is a commonplace in the announcements of their gigs, as well as in the press. This particular quote was taken from a Facebook event description, for a concert in 2015 in Belgrade club Kuglaš. https://www.facebook.com/events/kugla%C5%A1/kuga-nemesis-petak-16012015-kuglas-beograd/1610603379167403/ (accessed 18 September 2022).

albums with authored music, and songs like 'Uprising' or 'The War is On' offer a critique of contemporary capitalist exploitation, with feminist overtones ("I am the owner of my life / You can't push me down / It's not over / the battle has just begun!"), delivered through the persuasive death growl of singer Sanja Drča.

Figure 1: The members of the band Nemesis. Photo credits: Danijela Zmajević.

In addition to being active in Serbian metal music community, band members like Selena Simić and Tijana Milivojević also take part in passing the skills and the experiences of playing to young women, like in Rock camp for girls – an annual event organized by Femix[12] since 2017, dedicated to building the community of young rock female musicians and helping the girls learn and combat prejudices while in a safe environment. Simić is also active in the Serbian feminist movement, where, among other things, she leads the drumming section for the 8th March protest walk. Being a long-time participant of the drumming section, I have been able to observe through the years how Simić has been carefully balancing between her leading position and the requirements of participatory music making, as a master drummer who passed the skills to sometimes completely untrained women in the informal feminist setting, offered rhythmic patterns for the protest and yet let the others decide over them, patiently waited until everyone learnt the rhythms sufficiently enough, and positioned herself as an equal member of a situational collective, while practicing a non-directive leading. Her work, thus, embodies a

12 Femix is a program supported by OPA, Organization for the Promotion of Activism, that actively supports the creative work in arts and culture by women in Serbia, especially focusing on young women and girls: https://femix.info/ (accessed 11 September 2022).

situational approach to leadership that could be seen as gender-informed and fluid by being able to assume the leadership position and to step back when necessary, but also by combining the roles of an outstanding musician, a member of a band and an activist for women's rights, thus reaching across various social groups.

Figure 2: Anka Puderka and Marka Vozaf (left to right) from the group Meškarke, during a field-work session. Photo credits: Branislav Stevanić.

All-female music collectives and shared and multileveled leadership can be encountered in other sociomusical contexts as well. The group Meškarke from the village of Aradac in Vojvodina is formed by women of the Slovak ethnic minority who maintain female playing on small diatonic single row accordions (*meške*), thus safeguarding their cultural identity through an exclusively female and Slovak tradition that started in the early 20th century. Their repertoire consists of dance tunes like the waltz, step dance and *csardasz*, as well as Slovak and some Serbian songs.

Their instruments were passed on from mother to a daughter and the group's present setting consists of four active players in their late sixties, as well as one octogenarian member. The group successfully performs in Serbia and abroad, as the music allowed its members not only to promote Slovak heritage, but also to travel and see the world outside their village and encounter different cultures and lifestyles, sometimes very far from their own:

> [My husband] sometimes murmured and nagged, but he was able to go everywhere when his company would take them. I would let him go. Then he also would let me. Now he doesn't care anymore. […] I have been everywhere and saw many things that cannot be described. I saw and experienced a lot. […] Once we slept for a night in a

> student's dorm abroad. There were different people there, making noise, partying. We didn't sleep the whole night (Anka Pudar, interview, 30 October 2021).

The bending of expected gender roles was allowed because the music was seen by the local community as a hobby and also an attractive and polite representation of their cultural identity. However, it was not fully met without resistance: the members recalled how some of them had to literally escape the work in the field to join the group for a journey, argue and negotiate with their husbands, or how they had to organize everything at home in order to be able to travel. On the other hand, the music allowed Meškarke to raise their social status within the village and the community of Slovaks in Vojvodina in general as cultural ambassadors for their ethnic minority group, as well as to conquer a space for the activities not related to female roles in rural patriarchal settings and recruit new members along the way.

As we see, the cultural expectation regarding the female musicians practicing local traditional music often underlines (female) virtue, modesty, and a role in safeguarding the national heritage. This is also typical for the revival of *frula* that started during the 2000s, with many girls and young women entering the community of *frulaši*. *Frula* is a Serbian folk instrument,[13] an end-blown shepherd aerophone made of wood, with a traditional repertoire tied to village songs and dances that has been modernized throughout the 20th century. Nowadays *frula* playing is equally part of the Serbian music heritage preservation efforts, of folk amateurism and of professional world music settings.

From a gendered position, there is something specific in this otherwise common trope of successfully blending the modern and the traditional. Male *frula* players of the mid- and older generation either continue the reproduction of traditional musical models and repertoires treated as the local cultural capital and the "imaginary museum of sound", to paraphrase the famous metaphor by Lydia Goehr (1992), or some of them like virtuoso Bora Dugić, decide to play in an improved and technically superior manner, choosing more popular or melodically richer traditional tunes and adding examples of regional music, as well as their own authored works. Female *frula* instrumentalists often have to prove themselves on both levels – by entering the neotraditional music scene where there is still an underlying presumption that the instrument is reserved for men and by demonstrating an equal level of mastery in contemporary approach to performing on *frula*.

Young prominent *frula* player / multiinstrumentalist[14] Neda Nikolić's performances and repertoire choices illustrate the typical position for a female performer outside conventionally assigned gender roles: she plays the instrument associated with men in the general discourse on national folk culture. Neda commands a vast repertoire that could be tuned either towards neotraditional music events related to local and national heritage sustainability by playing village airs and dances without the accompaniment and by learning local musical dialects, or in other instances, towards presenting herself as a skilled multi-instrumentalist on a large stage of a concert venue associated with "serious" classical music, in front of an orchestra, doing crossovers and jumping between Serbian

13 While the majority are ethnically Serbian, there are also Vlach and Bosniak *frula* players.

14 For an overview of Nikolić's approach to *kaval* playing, see Mirjana Zakić's chapter in this volume.

folk music, jazz, contemporary classical and world music. In other words, she constantly has to move between social spaces, by participating in folk music events officially staging the national culture, as well as by doing the gigs in the clubs and negotiating a position in terms of representation, authority and labor value. This expectation to subtly tie the knot of the dichotomy between the old and the modern was summed up in a recent interview for the Serbian populist magazine *Telegraf*, whose title proudly stated "She is the pride of Serbia in the world, because she plays both *kolo* [a traditional Serbian dance] and jazz on *frula*".[15]

During the first year of pandemic, I was able to observe Neda's struggle to maintain her multileveled positioning through scheduling performances in the very limited context of COVID19-related prevention measures: she performed a concert in Belgrade's Ethnographic Museum during a period of very strict regulations on public gatherings, earned money through club gigs with pop music bands, and held her jubilary concert titled "Čarobna frula" (The Magic Flute) at Belgrade's Kolarac concert hall, where she presented her different musical "personalities" and varied repertoire with various guest musicians. In addition to performing, Neda also taught young children either through private lessons or through the workshops: many young girls who saw her performances on television and on the internet now point out to Neda when asked about the role models in *frula* playing.

Figure 3: Neda Nikolić playing frula in Belgrade's Ethnographic Museum. Photo credits: Iva Nenić.

15 https://www.telegraf.rs/pop-i-kultura/muzika/3178546-ponos-je-srbije-u-svetu-jer-svira-i-kolo-i-dzez-na-fruli-ovo-je-neda-nasa-najbolja-frulasica (accessed 17 September 2022).

If the intersectionality is a common identity precondition, then this situation – namely, of a female performer being under pressure to fulfill different social expectations and to cross different borders (between musical genres and between gendered areas of expression as defined by the society) in increasingly precarious conditions, could be understood as a constant demand to juggle between one's own agency, social biases and invisible borders. Thus Neda can turn over the expected position of a "partial insider" due to her gender by inventing herself as a versatile performer being able to move between scenes, instruments and genres and being invited to different musical arenas, but also putting more effort into sustaining that position and successfully avoiding the "either-or" logic. Of course, it is questionable whether this is a victory, or actually a burden faced by female music artists, especially at the early stages of their careers and in sociomusical formations with an ambiguous approach towards the professionalization of female music labor.

Growing into a transformative leadership position can be observed in the case of all-female neotraditional / world music band Rodjenice, gathering young women from the Serbian cities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica. This *a cappella* group, now a trio, was formed in 2009, with the intention of performing Serbian and regional traditional folk songs outside the common representative mode of folk music heritage that stresses the authenticity and locality as a means of safeguarding national culture. Rodjenice's repertoire consists of two-part village folk songs and, while they keep the non-tempered tonality and "rough" vocal expression characteristic of Serbian and regional rural music culture of the past, their framing of the songs differs from other all-female traditional and revivalist groups. The band is active on digital music platforms and they translate the song lyrics and present themselves to the foreign, English-speaking audience, while also taking part in international world music festivals and in general re-framing traditional music by aspiring towards an artistic concept that endows their music with a specific visual imagery and allusions to the Yugoslav past. One of the main metaphors used by the members of the group is "raw", which is simultaneously evoking the discourse of authenticity typical for the Serbian revivalist traditional music scene and a word play regarding the band's name and identity (their album recorded during the pandemic and released in 2021 is named Rawdjenice). As one of the singers said in a recent interview, "We don't want Yugoslavness as a political or social arrangement, or necessarily the cultural experience it entails. What we want from Yugoslavness is something supranational, that we can sing [to the various audiences in that context]" (Rodjenice, interview, 6 October 2021). The "raw" metaphor, thus, functions on several levels. The members of the trio have recorded their singing with a Zoom H4n recorder, wanting to "offer a specific musical experience as well as the experience of the space, in a form of a music narrative relying on sonic and production imperfection".[16] The "raw" concept serves as a descriptive statement for inserting the "exotic", loud and crisp sonic qualities of Serbian traditional folk music into the wider medium of popular culture, deliberately playing with fascination and estrangement, to use Freudian terms, of the audience. Lastly, it is an allusive political gesture asking for a bottom-up approach to the turbulent past and present cautious

16 https://rodjenice.bandcamp.com/album/rawdjenice?fbclid=IwAR0KsCT4kwUACM5qDi8P03rrSAXDV6KrPyjWbKFjprs7tXB8vyMI5ZMQ1bs (accessed 5 September 2022).

alliances between the post-Yugoslav nations as a "raw" ideology without politics; in the very words of the band members, "the choice of the songs [has] activated […] the politics in the culture, but in a non-deliberate way" (Rodjenice, interview 6 October 2021). This stands in contrast to the usual framing of traditional folk music as national and non-political at the same time and, as an intervention by a new generation of performers, it addresses different and wider younger audiences, while letting the older listeners relate to their experience of Yugoslavia, especially with the partisan songs sung in the style of village two-part singing *na bas* (on bass), like *ojkača*[17] 'Mladen' – a song describing how a fellow partisan fighter in WWII brings the news of the heroic death of a young brave man fighting the German fascists to his old mother.[18]

Figure 4: Rođenice posing with statues in the Museum of Yugoslavia's park. Photo credits: Jovan Radaković.

Rodjenice have also addressed the gender-based division within the folk music repertoire, by making an album entitled *Male voices* (2020), where they have deliberately sung the pieces today conventionally seen as meant for male performers – this decision stems both from their claiming agency as female artists (and refusing the role of mere "carriers of tradition"), but also points out the gap between the rigidly gender-codified domains of folk music making and the complex and changing history of gender positioning within

17 *Ojkača* or *ojkalica* is a type of song performed with the use of *ojkanje/groktanje* (shaking), an archaic singing technique where the leading voice decorates the melody on the syllable "oj" (oy) with the tones produced by the use of tremolo / vibrato, common for the Dinaric areas of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. It is performed by Croats and Serbs, the latter also bringing and preserving this type of singing to Serbia through the communities established with the resettlement of Dinaric Serbs to Vojvodina after the WWII.

18 https://rodjenice.bandcamp.com/track/mladen (accessed 11 August 2022).

folk music. As an act of disruption, it paves the path for a different interpretation of tradition and models a fresh approach to reshaping the relation between the past and present of national / regional culture from women's point of view.

Similar to the previous case study, the recent rise of popularity of Serbian finalist in the 2022 Eurovision song contest, Ana Đurić Konstrakta illustrates how taking hold of leadership can start from a seemingly underdog position and end up in a powerful act of being listened to outside the fandom circles and resonating on wider social issues. Lead singer of the indie pop band Zemlja groova (Groove land) and solo artist since recently, Konstrakta has been a long-time member of Belgrade's independent pop music scene. Her clever and ambiguous lyrics together with the rich visual imagery far from the figure of seductive music diva, mix irony, fun and carefully crafted social critique. The Eurovision entry 'In corpore sano' epitomizes this approach by simultaneously targeting the global obsession with female beauty (the now famous opening line "What is the secret of Meghan Markle's healthy hair"), addressing the hypocrisy of over-caring for the body but less for psychological wellbeing, and the precarious position of today's artists outside of mainstream music industry ("God grant us health since there's no medical insurance for me"), to name a few. On the stage, the artist is seen in a buttoned up suit, singing playfully in a narrow range and in recitative mode, surrounded by the choir echoing and amplifying her statements of a post-post-modern priestess condemning the *status quo*. Her performative act was cherished by the artists in Serbia and in the region, whose precarious position has rarely been publicly addressed in such way, but also by ordinary people who understood the lyrics as denouncing the falsehood of today's self-care practices preached within capitalist societies and even as a critique of the approach to Covid-19 pandemic that has often neglected the effects of restrictions and fear on psychological health. This way of claiming agency actually shows how being a part of small sub-culture of Serbia and to an extent, of the changing post-Yugoslav context, could be strategically used to reach the wider audiences together with posing an alternative model of female identification as an artist, as well as practicing transformational leadership for artists, female musicians and the wider community by pointing to social problems often left unspoken.

Roads to Take: Female Musical Leaderships for the Future

If leadership is to be understood apart from the mere obtaining of a power and authority position, taking it as a set of qualities and acts that should not be quantified but dialectically approached, it can lead to several directions in research, but also in the process of improving women's position in music. Society's gendered expectations and pressures often lead women to take multiple positions of promoting female agency in music, being role models, practicing horizontal and egalitarian inter-group relations, representing different communities, and using music as a tool for the social transformation. Close to Klenke's concept of female leadership as the contextualized and gendered breaking of various barriers and "glass ceilings", but also of a "labyrinth", a complicated journey towards a paradigm of "new organizational structures or different contexts" (Klenke 2011: 9), female affective and immaterial labor and carving of a leader's position in musical practices could be seen as a living experience that should be recognized and supported

through representation and networking of the women in music scenes and the relevant stakeholders, as being transformative, non-directive and multimodal. From the perspective of engaged scholarship, this also requires a discussion of the trap of exceptionality and tokenism (being labeled either as an "only" or a "representative" woman) within the communities, together with combating various stereotypes in many ways still attached to women's musicianship. Working across the genres and in-between generations, communities and cultures is a task that female musicians often take already being in a position of "partial belonging" due to their gender and this kind of cross-boundary approach can also be seen as a form of leadership as it builds bridges and takes a lot of work and courage from a privileged position. From young musicians, like Neda Nikolić, who work in different music scenes and in international contexts, to traditional and neotraditional female groups in Serbia addressing interethnic and regional issues related to the past and to contemporary identity politics, to rock artists like the band Nemesis singing in English for an international audience, but also empowering both budding female musicians and independent cultural production, this is a feature that characterizes female musicianship in Serbia, but also elsewhere, as other chapters in this book exemplify. The experience of inequality, but also the understanding of womanhood and identity in general as multiple, changing and not determined by entrenched social norms, has led many female musicians to address important social issues like social injustice, early marriage, precarious labor conditions, double burden of work performed by women, but also, in some cases, to strategically evoke feminist approaches and epistemology. Female musical leaders embody a multiplicity of ways of being or becoming women, and in that process use sonic, visual and discursive means to carve a place for themselves and the others in the world by "doing things with music". This calls for a greater attention to their endeavors by the joint efforts of academia, music communities, industries and activism, in order to remove various invisible, but solid "glass ceilings" and "concrete walls" on their way.

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Between Home and International Scenes. Sarah Ndagire's Way to World Music

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Abstract: *While most of Ugandan artists that reached international fame within world music are male singers and instrumentalists, in this chapter I focus on Sarah Ndagire, a female Ugandan singer based in the UK, and discuss how she developed her style, repertoire and career by establishing local as well as international networks. Ngadire gathered a variety of musical influences and inspirations as well as experiences in live music performances of several genres. Her music itinerary also developed through the fruitful cooperation with Ugandan musicians and sound producers and international collaborations for recording albums and performing on tours. Her repertoire includes interpretations of traditional songs as well as new pieces that she locates within world music with a Ugandan and African inspiration. In this chapter, I examine the various aspects of Ndagire's leadership by analyzing her background and training, musical production, career, international networks and cooperation projects with male musicians and studio producers; furthermore, I consider her position in the African diaspora and cosmopolitan approach to her work. Finally, I argue that her cosmopolitan sensibility, capacity of connecting with various artists, flexibility in moving across musical boundaries and effectiveness in shaping her own career are key factors defining her leadership.*

Keywords: *Uganda, Sarah Ndagire, female artist, traditional and world music, cosmopolitanism.*

In Uganda the professional music field is dominated by men, although female performers are also there. From traditional music to popular genres, almost all instrument players and the majority of solo vocalists are males, while female performers are also solo singers, but mostly dancers and background or chorus vocalists.[1] Because of this gen-

1 The gendered pattern marking music professionalism in Uganda has not been a direct focus of ethnomusicological scholarship so far. However, the male predominance in instrument playing and solo singing and female participation mostly in dancing and (chorus) singing emerge in contributions that analyze gender in performing traditional repertoires (Cimardi 2013 and forthcoming 2023; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005), as well as in works examining gender mainly through the lyrics of popular music songs (Lutwama-Rukundo 2008; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2002).

dered structure of music professionalism, very few women have leading positions in bands or as soloists, especially in world music. Sarah Ndagire is one of them. A singer experienced in traditional repertoires of Central, Western and South-Western Uganda, Ndagire assimilated the model of great African artists and gathered experiences through performing in various bands to build an international career within and beyond world music. She navigated various aspects of traditional performing arts through her personal re-elaborations as well as through collaborations with different musicians and music producers. Her talent and creativity have been internationally recognized and, thanks to them, she moved to the UK. From her transnational position between Europe and Africa, she continues to shape her repertoire and stage image that appeal to both global and local audiences.

I encountered Sarah Ndagire's music in the early 2010s, when I was researching Ugandan traditional repertoires in relation to gender. A traditional song, 'Katitira', which I had recorded from elders in Bunyoro, was also broadcasted by domestic radio stations in Ndagire's adaptation. From that track, I got interested in discovering more about her music and artistic work as a female performer. In 2012, thanks to the networking done by some friends, I was able to contact and meet her in Kampala, at the café of the Ugandan National Theatre, a place central for the performing arts of the country and that Ndagire knew very well. After that first stimulating meeting, we have kept connections through social networks, until 2021, when in the mid of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a long online video conversation. Then we continued our exchange through social networks and emails and, in summer 2022, I presented her my ideas at the core of this chapter, in particular the concepts of women's leadership and cosmopolitanism, and she read the first draft of this text and commented on it with insightful remarks.

Exploring Ndagire's career, musical production and self-positioning on the global music scene allows to reflect on the conditions and forms of women's leadership and agency, as well as on womanhood, Africanness and cosmopolitanism of musical artists in the present post-colonial time. In this chapter, I first locate Sarah Ndagire within the gendered structures of Ugandan music professionalism and then proceed to retrace her personal path as an artist in Uganda and abroad by presenting her interpretations and elaborations of local traditional arts as well as her popular and world music songs; finally, I explore how she mediated her music and public persona on different stages and for diverse audiences. Throughout this discussion, I have a twofold aim. On the one hand, I attempt to present the form(s) of female leadership that Ndagire impersonates by exploring different strategies and approaches she adopted in interpreting, elaborating and getting inspiration from Ugandan traditional repertoires adjusted to different audiences and contexts, as well as by establishing and nurturing transnational artistic networks. On the other hand, I want to shed light on the ways she articulates, stages and represents her African identity in international contexts and how she conjugates womanhood in her music and life. I interpret her work and career in the framework of cosmopolitanism understood as a way of negotiating (musical, cultural, aesthetical) meanings and I argue that this cosmopolitan sensibility, together with her capacity of connecting different artists, flexibility in moving across musical boundaries and effectiveness in shaping her own career, are key factors defining her leadership.

Gender Structures and (Traditional) Performing Arts in Uganda

In present Uganda, a gender differentiation in music professionalism sees men as the totality of instrumentalists and the majority of solo singers, while women are solo singers more rarely than men and mostly background vocalists and dancers. This pattern marks to varying degrees both the wide domain that we could label as "traditional" repertoires and the similarly ample category of popular music, as well as the in-between fields of neo-traditional popular music (i.e. the genres like *kadongo kamu* that developed since 1945 from traditional playing techniques and musical structures applied to new instruments and ensembles; see Kubik 1981) and world music (or world beat, understood as a broad category, including repertoires from the Global South adapted for an international audience mostly from the Global North).

If one moves away from the Europen-derived notion of "music" to adopt the wider concept of "performing arts", which covers the Ugandan understanding of the complex formed by instrument playing, singing, dancing and acting,[2] it becomes possible to investigate the role of gender in artistic performance on a more veritable basis. The gender differentiation hitherto shaping music professionalism in Uganda is historically grounded in most of local traditional performing arts, from the royal repertoires of Central and Western kingdoms to xylophone music of the Bakonzo and Basoga. In the past, women were not supposed to play instruments[3] because of their purported physical weakness or the risk of ritual contamination that their bodies were considered to carry.[4] In mixed gender call and response songs, such as those used to accompany dancing among the Banyoro and Batooro, the soloist led the performance and enjoyed great agency, freedom of expression and independence in shaping the content and tone of the vocal component. These qualities are associated with masculinity and in the past precluded women from doing the same, rather reserving them positions as chorus singers. On the other hand, because of the absence of a leading dancer, dancing offered occasions for a more equal expression to men and women. A similar equality marked storytelling, where both men and women could be main narrators and acting the story's characters. In the last decades, several factors – such as the development of a national

2 In Uganda this complex is commonly known as MDD: Music, Dance and Drama.

3 However, there are some notable exceptions to this general ban on women to play musical instruments: the widows of the king of Buganda could play some particular royal drums and, in the past, Huma women of Western Uganda played the trough zither (*nanga*), which is today in use just among Basongora women also based in Western Uganda.

4 My research interlocutors in Bunyoro and Tooro (Western Uganda) proposed different motivations related to the female body to explain why women are not supposed to play instruments, in particular royal instruments. Similar explanations in neighboring Buganda (Central Uganda) support the fact that women generally did not play instruments there either (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005). This kind of explanations also resonates with an extended literature tackling the issue of women being prohibited to play instruments worldwide, as reported by Doubleday 2008. However, it should also be noted that research on musical instruments has long ignored female musicians, usually because they were active in the private sphere instead of the public one, or considered them the exception to exclusive masculine instrument-playing, as Iva Nenić (2019) showed, especially for *gusle* playing in Serbia.

system of school education and festivals, the dissemination of semi-professional ensembles and of women's clubs throughout rural Uganda, the influence of African and extra-African models of female musicianship and success in music – have contributed to the erosion of the patriarchal structures modeling traditional performing arts, especially for what concerns singing. However, the influence of those customs is still significant in instrument playing, which although not a taboo for females anymore, can still be perceived as inappropriate to women.

Sarah Ndagire's first encounters and experiences in the field of artistic performance reflect this gendered bias. Indeed, she has never learnt to play any instrument and she still considers that to be one of the major impediments to developing her career more independently (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021). On the other hand, she had various experiences in acting, dancing and singing during her childhood and teenage years. In primary school, she embraced acting in the school club and, later, she sang in performances of traditional repertoires in her secondary school as well as with church choirs, although acting remained her main focus of interest during school years.

Traditional, Popular and In-Between: Sarah Ndagire's First Musical Experiences

The variety of genres and scenes in present Uganda can be retraced in Ndagire's training, early artistic experiences and later musical production. In the plurality of music scenes of contemporary Uganda, traditional repertoires can meet popular genres derived from the Global North halfway between experimentation through neo-traditional popular music, neo-traditional folk music and world music, while church music and classical music also contribute to a heterogeneous musical landscape. If traditional repertoires, characterized by unamplified live performances, are mostly the domain of school festivals, semi-professional groups and specialized traditional musicians, popular music is today mostly digitally composed in studios and performed in lip-synch on a played-back base.[5] Neo-traditional popular music genres like *kadongo kamu*[6] seem to lose audiences, but neo-traditional folk music, intended as new compositions inspired by traditional styles and at least partially produced in the studio, enjoys popularity, especially among middle-aged listeners. This is, however not comparable to popular music stars' success, both in terms of incomes generated and dedicated audience, mostly composed by youth (Schneidermann 2020). World music is mainly produced for a foreign audience by a few Ugandans based abroad, the most famous being the recently disappeared Geoffrey Oryema. Church music, in a variety of different expressions, is practiced and listened to by heterogeneous

5 Joe Tabula (2015: 12) locates the beginning of the dissemination of reggae and African American popular music genres like hip hop in Uganda in the early 1990s. These two genres had a significant impact on Ugandan popular music and stimulated the use of digital technologies in music production. As noted by Asaasira (2012: 163), "the fusion of a variety of music elements in Ugandan popular music has made it difficult to clearly categorize it [in specific genres]", but reggae and hip hop were soon indigenized by major artists, like Chameleon, Bebe Cool and Bobi Wine, who started emerging in the 2000s (Mbabazi 2012).

6 On *kadongo kamu* see: Kasule 1998 and Ssewakiryanga and Isabirye 2006.

audiences and finally classical music attracts only a niche public (Basoga 2012; Sandhal and Cooke 2006).

As I mentioned above, traditional and church music were part of Ndagire's training through her participation in traditional singing and acting in school as well as in different church choirs. When she was in her 20s, one of her friends in a youth center in Kampala insisted that she sang solo for a special performance; though reluctant, she finally accepted and her interpretation was very appreciated. People commented that she "had been hiding" her voice and talent and now needed to use it. Gaining confidence in her singing potential, Ndagire also started to perform outside the church choir and sang some famous hits. During the 2000s, as she worked for different Ugandan radios,[7] she had access to their sound archives, whose albums she could listen to and study. Furthermore, Ndagire and some like-minded friends researched music from other African countries and she found her inspiration models mainly from South and West Africa, in Miriam Makeba, Angelique Kidjo, Mory Kanté. By then, Congolese and especially South African artists, like Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Brenda Fassie, Lucky Dube and PJ Powers, were very famous in Uganda. PJ Powers' song 'Jabulani', the first one that Ndagire interpreted solo in a band, became one of the models of the music she wanted to do, a sort of Afro-pop fusion. Remembering how her musical taste and style took shape, Ndagire recounted:

> I loved the traditional rhythms and songs and I also liked the Western [ones]… So, I always wanted to find the way of combining them, because I find people who play traditional instruments, our traditional music… they play that [genre] alone, those playing in bands, you know for instance in jazz bands, they are playing that [genre] alone. So, I can't say that's where it came from, but from the beginning I started writing a few songs and, whenever I write a song, I think of a traditional song and… [that] I could add this to it… Then a friend of mine had a studio at the Lutheran Ministry… so I went there… and that's how it started (Sarah Ndagire, interview, Kampala, 8 February 2012).

For her own musical production, Ndagire was not interested in local popular music, digitally produced in studio usually on standardized rhythmic bases, but she wanted to record and perform with real musicians combining Ugandan instruments and rhythmic models with broader external influences. Ndagire would later develop this inspirational vein in her solo production of neo-traditional songs and world music, while during the 2000s she collaborated with established bands in Kampala as a singer. Some of these were very popular in the Ugandan capital city, like Light Rays Band, Big 5 Band, Percussion Discussion Africa group, Misty Jazz Band, Soul Beat Africa Band and the famous Afrigo Band. She also worked and established connections with professional musicians who would later collaborate with her for her songs and albums. The 2000s thus were fundamental years in providing her with experience of performing live a variety of

7 Radio Uganda at first, then Capital Radio for a short time and finally Dembe FM.

repertoires, from jazz to *soukous*,[8] from *kidandali*[9] to traditional. These experiences in bands playing different genres live contributed to Ndagire's stylistic eclecticism and prowess on stage.

Figure 1: Sarah Ndagire with Miriam Makeba in 2008 at the Uganda National Theatre in Kampala. Ndagire performed before Makeba at the Warid Kampala Jazz Festival, when this picture was taken. Used with permission of Sarah Ndagire.

8 *Soukous* is a dance music genre, derived in the 1960s from Congolese *rumba*, which had a wide circulation and success across Africa. The term is sometimes used as a synonym of Congolese *rumba*, especially for the *soukous* production from the 1980s onward, and in this sense was also used by Ndagire in our conversations.

9 *Kidandali* is a broad style category more than a circumscribed genre, it is played by Kampala-based bands combining the initial influences of *kadongo kamu* and *soukous* with jazz, traditional Ganda music and popular music.

Female Leadership and Solo Singing

According to sociologist Karin Klenke (2011: 4), the concept of leadership is usually still understood through the old masculine paradigm established in the Global North and based on power, control and authority. However, in the last decades research has started to consider alternate forms of leadership in different historical, geographical, social and cultural settings and the extensive literature available nowadays presents very different definitions of leadership. Klenke (2011: 7) underlines that the analysis of the context is fundamental in order to understand leadership forms, because "[i]t is context that shapes the process of leadership". In particular, while considering the context where female leadership emerges, culture and gender are inescapable elements establishing the possibilities, shaping the expressions and posing the boundaries of the forms in which female leadership can articulate (see the Introduction to this volume).

As described above, music professionalism in Uganda is mostly dominated by male artists, especially for what concerns instrument playing, while other performing arts constitute spaces where female performers have relevant roles and can even be soloists, in particular dancing, acting and, progressively since the 1960s, singing. Because the liberty, autonomy and reference role in solo singing were considered male prerogatives and related to an idea of leadership that was gendered as masculine, it was through a slow process, involving transformations of both gender notions and performative settings, that solo singing opened up to women. Nowadays, female solo singers are mostly active in the genres of popular music and gospel, but also in traditional ensembles, while in the domains of neo-traditional popular music and world music male vocalists prevail.

This is the context in which Ndagire's career and work emerges as outstanding. After the experience with the famous Afrigo Band,[10] Ndagire started her career as a solo singer and her choice of creating and performing in the genres of neo-traditional and world music was an uncommon one for a female artist. While popular music or gospel are recorded in studio with a music producer, neo-traditional and world music require live playing and recording. Thus, building a career in these latter genres demands much more effort and ability in creating networks and nurturing collaborations with numerous (male) instrumentalists. Working with musicians from the Kampala circle that she knew thanks to their co-participation in various bands, Ndagire explored local traditional repertoires, created neo-traditional songs for both the local and global audiences interested in world music and also a few pop songs. The decision to pursue a career in solo singing, not so common for female artists, and doing it in a musical field that is both more international and challenging than other possible musical paths seems to be recurrent in other examples of female musical leaders. As Nenić (2019) has shown for Serbian female folk instrumentalists, female musicians pushing against the constrictions and customs of the established performing arts system usually need to search for work and career possibil-

10 Founded in 1975, Afrigo is the oldest Ugandan band in the field of popular music. It was fundamental in the development of *kidandali* but also navigated several other genres, from jazz to *soukous*. Damascus Kafumbe (2013) dedicated an article to the development of Afrigo's musical style and adopted the band's self-identifying term *semadongo* ("master of many big musics") to describe it.

ities also outside their country, but can eventually turn this situation into an advantage for their artistic explorations and creations.

Through her music, social adaptability and resilience, Ndagire expanded her connections abroad and was able to tour Europe to record and perform and in 2011, she was granted the Exceptional Talent Visa for UK, where she is still based. Obtaining this visa – granted to international artists considered strategic for UK, based on their merits and achievements evaluated by the British Art Council – was a great acknowledgement for Ndagire on both the artistic and personal level. Indeed, such a visa is given to very few artists and African performers able to move to Europe using such document are very rare. While the development of a global market for world and traditional music has stimulated the emergence of new work opportunities in the Global North for performers from African countries, being able to out-migrate remains very difficult for them because of the several strict criteria to meet in order to obtain a visa for Europe (which is very telling of global power imbalance). Pascal Gaudette's (2013) analysis of what he calls the "*jembefolas*' path", i.e. the pattern of emigration and global mobility of *jembe* players, is useful for understanding the adversities met by many African artists active in world music. Gaudette illustrates the challenges for *jembe* players in building an international career, in particular at the crucial moment "when one must attempt to increase one's mobility beyond the confines of the African continent" (2013: 303). This "critical junction" in the *jembefolas*' path is normally faced through establishing and cultivating personal connections of friendship, family and marriage, which help (financially, burocratically, logistically) the musicians to obtain a visa and settle in Europe. Ndagire, on the contrary, was granted the Exceptional Talent Visa on the basis of her artistic achievements only, not through the help of family or friends, although it was similarly her self-confidence, perseverance and exceptional capacity of networking that guided her first steps abroad for tours and recording and it was this international recognition that allowed her to make the transnational jump from Uganda to UK.

Ndagire's work, international career and public persona as a solo female singer establish her as a leader in her field. However, her leadership role is not conjugated following the old masculine model, but it manifests through other values and characteristics, which I explore in the following section.

Musical Production and Performance in Uganda and around the World

Overall, Ndagire's musical production can be thought of as addressing three main types of audience: the non-expert listeners from the Global North interested in traditional music from Africa, the Ugandan audience loving contemporary renditions of traditional music and the international public following the new releases in the field of world music. Ndagire's flexibility in navigating various musical styles and adaptability in recording for different audiences are skills that she deployed in building her international career and emerge as characteristics of leadership.

In collaboration with other Ugandan professional performers, Ndagire has recorded four albums of traditional music and folk stories from different parts of Uganda with the

Swiss label Face Music.[11] These albums reflect Ndagire's competence in the repertoires and connected languages from Central, South-Western and Western Uganda, a flexibility that she acquired thanks to her family background and education.[12] Most tracks are interpretations showing mild transformations if compared with historical field recordings of the same songs or other pieces of the same repertoires.[13] An example of this kind of interpretation is her rendition of the Ganda traditional song 'Okufa' ('Death'), which is connected to storytelling and describes what is left behind when someone passes away.[14] These four albums are mainly directed to an international audience, which is most probably not specialized in music from Africa but interested in traditional music as not popularized in the form of world music.

Other among Ndagire's pieces are re-arrangements of traditional songs, where the lyrics and main tune remain unaltered but the instrumentation is enlarged with the addition of digital parts, the tempo accelerates, and different traditional songs or new songs in traditional style can be linked together. This kind of elaboration is usual in Ugandan traditional songs as performed by school and semi-professional ensembles, except for the digital instrumentation; however, this latter element is common in neo-traditional folk pieces recorded in studio and intended for local audiences.[15] An example of this type of music production is 'Katitira',[16] the traditional song from Western Uganda that I heard on the radio in 2012 and that I also recorded in elders' renditions and saw performed at school festivals. Through Ndagire's performance, this traditional song became popular

11 For two of these albums she collaborated with Pedson Kasume and the Ensemble Xpera – *Traditional Music from Uganda Vol. I East Africa* (2006) and *Traditional Music of the Bantu Women and Folktales of Baganda Women from Uganda Vol. I East Africa* (2006) – and for other two albums with Israel Kalungi and Lawrence Lubega (Ensemble Pearl) – *Traditional Music from Uganda Vol. II* (2010) and *Traditional Music of the Bantu Women of Uganda Vol. II* (2010).

12 Ndagire's father is from Buganda (Central Uganda), her mother from Nkore (South-Western Uganda) and she attended secondary school in Bunyoro (Western Uganda).

13 The transformations cover both the vocal and instrumental components of these renditions: Ndagire's voice emission is quite polished compared to the more "natural" vocal style of historical recordings and the chorus is sometimes harmonized with a second voice instead of being simply at the unison or with male and female voices at octave distance; the accompaniment is sometimes realized by an instrument other than the traditional one or seldom comprising secondary melodic lines besides the main one. In comparison to the contemporary practice of traditional repertoires in the school festival and by semi-professional groups, but also by Ndagire herself in tracks like 'Katitira' – which involve a wider elaboration of the traditional material in terms of adding second voices, blending different songs and enlarging the instrumental accompaniment – the transformations in Ndagire's interpretations in these records can be considered quite conservative.

14 An excerpt from this song can be listened to at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-4LWPoi1yk&ab_channel=FaceMusicSuisse (accessed 6 August 2022). 'Okufa' is from the album *Traditional Music of the Bantu Women and Folktales of Baganda Women from Uganda Vol. I*, http://www.face-music.ch/catalog/tradmusicug_album02.html (accessed 6 August 2022).

15 I analyzed similar processes of elaboration and digital arrangement of vocal repertoires from Western Uganda, as well as the composition of pieces in "neo-traditional" style, in Cimardi 2017.

16 Ndagire made different versions of this song, including the one considered here that is a medley with another Nyoro song, 'Nalyana': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5HbcmjmqqI (accessed 6 August 2022).

nationally, showing how arrangements of traditional material made in studio are among the forms of interpretation of traditional vocal music favored by Ugandan audiences.

'Train' is the piece giving the name to Ndagire's second album (2007), which includes elaborations of traditional songs (for instance 'Okunde nyowe', 'Nyamijumbi') as well as pop pieces (like 'Melody'). 'Train'[17] presents some features that might sound "traditional", but it is actually a new song. Here, lyrics in English (only very few words in Luganda are used) describe the role of the singer as a travelling train disseminating "songs and rhythms" of her people. The accompaniment is characterized by Ugandan traditional instruments, the xylophone and flute, besides bass and percussions created in studio; male vocalists, recalling South African *isicathamiya* singing style, interpose with the solo lines and a female chorus answers to the solo in the refrains. This kind of piece is addressed to an audience wider than the national one, a community of fans interested in world music. Following the pattern described by Thomas Turino (2010) for the dissemination and popularization of Zimbabwean *mbira* music in the world music market, in this kind of Ndagire's songs elements from traditional musics of the world are adapted and hybridized in order to be both familiar and exotic for the "cosmopolitan aesthetics" of listeners in the Global North.

Besides her flexibility and capacity of performing different musical styles to attract diverse audiences, Ndagire has built her career on skills of networking and cooperating across cultural and national borders. She gained these competences through to her collaboration with producers and performers in Uganda as well as in Europe, not following established music market connections, but thanks to her ability to bring together and cooperate with musicians of different backgrounds.

Her songs 'Katitira' and 'Train' are included in the four albums that she recorded as soloist and released with the Ugandan label CD Baby, which also distributed them.[18] For these projects, she collaborated with two Ugandan sound producers, Jude Mugerwa Lukwago and Kaz Kasozi, who are not particularly focused on world music productions, but have mostly worked in other music genres. Ndagire and their experiences met in a creative intersection between traditional repertoires and style and popular genres and their different approaches and backgrounds combined to create original pieces, most of which are directed to listeners of world music (Sarah Ndagire, interview, Kampala, 8 February 2012). Their productions have not involved major record companies in the world music market, but have been entirely Ugandan productions and the records' promotion has been based solely on Ndagire's and the producers' connections and networking.

Ndagire does not have a stable band, but collaborates with different musicians depending on the project on which she works. Although she has lived in UK for some years now, she records in Uganda because there she finds musicians able to understand what she wants as accompaniment in terms of style and rhythmic patterns, moving across local, regional and pan-African styles, like *kadodi*, *baakisimba*, Congolese

17 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuLuQBU3Qqw&list=OLAK5uy_kjGmViOHG_VEgRN_IgOa79q3JlmoQRM-o&index=3 (accessed 6 August 2022).

18 The four albums realized with Baby CD are: *Katitira* (2006), *Train* (2007), *A Taste of Uganda* (2012 – collecting pieces also released in other albums of hers) and *Sim Sim* (2015).

rumba, and *taarab*.[19] So, for instance, she can choose a good guitar player experienced in *rumba* among her former collaborators and have an easy, immediate and quality musical exchange for her accompaniment intended to be recorded. On the other hand, her numerous musical performances and tours in Europe and in the USA are usually accompanied by European and American musicians. It is easier to hire them and adapt pieces drawn from her varied musical production than to travel for tours with the many Ugandan musicians who took part in recording her albums, let aside the challenges that Ugandan citizens face when applying for visas to countries of the Global North. The European musicians with whom Ndagire tours are skilled professionals but usually not versatile in some styles or instruments that she chose for the recordings, so they adapt the accompaniment from the records (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021). This kind of adaptation is common in the field of world music for performers that do not have a stable band and allows artists like Ndagire to perform more flexibly for European and American audiences. On the other hand, not having a stable band to rely on and build a repertoire with also implies some disadvantages, like splitting the creative and recording process from the performance experience. Compared to developing the composed pieces with the original instrumentalists, this requires further working on arrangements and adaptations, as well as considerable energy for creating and establishing collaborations with musicians and time for rehearsing with them.

With energetic versatility, Ndagire moves across different genres and musical and cultural collaborations with Ugandan and European musicians to calibrate recordings and live performances for disparate audiences and contexts. Acting as the agent of herself, Ndagire shows deep awareness of the various approaches needed as well as the capacity to manage these varied collaborations in order to build an international career, anchored to audiences both in Uganda and in the Global North. Her musical entrepreneurship is transnational and transcultural and based on her deep understanding of different cultural contexts and audiences. According to these, she mobilizes and then cooperates with varied musical teams for both records and concerts, which she develops and plans within an ever-expanding network of cooperating institutions, venues and events.

19 *Kadodi* and *baakisimba* are Ugandan traditional music and dance genres, the first one of the Bamasaba/Bagishu people of the East and the second one of the Baganda people of the Center. Congolese *rumba* is the popular dance music derived from Cuban *son* and usually also (improperly) referred to as *soukous* (see fn. 8). *Taarab* is a music and dance genre derived from the confluence of elements from Eastern and North Africa, the Middle East and India that developed particularly in the Swahili regions of Tanzania and Kenya.

Figure 2: Sarah Ndagire performing at Glashouse in 2010. Used with permission of Sarah Ndagire.

Africanness, Cosmopolitanism and Womanhood

Ndagire's being across borders and genres is reflected in the transnationality of her life – living in UK and visiting Uganda almost every year to perform and record, hence her position can be considered cosmopolitan. However, rather than cosmopolitanism understood in the most common meaning of a hybrid identity in-between different countries and cultures,[20] hers can be considered a mediating approach between disparate realities. During one of our conversations (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021), I asked her if she didn't feel at least a bit European, after so many years living in the UK. She said just a bit, in the practical mentality that she acquired as her own agent in planning, organizing and promoting her work and in her accent in English that is perceived as British in Uganda. But mostly she feels African and this is the side of her identity that she wants to present through her music and her image:

> … in my shows I wear African costumes, because that's who I am. I might sing an English song, I might sing in English… but actually I like to come out as an African, because it's who I am, it's what I like. It's also the difference in the industry sometimes, it's what

20 Cosmopolitanism as a paradigm has been used in postcolonial studies to explore the cultural, social and identity patterns established by the diasporic mobility that started with the colonization and slave trade and then expanded during the 20th century through the increase of travel possibilities, migrations and the parallel decline of the nation-state as an entity comprising homogeneous populations (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2013: 64–67). This concept, often used to describe hybrid identities, has been put into practice and explored in multiple acceptations also in ethnomusicology, for instance by Feld 2012 and Stokes 2007.

> whereby you can stand out. And that's what I know best… it improves even my confidence… I'll come on stage and I'm dressed like that and I feel like yeah, it makes me even, you know, feel better about the shows (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021).

For Ndagire, Africanness rather than Ugandanness is a strong element of her identity, especially living abroad, part of the African diaspora, and she likes and draws confidence from that. In our conversation, she also noted that many African musicians after a few years in Europe abandon African attires and music styles, while she wants to stay true to her roots and her clothes of African fabrics made by African tailors reflect this, in her performances both in Uganda and abroad. Furthermore, she is well aware that her origins, the way she dresses while performing as well as the type(s) of music(s) she does, make her "special" in a competitive music market that values and commodifies difference. She also considers this as an advantage in presenting her artistic image in the performances and tours she does in Europe and in North America, which mostly cover small towns and villages, where, in comparison to big cities, people are not used to African music and design (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021).

Ndagire's conscious and deliberate display of and emphasis on the African elements in her music, stage appearance and self-promotion recall issues of exoticism and essentialism in world music. Ethnomusicological scholarship has considerably criticized the exoticism marking sound, representation and stage persona of Black performers from the Global South within world music, especially as a phenomenon connected to colonial imaginaries of the racialized Other (Connell and Gibson 2003; Feld 2005; Stokes 2004; Turino 2010). Literature in ethnomusicology has also discussed "strategic essentialism",[21] i.e. the act by marginalized groups of subversively adopting some stereotypes about them for pragmatic purposes, as employed for instance by African performers (Whitmore 2013) and Romani musicians (Marković 2015) to tackle the powerful world music market. Other contributions, like Anna Rastas' and Elina Seye's (2015) article on Africanness in Finland, have underlined the preference of artists of African origin to present themselves as "African" instead of by nationality while promoting their concerts or workshops. Although this self-description can stimulate generalizations and evoke essentialism, it is a marketing strategy usually employed by performers in the Global North to be visible within a complex cultural offer; furthermore, some venues where they perform also offer them the opportunity to challenge stereotypes about "African culture". While some features in Ndagire's self-positioning could be understood as essentialist and exotic, her attitude does not seem to be of "strategic essentialism", as it is among world music artists displaying stereotyped characteristics on stage to fulfill the audience's expectations. Rather Ndagire's self-positioning and (re-)presentation is a profound re-appropriation of what had become a stereotype, the African woman, the African singer. This re-appropriation is not naive but the opposite, it is a confident claim of her African identity in its external manifestations like clothing as something she equally owns and to which she belongs. At the same time, she acknowledges the commercial advantages of her stance because she is aware of the economic and power

21 The expression "strategic essentialism" was coined in the 1980s by Indian scholar Gayatri Spivak.

structures of world economy and music, and she uses the visibility obtained through her music and image to present different perspectives on "African cultures" as well as to sensitize about topical issues, as I discuss below.

Although her music is also known in Uganda and she led workshops directed to handing down Ugandan traditional repertoires to new generations, Ndagire thinks of her work more in terms of "cultural diplomacy", directed to presenting Africa and Uganda to foreign audiences. Ndagire has indeed participated in several projects and initiatives on multiculturalism in Europe, both as a performer and as a speaker and, on these occasions, she has introduced aspects of African cultures and discussed stereotypes with the participants. Also, given her activism as a cultural mediator, cosmopolitanism understood as a form of hybrid identity does not describe Ndagire's work and positioning. It is an alternate definition of cosmopolitanism, which I draw from Ulf Hannerz's work (1996), that I think can better represent Ndagire successfully crossing national, cultural and musical borders. According to Hannerz (1996: 103):

> [c]osmopolitanism is, first of all, an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It entails an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. […] cosmopolitanism can be a matter of competence, and competence of both a generalized and a more specialized kind. There is the aspect of a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting. And there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the term, a built-up skill in maneuvering more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings.

By defining herself as an African woman who mediates music, stories and representations of her country to mainly foreign audiences, cosmopolitanism does not connote Ndagire's identity, but rather her understanding and workings through and across national and cultural differences. As argued by Martin Stokes (2007: 17), although cosmopolitanism is a "messy and compromised" term, it is still a concept useful to highlight "the self-conscious exercises in musical exchange and hybridization" as well as "to alert us to agencies and cultural energies, to music and an active and engaged means of world making, not simply a response to forces beyond our control". On the specifically musical level, cosmopolitanism characterizes Ndagire's blending genres and influences by exercising her personal musical preferences and conveying her message and stances rather than adhering to world music unwritten rules of hybridity.

Several Ndagire's messages in her music and presentations concern issues related to womanhood and express a female point of view in a way that attempts to connect Ugandan/African experiences with European/North American ones. Indeed, female experiences and life stories emerge in several of Ndagire's songs, like in 'Sim Sim' ('Sesame'),[22] whose lyrics and music were written by producer Kaz Kazosi, in dialogue with Ndagire. This piece, which can be located between pop and world music, gives voice to the hopes and commitment of a woman selling sesame balls to be able to pay school fees for her

22 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvQpB7RoHdc&list=OLAK5uy_mhlDZHo_Z2SjK8rUEIl6320Y9wZzsX-6U (accessed 6 August 2022). This song is also the title of Ndagire's last album.

young daughter. Although stylistically and thematically this song represents contemporary Uganda, Ndagire understands it as traditional:

> … it is kind of a traditional story because it's talking about a story that all of us that went to school in Uganda have an idea about. It's the simsim balls.[23] Everybody who went to school used to love simsim balls but now, as adults, we are thinking: we love the balls but they didn't make themselves, someone made them… So 'Sim Sim' is a story about the woman who makes us lovely things that we used to like very much. That is kind of traditional… Then, I had a kind of vision that I'm telling this story under a tree and I've got people, we are sitting under the tree and I'm telling them a story… and that's how I think it feels a bit traditional because it has that idea that… you're listening, you're under a tree… (Sarah Ndagire, interview, online, 29 April 2021).

As in 'Sim Sim', in other Ndagire's songs women are the protagonists with their challenges, joys and hardships: love and couple troubles, inheritance rights, HIV-AIDS vulnerability, girls' education. On stage, Ndagire not only presents the topics emerging from her songs to both international and local audiences, especially when they do not understand the lyrics' language, but she also sensitizes the public to these topics and advocates, nationally and internationally, for more equality and rights for Ugandan women and girls.

Some of these problems – like inheritance rights not contemplating women and education that was not considered necessary for girls – are related to old customs in Uganda, which Ndagire, various associations and the Government are trying to overcome.[24] As already mentioned presenting her understanding of a piece like 'Sim Sim', Ndagire's relation with the traditional elements of her culture is dynamic and flexible, especially in relation to fitting in traditional canons about womanhood:

> I am very traditional because I would do many things that are traditional – the positive things, not the things that oppress me. Many of these things are not written anywhere, like [appropriate] clothes… Even if you are educated, it doesn't [completely] change you. I kneel down for my elders,[25] it's natural, I don't even think about it… because that's the way I was brought up. So I still uphold my traditional values that I think are positive… if I am married (I am not married now), of course I would do things that a woman does, like take care of my husband. But I wouldn't take care of him in a very submissive way, which is really terrible (Sarah Ndagire, interview, Kampala, 8 February 2012).

Positioning herself in relation to traditionalist attitudes and contemporary challenges and opportunities of being a female artist, Ndagire negotiates her position as a contemporary Ugandan woman, balancing between customary practices and present possibil-

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23 Usually, sweet and tasty sesame balls are sold by women in the proximity of schools for pupils to buy as affordable snacks.

24 Her engagement in assisting women and fragile members of the society is also marked by her volunteering and contribution to the association Gaita Kukibi Widow and Elderly Network, which provides support to widows, elders, orphans and vulnerable children.

25 In many Ugandan cultures, kneeling in front of elders is considered the proper behavior for children and women, as well as for younger men.

ities. She is a single parent and, thanks to her education and artistic career, she is not economically dependent on a masculine figure as it was typical in the past, but she can provide for her two children. At the same time, her fame and public image as a traditional and engaged singer living abroad are appreciated by her family, which is proud of her (Sarah Ndagire, interview, Kampala, 8 February 2012). A dynamic relationship with tradition, not only in the musical field but also in gender matters is another key aspect of Ndagire's leadership, which does not break customs but negotiates them, by adopting elements that are positive in the present and leaving aside those that are negative, especially for women.

Conclusions

Maintaining fruitful connections with the homeland in social as well as in artistic terms, her Ugandan roots transplanted in UK, Ndagire locates herself in the African diaspora, where she promotes the knowledge of African, Ugandan culture through her music and image. Her music cannot be clearly located in a single genre, since it embraces traditional repertoires, re-elaborations, new compositions in traditional style, world music as well as some pop pieces. Because of this eclecticism in her musical production, her audiences are both Ugandan and foreign. Thanks to her mobility across Europe and Africa, she has established international networks of collaborations for her records, live concerts, multicultural projects and tours with both Ugandan and European musicians. She has been skillfully weaving these connections through cooperations, participation in bands, cultural projects in Europe, international networking and by acting as manager and agent of herself. Characterized by transnationalism and transculturalism, her approach to music, collaborations and audiences constitutes a form of cosmopolitanism forging her agency and establishing her as a protagonist on the Ugandan and world music stage. This cosmopolitan sensibility, together with her dynamic and flexible approach in dealing with her heritage in music and in gender issues are key factors defining her leadership.

Gendered structures in Ugandan music professionalism, on the one hand, and essentialism and commodification in world music, on the other hand, usually relegate women and African performers in marginal or disempowered positions. At the intersection of these national and global settings is Ndagire, who has been able to cleverly build and maintain her position, career and autonomy by turning what are often considered as weaknesses into strengths. Thanks to the manifold qualities that define Ndagire as a leader, she enjoys a success that very few other female Ugandan performers have obtained in the field of (neo-)traditional and world music.

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Plucking a Liberal Sound: Japanese Women's Resignification of Finnish Kantele in a Hobbyist Club

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Abstract: *In this chapter, I examine the new meaning of an old instrument in a foreign context. Kantele is the national instrument of Finland, and over the past decades it has established itself, among the very few Nordic instruments, a significant presence in Japan. Most of its enthusiasts are women (approx. 150–200) living in urban areas. This paper explores the Japanese female participation in the transcultural music scene, asking how the new meanings were inscribed to kantele in the new environment. The context chosen for the ethnographic study is the Sapporo Kantele Club, one representative hobbyist group established in the 1990s and led by the musician Hiroko Ara, who adopted folk music, improvisation in particular, as the inspiration for teaching. I argue that the Japanese women's passion for the kantele is related to its qualities of liberty, inclusiveness and freedom, with which they refresh themselves from the rigidity of Western music and the Japanese social norm with imagination, individuality, and creativity they experience in the music practice.*

Keywords: *Finnish kantele, Japanese women, meanings, liberty, Sapporo Kantele Club .*

Several scholars such as Lebra (1985) and Iwao (1993) have called into question the Western feminist lens on Japanese women as victims of oppression. The position of women in Japanese society is a contested issue (Ogasawara 1998). As Hsia and Scanzoni (1996: 309–310) have noted, "Japanese women are far more active in private as well as in social spheres than we tend to believe. Therefore, the portrayal of Japanese women as helpless, submissive, is not without questions". My intention in this chapter is, rather than taking a side to define women's role in the complexity, to recognize and keep the dynamics of these different discourses in mind when examining the meaning of Japanese adoption of Finnish kantele. Kantele is a Finnish folk instrument that has established a visible presence in Tokyo, Sapporo, and Western Japan. Approximately 150–200 enthusiasts – primarily women who come from middle-class families with heterogeneous backgrounds – form a small music community and use kantele as a new aspect to approach Finnish culture. About five seniors have progressed from hobbyist players to a professional status. They provide lessons to hobbyists and constantly perform on kantele on different occasions. Why is kantele loved in Japan, and why do some practitioners successfully build

a profession with kantele? What is the power and the meaning of kantele in the lives of Japanese women? To what extent does the kantele impact women's life?

While exploring possible answers to Japanese women's adoption of this less-known instrument from a Nordic country, in this chapter, I focus on the role and work of Hiroko Ara, as both professional kantele performer and teacher, to assess the enthusiasm of the women members in her group. By applying Small's (1998) concept of "musicking", I examine women's reflection and their acts reconstructing a new aesthetic, as an alternative to supplement the weakness perceived in music teaching in Japan. The kantele, with its foreignness, provides a novel experience to Japanese practitioners. Overall, I argue that it has been interpreted as an instrument of freedom, because of a different quality that practitioners find positive for their society. This quality of foreignness pertains to why and how the kantele established its niche in Japan, where many foreign music traditions have already found their audiences (Atkins 2001; Condry 2001, 2006; Cornyetz 1994; Fares 2015; Furmanovsky 2008; Hosokawa 1999a, 1999b; Kurokawa 2004; Manabe 2006; Mitsui 1993; Reyes-Ruiz 2005; Savigliano 1992). Data used in this chapter were collected between 2016 and 2018 in the Sapporo Kantele Club, where I conducted participant observation and interviews with the leader (Hiroko Ara) and club members, and identified myself as a kantele performer-researcher. Furthermore, I consulted Internet information and had email correspondence with research participants in 2022 to confirm some details.

The Kantele in Japan

Before investigating women's passion for Finnish kantele, I provide an overview of lifestyle changes in the lives of women, resulting from social transformation after World War II. After the end of World War II, Japan gained economic success that led to changes of Japanese notions on recreation, due to increased household wealth (Brannen 1992: 217; Linhart 1998: 16). It also influenced the lifestyles of women, transitioning from extended family to nuclear family (Mori 1996: 119; Ueno 1987: 79–80). Women's pursuit of leisure freedom expanded in 1960s consumerism and the feminist movement in the 1970s (Macnaughtan 2006: 32). The "ethnic boom" in the 1980s saw the increasing availability of commodities from foreign culture, especially items from Southeast Asians, Koreans, and urban African Americans (Cornyetz 1994: 131). Affluent people in Japan invested their free time in hobbies related to their cultural life; for example, the piano gained many practitioners in the 1950s and early 1960s with its middle-class image (Yoshihara 2008: 34, 141).

Kantele is a chordophone regarded as the most representative folk instrument in Finland, resulting from the nineteenth century Finnish nationalists' efforts to make kantele the Finland "national instrument", in order to distinguish Finland from their Swedish and Russian counterparts, that have controlled this country until 1917. Kantele can be classified by the number of strings (small kantele, middle-size, and big-size) and methods (carved or box) (Rahkonen 1989: 79–159). In 1983, it was included as one of the main instruments in the Department of Folk Music at Sibelius Academy (Hill 2009a), Finland's prestigious music university, and since then the music became more eclectic and diverse due to musicians' new approach to modernization, in accordance with contemporary

tastes (Austerlitz 2000: 205; Hill 2009a: 86; Ramnarine 2003: xi). These new attitudes facilitated, as observed, not only the kantele's ongoing popularity in Finland, but also its transnational move beyond Finnish borders. Nowadays, the kantele enjoys increasing attention from international audiences (Träskelin 2015; Virta 2020).

Following the intensified relationships between Finland and Japan in the post-war era and the "Finland boom" in the 2000s (Ipatti 2019), Japan became the country in East Asia, where visible enthusiasm for kantele resulted from the publics' "exceptionally positive" image of Finland (Ipatti 2019: 103). In 2008, the Japan Kantele Friendship Association (Nihon kantele tomo no kai) was established, which was the first (and so far the only) overseas branch of the Finnish Kantele Association (Kanteleliitto). An analogy with other imported genres that Japanese enthusiasts have adopted, such as gospel music, helps understand kantele's success in Japan, for foreign cultures seem to "…release [Japanese practitioners] from… a feeling of restrictedness" (Waseda 2013: 193). I shall examine this issue in this chapter. Over the past years when this study was launched, I was constantly asked (by Finns in most cases) to what extent koto, the traditional Japanese zither with synthetic strings, plays a role in kantele's success in Japan. Based on a general observation, only a few practitioners whom I have met in the course of fieldwork have related their attention to kantele to koto, even though the two instruments share an ontological similarity. Louder voices heard in the field revealed that the two stringed instruments differ from each other in terms of images. They noted that the koto has a connotation of formality, which ultimately makes it fall out of their definitions of a hobby – they assumed it would take years for one to master the advanced skills.

Hiroko Ara, the leader of Sapporo Kantele Club, is one of the several senior players who built a professional career on the kantele in Japan.[1] She works closely with enthusiasts who are attracted to her "style", inspired by Finnish folk music. These women usually self-identify as kantele players of "folk-style" when they meet other peers from different groups, to differentiate themselves from others. Ara's musical sensibility was, rather than trained in formal conservatories, nurtured at Hokkaido University, where she studied Economy between 1982 and 1986. She was exposed to various music genres such as jazz, folk, and world music and developed her musical talent as a drummer and keyboardist in a popular music band. Her encounter with Finnish culture took place in early 1990 when she worked as a secretary in the Hokkaido-Finland Association (HFS) office. In 1991, she assisted the HFS's first kantele promotional plan in which Finnish kantele player Minna Raskinen was invited to host concerts and workshops in Japan. Ara was impressed by the diversity of musical genres and styles Raskinen played on kanteles.

> It is my impression, that by way of having a strong interest in Irish songs, Indian music, and Japanese melodies and grafting the essence of such songs into her compositions, and composing fantasy-laden suites inspired by poetry, she [Minna Raskinen] had a strong focus on creating a very unique world as a kantele player. Taking as venue the stony chapel of Sapporo's Luther Church [the venue where Raskinen performed],

1 According to most members of the community, professional kantele players are Masako Hazata and Miho Kuwajima in Tokyo, Hiroko Ara and Mitsuko Sato in Sapporo, and Tomoko Onishi in Kobe. These professionals' approach to kantele music is stylistically different from each other.

> songs performed that night in the concert, Tonakai no komoriuta (Reindeer's lullaby), Kareria kyōkai no kane (The Bells of Karelia church), Haha ni sumire wo (Violet's for my mother), as well as Wakare no uta (Farewell Song) and Osaka • kokusai (Osaka – international) composed by Miss Minna, were imprinted in my ear for the longest time. (Hiroko Ara. Blog. 18 October 2005. Accessed 8 December 2020).

Ara continued playing kantele in meetings spontaneously organized by Hokkaido Finland Society members after 1991. In these gatherings, she sometimes helped prepare the music for group practice due to the absence of materials and kantele instructors. For example, "the classic" A Guide to Five-String Kantele Playing was used for inspiration. She acknowledged that it was challenging to understand the spirit of old kantele tunes only from the notes without listening. In this situation, she sometimes composed or arranged pieces (not only Finnish) for a five-string kantele ensemble enthusiasts formed at that time. In 1994, Ara became one of the trainees when the Hokkaido-Finland Society sent prospective players to Finland for developing skills to teach kantele when back in Hokkaido, where the number of enthusiasts increased. Funded by HFS and the Hokkaido government, the trip took place in Helsinki and Kaustinen, the two places known for kantele's regional tradition and contemporary development (Ramnarine 2003: xv). The one-month project widened Ara's views on the scope of Finnish folk music and kantele music. Besides playing styles, she was inspired by the importance of improvisation and the methods of learning music by ear. Both are at the core of Finnish folk music pedagogy.

When she returned to Japan, Hiroko Ara introduced these aspects to Japanese audiences through camps[2] and a broadcast[3]. In the following section, I examine her live concert in a local café and her teaching at Sapporo Kantele Club in Sapporo to understand how she built leadership as a kantele performer and instructor in the niche of Finnish/Nordic music within the world music community.

The Female Musician Enriching Japanese Imagination with "Borderless" Kantele Music

Like elsewhere in the world, playing live concerts is one of the few ways an independent musician can diversify her/his income.[4] On the afternoon of the 27th of May 2018, I had a chance to observe how Hiroko Ara introduced kantele for Japanese audiences. Café Hiiragi is a small shop in Sapporo, with a wooden structure and nostalgic furnishings. The

2 Hiroko Ara invited several kantele musicians from Finland and Norway between 2006 and 2012 to teach kantele in Hokkaido. The three events are called "camps" (Hiroko Ara. Blog. Accessed 24 March 2022).

3 She has been promoting kantele music and other genres of Nordic music on a local radio program, "Kantele no Mori" (literally "Kantele Forest") on a Sapporo broadcast station since 2012. (Hiroko Ara. Blog. 16 July 2012. Accessed 5 January 2022).

4 As the Japanese kantele community is small, it is common for professional kantele players to collaborate with different individuals outside of the Japanese cultural niche of Finnish culture to broaden their activities. The kantele are found to be used in, for example, story reading, Nordic culture fairs, and cultural/commercial exhibitions.

owner is a bluegrass singer, who has been organizing special events like live music concerts to diversify her customers. The clientele I encountered was entirely composed of wealthy Japanese.[5] White's (2012: 13) research on Japanese cafés that play "the locus of community, of continuity in relationships and the creation of new ones" supported my observation on Hiiragi. From my perspective, Hiiragi manages to carve out a space for foreignness in the center of a society where the musical hall remains the main place for listening to music. The small café's hospitality is manifested on the wall bulletin board, which was full of flyers announcing various upcoming music performances. As heard in the event, these events win the hearts of music lovers, especially those who are tired of the "formal" music events taking place in a music hall and attempt to search for less-mainstream music in a relaxing space such as a café with people they regard as having the "same taste".

Unlike relatively straightforward representing kantele as a national instrument by performing pieces such as Finlandia, as addressed by other professional kantele players in Japan, Hiroko Ara's kantele music was more sophisticated and boundless. Besides music pieces, improvisation is the practice that differentiates Hiroko Ara's "style" from others, which was performed on different sizes of kanteles in the live concert. The concert program of Hiroko Ara shows careful navigation of a middle ground, for the program featured a mix of the explicit references to Finnish folk tunes to her own compositions that include foreign and Japanese music (Figure 1). I loosely categorized them into four groups for discussion: 1) music from Nordic countries, 2) Japanese music of different genres, including adaptations of pop, children's songs, and animation songs, 3) world music such as jazz and Irish music, and 4) original compositions. The live concert demonstrated Hiroko Ara's attempts to draw inspirations from all directions from different cultures, and the four typologies of music manifested that her perception of the kantele as a cultural crossroad, rather than a representation of a defined tradition of only Finnish culture. She performed a Finnish piece, a traditional tune from Sweden as the next, and followed by the improvisation on a five-string kantele and a Japanese animation song. All music is instrumental, with a softness in dynamic level and rich in texture without obvious tension or dissonance, which excellently fit the setting where clients pay for relaxation.

The inclusion of a considerable non-Nordic repertoire suggests Ara's navigation to make kantele relevant for local audiences coming from different backgrounds, including both men and women. Ara was particularly aware of the presence of two guests from afar: they took flight from Tokyo to Sapporo for the live concert. As told by a kantele peer who was also in the event, the two men became Hiroko Ara's kantele music fans after watching the animation Girls und Panzer (literally "Girls and Tanks" or GuP).[6] "Senshaō Kkōshinkyoku" (Panzer Vor), the theme song of GuP, was played on the kantele concert,

5 A seat for Ara's live concert costs 2500 yen (appr. 17.5 euros), with a drink included.

6 Girls und Panzer (literally "Girls and Tanks" or GuP) is a Japanese animation that tells a story about tank competitions between girls' high schools. It was initially aired as a TV series in Japan between 2012 and 2013 and based on which an animated film was released in cinemas in 2015. The kantele was adopted in GuP to represent Finland in a high school, and it added another dimension to kantele fans in Japan that no one could have ever anticipated. In the anime, Hiroko Ara uses two eleven-string kantele to play the Finnish folk song Säkkijärven Polkka (Säkkijärvi's Polkka), which became a well-known kantele "piece" in Japan.

with some adjustments in terms of pace and style. The original music in the animation was orchestra music, dominated by solid and steady percussive beats of drums, cymbals, and brass instruments. Hiroko Ara's adaptation was different from the rhythmic style and characterized by more rubato and softer tone, which added flavor to a cafe's air and created an aura of meditation. The new adaptation resonates with Colson's (2014: 2) words, "artists follow a creative process that takes exogenous sounds and localizes them by making alternations and adjustments that 'personalize' pieces and make them sound more familiar".

In the small cafe with limited space, a microphone was not used because it was acoustically satisfying. Ara's free plucking on the kantele filled the air with an intriguing atmosphere and enriched Japanese experiences of listening to music combining elements from different geographical locations. Audiences were left with a good deal of autonomy for imagination, feeling, and relaxation, which differs from precisely constructed music pieces by great composers or from that of some music that tells listeners what to think with strong "concepts". This program that features a coexistence of "old" and "new", the "foreign" and "Japanese", the "pieces" and "original works", is, of course, not a new invention. However, it shows her attempt to craft a new aesthetic and expressivity discernible from previous experiences. All music was carefully tailored to local audiences' expectations, and they eventually were taken on a musical journey to Finnish, Nordic, Japanese, and other cultures of the past and present. After the live concert ended, a few members of the audience approached Ara, asking for her signature on albums they bought on site and wished to know more about her activities. What they experienced was more than just exotic sounds; it was the result mediated by the interaction between performers and people in the specific space and time, as noted by Small (1998: 184), who attributes overall effects in performance to the wholeness of participants, sound, and the physical space. Told by a regular client who enjoyed the mind's flow with Hiroko Ara's music, the live concert in small Hiragi creates an intimacy, open to interpretation, feelings, and human relationships.

My observation in this section has shown how Hiroko Ara grounds herself as a foreign practitioner who crafts a new aesthetic and expressive (sub)culture for Japanese audiences. The kantele offers an opportunity to celebrate individuality and creativity through music, without the pressure of an explicitly musical "tradition". In the next section, I continue to examine why and how kantele is perceived and adopted as a "liberal" instrument in Sapporo Kantele Club by women practitioners.

Hiroko Ara's Solo Concert
café Hiiragi
2018.05.27 13:00-15:00
Program

*Concert kantele

①五月(*Toukokuu*; May)	Martii Pokela (Finnish composed kantele music)
②Josefine's Waltz	Roger Tallroth (Swedish band: Väsen)
③Improvisation	-
④テルーの唄(Teru No Uta; Teru's Song)	Hiroko Taniyama (animation song)
⑤ささやかな場所(*Sasayakana Baai*; My Little Place)	Hiroko Ara (original piece)

*Eleven-string kantele

⑥Improvisation and *Tilannevalssi*(Situation Waltz)	Timo Väänänen (Finnish folk music)

*Concert kantele

⑦戦車道行進曲(*Senshadō Kōshinkyoku*; Panzer Vor)	Shiro Hamaguchi (animation song)
⑧桜ふぶき(*Sakura Fubuki*; Cherry Blossom Petals Fluttering)	Hiroko Ara (original piece)

Break(15mins)

*Concert kantele

⑨遠い音楽 (*Tōi Ongaku*; Distant Music)	Zabadak (Japanese popular music)

*Five-string kantele

⑩Improvisation and A *runo*-song tune	Finnish folk music
⑪*Maaherran Polska* (Governor's Polska)	Finnish folk music

*Concert kantele

⑫ノスタルジックなワルツ (Valse Nostalgique)	Hiroko Ara (original piece)
⑬ナイト・フラワー (Night Flower)	Hiroko Ara (original piece)
⑭Wedding March from Sweden (スウェーデンの結婚行進曲)	Swedish folk music
⑮ポホヤンマー地方に伝わる古い結婚行進曲 (Vanha Häämarssi Pohjanmaalta; Old Wedding March from Ostrobothnia)	Finnish folk music
⑯Improvisation	-
⑰日蔭の庭 (*Hikage no Niwa*; Shade Garden)	Hiroko Ara (original piece)
⑱Sara's Touch	Mike Mainieri (jazz)
⑲この道 (*Kono Michi*; This Road)	Kosaku Yamada (Japanese Children's song)
⑳イェプアの行進曲 (*Jepuan Marssi*; March from Jepua)	Finnish folk music
㉑Blind Mary and Elenor Plunkett	T. O'Carolan (Irish folk music)

Figure 1: Hiroko Ara's live concert program in Hiiragi.

Improvisation as a Teaching Alternative Enabling Different Voices to be Heard in Japanese Re-contextualization

Hiroko Ara has been promoting kantele and the Finnish folk music in the Sapporo Kantele Club (SKC), a musical gathering that was established in May 1991, supported by the Hokkaido-Finland Society.[7] The major members in SKC, primarily the residents of Sapporo or from adjacent cities, come from multiple backgrounds such as office ladies, housewives, students, and others. Small and middle-size kantele are the two types used, for their simplicity is rather easy to manage and thus allows a player to create a pleasant sound in a shorter time.

In the sessions I participated in spring 2018, the repertoire varied slightly in every class. The four pieces, 'Eevan ja Aatamin Valssi' ('The Waltz of Adam and Eve'), 'Toukokuu' ('May'), 'Tilannevalssi' ('Situation Waltz') and 'Pehmeä Jig', have been practiced. They were either Hiroko Ara's arrangements or those taught by visiting Finnish musicians. While notations were given at the end of a class as supplements, learning music by ear was prioritized. Told by a member, Hiroko Ara constantly emphasizes "make your version/voice" in the club, which made her and other members feel positive because, their voices were acknowledged. For example, one SKC member introduced the kantele at a video game fan gathering in Tokyo in 2016 by playing the well-known video game Final Fantasy VII, arranged by herself. Another member, Kazumi Yokotani, drew on an old Japanese poem Iroha ni Hoheto from her childhood as the lyrics for a rhythmic Finnish polka, Maaherran. The poem Iroha ni Hoheto has Buddhist connotations, which Yokotani learned from her grandmother, who read it to her when she was small. Yokotani performed this combination on the fifteen-string kantele in Virtual Kaustinen 2021, the famous summer festival in Finland, streamed during the pandemic period (Email, 5 January 2022). These aforementioned cases reveal the ambivalence of kantele performances in Japan, where the kantele was initially adopted because of its foreignness, but then quickly made familiar by women who re-signify it through their life experiences and their imagination.

I have mentioned in the previous section that improvisation is Hiroko Ara's signature style. Improvisation is adopted, besides performances, in her teaching as pedagogy which ultimately became a group identity. Improvisation is an old musical practice, handed down from ancient times and particularly associated with Karelia, the borderland of Finland and Russia, that characterized rhythmic repetition without muting (silencing) as the aesthetics (Kastinen n.d. "Karelian Kantele Tradition – About kantele Karelian players" par 5). While it has its distinction in the Karelian area, Hiroko Ara adopted it as group practice because of the quality opposite to notation. In a session I observed in 2018, she taught the basic plucking techniques after tuning was ready and told the players who held five-string kantele to pluck the strings of re, sol, and la with specific fingers, and the fifteen-string players the chords. "Please imagine that winter has just passed and play what you feel most comfortable with", said Ara and encouraged students to "make your voices". She shuttled back and forth in the practice room to demonstrate a number of short rhythmic patterns that consisted of the basic three

7 Hokkaido-Finland Society is a friendship organization founded in the 1970s that promotes Finnish culture in Hokkaido.

notes. Plucking strings without any visual reference (notation) seemed neither easy nor comfortable for every member, especially those newcomers who appeared to be nervous when they took their turns. The reason was presumably because of the fear of making "mistakes" – unexpected sounds that stood out in the group. For them, improvisation was completely novel, since they did not experience it much in school, where notations dominate the primary way of making music. The music teaching in Japanese schools has been historically influenced by Western notation, harmony, and theory that were introduced to Japan in the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912), when those in power pursued Western models for modernization and industrialization (Herd 2016: 363). Therefore, improvisation that blurred boundaries of "melody" and "accompaniment" (Rahkonen 1989: 170–1) created a refreshing experience in which practitioners retrieve musical joy in the participatory activity (Small 1998: 8). Gradually, the melody became richer, after the development by several senior members, who joined in later. The session ended with a peaceful silence when the last vibration faded.

Improvisation seems to enliven a club atmosphere, because it provides a different approach to create music that differs from demanding students' mechanical representation of musical sheets. Most importantly, the practice raises individuals' awareness of their emotions, which seem to be lost at the expense of reading sheets. Naemi Ukumura, an office lady in her twenties, who had just joined the Club for some months playing the five-string kantele, upheld that improvisation is conducive to perceiving one's emotion.

> I want to improve the techniques of improvisation. The techniques include the fingering skill and the ability to feel my emotions. (Naemi Ukumura, interview, Sapporo, 29 May 2018).

For club members, Hiroko Ara's approach shaped the mood of the club and what being a practitioner of kantele signifies to them. In fact, Hiroko Ara has never asserted that her adoption of improvisation was meant to deny the classical music system. However, as a methodology, improvisation seems to "improve" the quality of musical learning experiences. In autumn 2016, I conducted a group interview among several hobbyist players who had a long history in the SKC. Their narrative showed that the membership was not necessarily related to the immediate information about Finland, nor the act of creating something new, and even less that of achieving musical perfection, but the atmosphere in SKC they elaborated with "emotional warmth", "friendship", and "peer support". They attributed their long membership to the musical joy and senses of togetherness - the meaning of music is inscribed by social relationships and experiences (Small 1998: 13; Turino 2008).

> I am now immensely enjoying improvisation in Hiroko's club because I enjoyed this style. Hiroko-san says [that] there are no "wrong notes" when we improvise… I enjoyed the feeling in the group. It would be lonely if I left this group. When playing the kantele, I need friends. (Anonymous, group interview, Sapporo, 24 October 2016).

Clearly, the reason why improvisation is appealing is the absence of correctness as the notion in musical practice. The free plucking in improvisation is a process of imagination and creativity (Väljaots 2021). The joy in SKC was aptly crystallized in a comment by a member, who related her feeling of improvisation to the acceptance and tolerance. While

the interviewee did not mention classical music, her reply has inferred the different ideas that improvisation holds, which differs from "accuracy" demanded on a practitioner's one-way representation of written notes.

> It is a very friendly group with good friendship. I always made mistakes while playing, but Hiroko never scolded us. She instead encouraged us to enjoy playing. Hiroko told us that every note harmonizes with each other, making us comfortable to play "our voice". That's one of the reasons we kept playing the kantele. (Anonymous. Group interview. Sapporo, Japan. 24 October 2016).

In Japanese experiences, improvisation inspires a new musical journey that, to some extent, breaks the "hierarchy" – the primary-secondary relationship – that exists in notation. In other words, the practice dissolves boundaries between peers, and the teacher and students, because all voices, regardless of a player's background and musical competence, are recognized. This way of musicking differs from the feelings in structured music, in which some voices are subordinated to others, considered more "experienced/talented". A woman pointed out the inclusiveness and openness she experienced in SKC, attributing the pleasant atmosphere to the idea that musical joy outstrips musical perfection.

> Because of friendship and Hiroko, I have played the kantele for a long time. I thought Hiroko has a personality of "including everything"; she is very open-minded. Because I don't practice much and therefore I [my kantele playing] improves very slowly. Nobody [in the club] ever judges, Hiroko never says a strict word, the kantele sound is very comfortable. (Anonymous, group interview, Sapporo, 24 October 2016).

Chie Kōno, a hobbyist player from SKC, believed that improvisation enabled mental recovery. Kōno was a housewife who joined the club in 2008. She felt particularly attached to Finnish folk music because of her exhaustion and the hardship in long-term care of the elderly mother in 2007. The kantele, according to her, became a great companion when she was isolated at home, and improvisation particularly brought about positive effects on her loss.

> I had a job before I got married. I had been taking care of my parents for six years. When I started to play the kantele, my mom was very sick. After a few months, she passed away. My father had already passed away three years before my mom. So I suddenly had too much time because I was not working… After taking care of my parents, I was "empty". I was so empty that I didn't want to meet friends or go to a concert… The kantele helped me… I was very sick in 2004 and 2007. At that time, I couldn't manage my life well. My husband reluctantly accepted the situation. Although now I have become healthier… Without the kantele in 2008 and 2009, I couldn't manage to spend my days. The kantele sound and kantele friends helped me out. (Chie Kōno. Interview. Sapporo, Japan. 18 October 2016).

As Asplund (1983, 83) put it, "[by] using only five strings, players were able to conjure up a constantly changing world of sound. The result was not closed-form pieces of a specific length but music that flowed freely along with 'infinite variation'". Improvisation helped Kōno become aware that everybody has innate musical competence after she realized

that she herself was capable of improvising as a kantele novice. The result was surprising and thus she believed that improvisation frees a practitioner because of a different idea of making music.

> I have two [contrasting] feelings when I play the kantele. When I play tunes, I have to concentrate and somewhat feel strained; but I feel relaxed when I improvise. It [improvising] is comfortable. Before having the lesson [improvisation] in Finland, I had already started improvising, it came naturally… In the past three or four years, I have always improvised at concerts, and some friends became interested in my improvisation… I don't have to think about anything but [just to] be empty when I play improvisation. My fingers move as they want to. I had thought that only great players could feel relaxed when playing; however, a kantele beginner can feel relaxed when improvising on the kantele, at least in my case. That's why I like it. Having been playing for many years, playing and listening to kantele is most comfortable now. (Chie Kōno, interview, Spporo, 18 October 2016).

Lamenting that she had been constantly excluded from the groups when playing music in Japan, improvisation prompted Kōno's review of Japanese society and particularly the Japanese ways of making music. She found some aspects problematic, due to Japanese over-preparation and their lack of flexibility and ability to listen to others when playing music. For her, improvisation is a journey of re-discovery, and through the practice she feels herself more open to relationships with people from different backgrounds.

> The idea of "not deciding in advance, but making music by listening and feeling each other in the group" from Hiroko Ara and the Finnish musicians is my favorite idea. Japanese people tend to make precise plans to clarify everyone's part even when playing music. I had thought that there were no other choices. I did not consider if it was fun or not. After knowing the style of folk music, I can do "improvisation" in my life, not only on kantele. My life changed for the better; I am thankful for the folk [music] style. Before this, I often felt I was an exception in our society. I might be wrong, not good, and different from ordinary people in this society. But now, I can live here and feel comfortable with people of diverse backgrounds. (Chie Kōno, interview, Sapporo, 18 October 2016).

While Kōno's narrative might show a certain degree of idealization of Finland when she mentioned the kantele, she was not meant to deny every aspect of Japanese society. Instead, she recognized responsibilities tied to womanhood and sought to fulfill the best of the expectations held for her role as a wife. She acknowledged her husband's hard work, which allowed her to cultivate playing kantele in her free time. As van Ede argued, the Japanese pursuit of a cosmopolitan hobby is not necessarily meant to oppose Japanese society.

> Internationalism is, I believe, not "inevitably set against", but even so set within "traditionalism", exactly because of its dependence on locality – a sense of place that not simply equates the local with the national in opposition to the international/cosmopolitan/global. . . (italic original, van Ede 2014: 161).

I have investigated Japanese women's enthusiasm for Finnish kantele in this chapter. While the enthusiasm seems to be, on the surface, a mere microcosm of the social phenomenon of "Finland boom", a close examination of practitioners' experiences shows wider dimensions the kantele brings to its foreign female enthusiasts. Firstly, I examined how Hiroko Ara has, among a few professional players, crafted a new aesthetics and expressive (sub)culture with the spirit of Finnish folk music for Japanese audiences. She represents kantele in her live concert as an eclectic instrument with which she could tap into different inspirations to create music, with no specific standard "tradition" features insisted upon. Secondly, I examined the new meaning attached to kantele in the Sapporo Kantele Club, where women practitioners find great satisfaction because they are allowed, from their position of relative knowledge, to connect kantele to something different than the local styles and mores. As found, liberty is the new meaning inscribed to kantele, since it legitimizes, after all, the very existence of freedom, egalitarianism, and autonomy previously less available in Japan. This chapter shows how Japanese women, by adopting a less-known instrument from Finland, reach out to the (partly imagined) "foreign" tropes of freedom. They improve their life and facilitate a better relationship with others by being practitioners of kantele that acknowledges all voices.

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Female Balkan Romani Singers: Charting Innovative Performance Paths

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Abstract: *This chapter unpacks the intersectional dimensions of the innovative paths crafted by female Romani performers. Focusing on three case studies from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia, I explore how vocalists from three different generations challenged, resisted or reframed the historical stereotype of Romani women as dangerous, exotic, emotional, and sexual. Not only is the "Gypsy seductress" an iconic figure in literature, folklore and visual culture, but also "Gypsy sexuality and emotion" is often precisely located in the female voice and the body. How did these women negotiate these discursive challenges to establish their individual artistry and their signature genres? How did they overcome the patriarchal structures of their families and communities to carve out creative space in the public sphere while becoming economically independent? My analysis intertwines issues of gender, ethnicity, race, and representation. Nadka Petrova's life history illustrates how a Bulgarian wedding singer born from humble origins during late socialism achieved superb technical mastery while carving out independence in a competitive genre. Macedonian superstar Esma Redžepova, born during World War II, is perhaps the most famous Romani singer in the world. As she bridged the musical worlds of Roma and non-Roma to attract a transnational Balkan audience, her iconic image and sound drew on historical stereotypes, but she re-fashioned them as respectable. Pretty Loud (Serbia) recently emerged as the first Romani female rap band. Their songs expose racism against Roma as well as critique sexism within their communities.*

Keywords: *Roma, gender, sexuality, Balkans, representation.*

While all over the Balkans Romani men are well known as expert musicians, female artists have received less attention. Considering that there are few female Balkan Romani professional singers due to cultural constraints on women's bodies and their mobility in the public sphere, how did successful performers overcome challenges? To understand their paths, I take an intersectional approach addressing ethnicity, race, gender, class and age. Focusing on case studies from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia, I examine how three vocalists from three different generations challenged, resisted or reframed the historical stereotype of women as emotional, sexual and needing protection, and specifically Romani women as dangerous and exotic. In the Balkans

generally, and especially in Romani communities, women are expected to care for home and children, thus constraining their occupational choices. How did these artists overcome patriarchal structures to carve out creative professional space in the public sphere while becoming economically independent?

Not only is the "Gypsy seductress" an iconic figure in literature, folklore and visual culture, but also "sexuality and emotion" is often framed as precisely located in the female voice and the body. How did these women negotiate these discursive and bodily tropes to establish their individual artistry and their signature genres? Noting that images and sounds of "Gypsies" are racially coded, I highlight issues of representation. My analysis is informed by interdisciplinary theoretical frames encompassing performance studies, emotion/affect studies, gender and sexuality studies and critical Romani studies. Professional music has been an important medium of exchange between Roma and non-Roma for centuries, and the musical marketplace has been the site where emotions and images are exchanged. In addition, the association of women's voices with authenticity, emotion and sexuality provides symbolic capital for the marketplace. Inspired by Ruth Hellier's list of themes (2013: 26), I examine life histories, genre and repertoire choices, texts, sound aesthetics and the uses of body via dance and costume.

Nadka Petrova's life history illustrates how a Bulgarian wedding singer born from humble origins during late socialist rule achieved superb technical mastery while carving out independence in a competitive genre. Macedonian superstar Esma Redžepova, born during World War II, is perhaps the most famous Romani singer in the world. As she bridged the musical worlds of Roma and non-Roma to attract a transnational Balkan audience, her iconic image and sound drew on historical stereotypes, but she re-fashioned them as respectable. Pretty Loud (Serbia) recently emerged as the first Romani female rap band. Their songs expose racism against Roma as well as critique sexism within their communities.[1]

Roma as Professional Musicians, "Gypsies" as "Others"

Linguistic evidence shows that Roma are a diasporic ethnic group that migrated from northwest India to the Balkans by the fourteenth century. Initial curiosity about Roma by Europeans quickly gave way to discrimination, a legacy that has continued until today. Roma were viewed as intruders probably because of their dark skin, their non-European physical features, their foreign customs, and their association with magic (Petrova 2003). Stereotypes about Roma abound, encompassing the romantic (musical, sexual, artistic) along with the criminal (dangerous). Roma are racialized in these stereotypes, and are often referred to as blacks: dirty, untrustworthy, thieving.

1 Fieldwork with these female performers included interviews, informal conversations and participant observation at performances and at home. I began conversations with Esma in 1996 in her home and on several tours until her death in 2016; I also consulted her two published autobiographies. I met Nadya Petrova in 2014 and interviewed her several times; there are no published sources about her. I met and interviewed Pretty Loud members in 2021 in Belgrade and 2022 via Zoom and consulted many published interviews.

Roma inspired fear and were expelled from many European territories. Bounties were paid for their capture and repressive measures included confiscation of property and children, forced labor, branding, etc. (Petrova 2003). In Romania Roma were slaves from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Perhaps the most tragic period in Romani history was the Holocaust when over 500,000 Roma were murdered. The communist regimes in Eastern Europe defined Roma as a social problem. They were targeted for integration into the planned economy, forced to give up their traditional occupations, and assigned to the lowest skilled and lowest paid state jobs. Today European Roma face inferior and segregated housing and education, poor health conditions, and shorter life expectancy. Discrimination is widespread in employment and the legal system, and even educated people routinely express disdain for "Gypsies". Hate speech and racial profiling are common in the media. Perhaps most troubling are the hundreds of incidences of physical violence against Roma perpetrated by ordinary citizens and also by the police (FRA 2018). Due to these prejudices, many Roma pass as other ethnic groups.

Balkan Roma have been professional musicians for centuries, playing for peasants and urbanites of many classes and ethnicities in cafes and family celebrations, but excluded from elite concert stages. This professional niche is primarily male and instrumental, and requires knowledge of the co-territorial repertoire manner. Roma became multi-musical as well as multi-lingual and developed an openness to innovation. Yet their artistry in music does not erase their rejection; they are revered as musicians and reviled as people (Silverman 2012). The positive yet dangerous coding of Roma hinges on their romanticization by non-Roma as free souls, their association with the arts, especially music, and their proximity to nature and sexuality. Gay y Blasco claims (2008: 297): "Gypsies/Roma occupy a central place in the collective imagination of the West. They are objects of both revulsion and fascination…". Using Edwards Said's concept, we can claim that Roma are "orientalized". Lee (2000: 132) extends Said's argument: "Whilst Orientalism is the discursive construction of the exotic Other *outside* Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other *within* Europe—Romanies are the Orientals within". Roma, then, serve as one of Europe's quintessential others.

Roma are historically associated with emotional expression. Van de Port (1998: 205), who observed Serbian bars, claimed that the Gypsy musician unlocks the soul. More than just a "safety valve" for pent up emotions, the Gypsy bar gives rein to the emotional imagination. Malvinni represents the centrality of emotion in Romani music with an equation: $I + V = E$, where I is improvisation, V is virtuosity and E is emotion (2004). Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) show how emotions, despite appearing to be innate, universal, and essential, are embedded in specific cultural contexts that are often tied to inequality. For Roma, music has been one of the positively coded arenas in a long history of exclusion. Indeed, Roma have carved out a traditional performance niche from their historical association with emotion.

Within Balkan communities, Romani performances are often evaluated by patrons for their affective impact. Markovic (2017: 164) notes that "music is closely associated with celebratory culture… because music is believed to be inherently emotional. Good musicians are appreciated for their ability to act as catalysts for celebrants' emotional expression through their musical services". Moreover, Van de Port (1998: 182), among many

authors, claims that Romani musicians are masters of transmuting the emotions of patrons, divining their requests, and accessing their souls. In Eastern Europe we hear of the virtuosic performances of Roma that move people to tears, of the seemingly endless variations in melody, of the capturing of emotion in music. Proverbs similarly attest that "a wedding without a Gypsy isn't worth anything" (Bulgarian). Musicians delicately refine how to produce these affective experiences that seem "natural" but are actually highly coordinated. Moreover, Romani music performance provides a useful case to examine the "affective turn in ethnomusicology"; which, according to Hofman (2015a), is related to sensory (emotion) and embodiment more than discourse. The embodied and gendered nature of affect is a resource that Romani singers often use.

Gender, Sexuality and the Female Voice

Due to the pioneering work of feminist music scholars, gender has become a primary analytic in understanding musical performance (Dunn and Jones 1994; Hellier 2013; Magowan and Wrazen 2013). The "Gypsy seductress" is an iconic figure in literature, folklore and visual culture, e.g., Carmen and Esmeralda. Radulescu (2008: 195) points out that Gypsy women in the Middle Ages were both feared and admired as entertainers (palm readers, dancers, musicians). Their supposed sexual freedom caused them to be labeled as witches at the same tie that their freedom was admired. Romani women iconically fulfill the fantasies of non-Roma as wild creatures given to their emotions. Moreover, sexual prowess is commonly attributed to marginal people of color, often to control them and criminalize them (Hancock 2008). Note also that marginalized ethnic groups have little control over how they are depicted. Moreover, Romani performers may strategically embrace stereotypes to create various musical niches.[2] Labels such as exotic, passionate, genetically talented, and soulful, for example, are not only found in marketing but also defended by some Romani performers; they may self-stereotype because it can be the only branding available. Yet, as we will see below, Esma Redžepova cleverly re-worked this stereotype, and thus produced new subjectivities.

The gendered profile of Romani women is located in both the female body and the female voice. As Dunn and Jones point out (1994: 1), feminists use voice, as in "giving voice", to refer to empowerment as well as to the "literal audible voice" that has often been silenced. Both dimensions of voice involve hierarchal power dynamics. In addition, the voice in often associated with subjectivity, emotions, privacy, authenticity and vulnerability, which in turn are often gendered as female (Hellier 2013: 5). Along with the voice, the female body is an affective tool. "Emotional efficacy resides in the way in which sounds and movements are cognitively and affectively integrated" (Magowan and Wrazen 2013: 4). For the three artists I discuss, the double association of women and Roma with sexuality was powerful raw material that needed to be reframed.

Stoever's work claims that although "difference" is usually highlighted visually, it is also heard (2015). Writing about the "Sonic Color Line" in connection with African Amer-

2 See Spivak's concept of "strategic essentialism" whereby powerless groups adopt essential traits attributed to them in order to accomplish specific goals, see Silverman 2012: 52.

ican music, she states (2015: 4): "Listening operates as an organ of racial discernment, categorization, and resistance in the shadow of vision's alleged cultural dominance". Sound is thus a "critical modality through which subjects (re)produce, apprehend, and resist imposed racial identities". This is highly relevant for Roma, who have been excluded from dominant visual and auditory regimes categories and are expected to have "marked" bodies and voices. Thus, there is a form of collusion between the producers of sound (Roma) and listeners (non-Roma) to produce voices that sound "Gypsy". Hierarchal powers relations are embedded in this process of "auditory profiling" (Stoever 2015: 20). We will see below how Esma took the emotional, passionate historical formula of the "Gypsy singer" as raw material and reworked it. She neither dismantled the sonic color line nor the racialized listening practices associated with it, rather, she elevated them to respectability and debuted them on elite stages. Nadya Petrova, on the other hand, de-emphasized her Romani heritage to perform in Bulgarian genres; and Pretty Loud choose a new genre, rap, so as to decouple the historic association of Roma with traditional genres.

Note also that in contrast to the stereotype described above, the display of female sexuality in Balkan Romani communities is actually very regulated. Female professional singing and dancing are frowned upon because both are associated with sexuality: the voice and body are displayed for men for remuneration. Historically this ideology existed among all ethnicities and religions in the Balkans, but today it is strongest among Muslims and Roma (Silverman 2003). Thus, there are very few female professional Romani vocalists. One way to circumvent public disapproval is to marry a musician; one's husband (or father or brother) then serves as the protector of his wife's honor. Indeed, this is a path both Esma Redžepova and Nadya Petrova followed.

Bulgarian Wedding Singer: Nadya Petrova

As mentioned above, females (whether Romani or not) have always faced the problem of reputation: despite the female voice being desirable and valued, female singers have traced a difficult path to public performance. Women artists need to actively counteract both the assumption of their loose sexuality (Hofman 2015b) and the assumption of females needing to be "protected". Indeed, my interviews with many Bulgarian village singers revealed that in the 1950s-1970s, their families refused to let them move to the large cities to join national choirs. The elder generation (both males and females) could neither envision nor condone an unmarried woman living on her own in an unsupervised manner. Even going to school in a neighboring city was often rejected. Such was the case with Nadya Petrova.

Petrova's vocal talent was noticed in school, and, in seventh grade, she was selected to audition for the selective Folk Music High School in Kotel, a city several hours north from her hometown of Sopot. Her mother refused to give permission for Petrova to audition stating, "No, Roma might abduct her from school. She needs to stay home with me". Her mother was not referring to the false stereotype of Roma kidnapping children, but rather to the well documented Bulgarian custom of young men grabbing desirable girls from village dances and marketplaces. Until the 1950s there were cases of abducted

girls forcibly taken to men's homes. Theoretically, the girls were supposed to be given the choice to leave and go back to their own homes, but some were raped, and were forced to marry their rapists (Forsyth 1996: 65–69).

Clearly Petrova's mother was trying to protect her daughter, but she was also supporting patriarchal principles limiting women's freedom and individual choices. Note also that men's behavior was not criticized. The fact that Petrova was an only child also contributed to her parents' fears. She was born to a poor Eastern Orthodox family; her mother married young and waited fourteen years for a child before Nadya was born; thus she was treasured. Nadya's mother's family were all singers, performing mostly Bulgarian repertoire, and Petrova learned many songs from her. Her talent "stood out like a pearl". She started singing professionally with local bands at the age of thirteen, for weddings, baptisms, and soldier send-off celebrations. She also worked for many years at an arms factory in Sopot.

Petrova's talent lies in *svatbarska muzika* (wedding music), a genre of Bulgarian folk music that arose in the 1970s (Silverman 2007, 2015, 2021). The instrumental part of this genre features fast tempos, stunning improvisations, dense ornamentation, chromatic passages, and innovative modulations. Bridging folk, jazz, and rock sensibilities, wedding music was a countercultural phenomenon in the 1970s-80s but during post-socialism it was reclaimed as folk music. Wedding songs are either traditional or composed by singers. The vocal style emphasizes rhythmic vibrato and extensive ornamentation, imitating the melodic instruments; it is based on eastern Thracian models and was codified by singers such as Nedyalka Keranova, Maria Karafezieva, and Dinka Ruseva. Indeed, these three singers are Petrova's idols, one of whom, Keranova, was also Romani. Like her idols, Petrova's forte is *bavni pesni* (slow songs) that showcase her superb technical abilities in long ornamented phrases.[3] Like, Keranova, Petrova does not advertise her Romani ethnicity; in fact, many fans do not know she is Romani. She speaks Romani, is proud of her ethnicity, and can sing Romani songs, but does not highlight this, as it is a stigma. Note that although wedding style was created mostly by Roma, both Roma and ethnic Bulgarians had and still have decisive roles in wedding music, and bands are often mixed (Silverman 2021).

At a young age Nadya eloped with a local Romani clarinetist, Dimitŭr Petrov, and joined his band. Marrying a musician was the typical solution to a female singer's dilemma of building a professional career while appearing modest. Petrova's parents were against this union, and she had no contact with them for several years; but after her two sons were born, they reconciled. Nadya established her reputation as a singer because of her immense talent and technique, and her huge repertoire, but she established her reputation as a respectable woman because she worked with her husband and was a good mother. Dimitŭr, however, soon suffered a heart attack, gave up performing, and became an *uredbadzhiya*, a person who owns and operates a sound system with wedding bands. When Nadya and Dimitŭr were hired together they made decent money; however, she began to be hired more often than him, and often without him. She earned respect and established an independent career. From 1990s-2000s she was a "guest"

3 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jd1DlSJjLpI, https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000972912937&sk=about&section=year-overviews and other YouTube clips.

singer with several top bands: Ork. Folk Palitra (Folk Palette), Ork. Rodopi, Ork. Slavej (Nightingale), Ork. Brestovitsa and Ork. Biser (Pearl, led by Mladen Malakov). Being independent means that you set your own fees, which are higher than other musicians.

Despite good income, females building independent career face myriad problems. Nadya had to learn how to advocate for herself and how to navigate the music business. During one post-wedding 3 AM band meeting, the band leader refused to give her the predetermined soloist fee. She argued and threatened not to show up at their gig the next day. When he wouldn't budge, she defiantly did not show up at the gig! This was a rare display of female power and financial acuity. A few weeks later he was forced to reconcile with her because his clients demanded her as the vocalist. Another problem for females was transportation; many of Nadya's gigs were hours away from her home. Her husband would not let her drive alone to performances, as this could be dangerous (due to theft and sexual assault late at night) plus a threat to her reputation. Thus Nadya needed to find rides with male band members, or Dimitŭr or their sons would drive her and wait around for hours. This publicly displayed Dimitŭr's lack of work, and marital strife ensued.

Eventually Nadya separated from Dimitŭr, bought a car, and drove herself to gigs, displaying a public measure of freedom. She joined Makalov's band and then married Malakov. Dimitŭr died of COVID in November 2020. Now that Nadya is a member of Malakov's band, her reputation and financial security are assured. Again, Malakov (like most traditional men) does not want her to drive alone. She quoted him: "people look down on a woman alone; this is not the kind of life I want for you". There are some female singers who do drive alone and manage to retain their reputations. Some wealthy singers hire male drivers. In general, however, female performers still gain security mostly through men, even today.

Another challenge facing female singers is the need to balance the male gaze favoring sexual allure in costuming with the desire to appear modest. Wedding singers are affected by the huge market for *chalga* (pop-folk fusion, also known as turbo-folk) that arose in the late 1980s. Chalga singers tend to dress scantily and dance sexually (Silverman 2012, chapter 9). Singers like Petrova seek to distinguish themselves from "crude" chalga singers – thus, they may wear folk costumes for video clips (Silverman 2007, 2015). But the boundary between folk and chalga is not always sharp. Although Petrova insists that she is a folk singer, still she keeps abreast of chalga hits in case they are requested at weddings. Below we will explore how Esma, too, needed to negotiate her costuming and her complex image.

Esma Redžepova: Icon of Romani Song

Esma Redžepova (1943–2016) is perhaps the most famous Romani singer in the world but faced multiple challenges to stardom. She not only wrote songs that are still sung today, but she also created a niche for Roma on concert stages plus served as a model for female vocalists. One of National Public Radio's 50 Great Voices, Esma (as she is known to her fans) emerged as a teenage star, toured internationally for over 50 years, won numerous prizes, gave over 10,000 concerts (including many benefits), recorded hundreds

of albums, and mentored and fostered forty-seven children. Esma strategically used her voice, her body, her costumes, and her stagings to craft a signature gendered style. Her image drew on historical stereotypes of Romani women as exotic, emotional, sexual, and musical, yet she re-made them as respectable and rooted in families. Like Petrova, she overcame the stigma of females risking their reputations when performing professionally.

Esma was born in Skopje, North Macedonia to a poor Muslim family. Her talent was noticed in school productions, and she won an amateur radio competition. However, she feared her parents' wrath because it was considered shameful for women to perform outside the family for strangers. She said: "A Gypsy girl, beautiful, who also sang– that would have been really dangerous. The family decided that I, like all other girls I should marry early, and have children, and obey my husband without question, and work" (Teodosievski and Redžepova 1984: 89). Singing was an especially sensitive topic in her household because Esma's sister Sajka rejected an arranged marriage, ran away, became a café (*kafana*) singer, and was disowned. But Esma managed to resist her parents' attempts to marry her off in her teens. As a result of the competition, she was brought to the attention of Stevo Teodosievski (1934–1997), an ethnic Macedonian arranger at Radio Skopje who later became her husband. Stevo wanted to train her. Facing her parents' disapproval, he promised that he would make Esma into a stage artist, not a *kafana* singer.

Esma's career with *Ansambl Teodosievski* was characterized by instantaneous success and daring innovations. She was the first Balkan Romani musician to achieve commercial success on elite stages; she was the first female Romani artist to record in Yugoslavia; and she was the first woman in Macedonia to sing on (the new medium of) television. Esma gives credit for her success to Stevo, but Esma herself composed many of her songs, choreographed her performances, and provided her talent. On the other hand, Stevo planned her career carefully – Esma performed only at concerts and for radio and television recordings, creating a new category of female concert artist that didn't have the stigma of a *kafana* singer (Silverman 2003, 2012, chapter 10).

In the early 1970s, Roma in Macedonia were beginning to develop pride via their historical ties to India as part of a larger politicization process. Esma and Stevo made their first trip to India in 1969, followed by two invited trips in 1976 and 1983. In 1976 Esma and Stevo drove from Skopje to India by car; and they were crowned "King and Queen of Romani Music" at the First World Festival of Romani Songs and Music in Chandigarh. Esma also displayed her pride in her Romani heritage through language: "It was kind of a shame to sing in Romani in my time; many singers hid the fact that they were Romani. When I came out singing my own songs in Romani, many came out after me". Despite its official policy of multi-culturalism, Yugoslav music producers openly discriminated against Roma. According to Esma, "many singers passed [as other ethnic groups] because there was an embargo on Romani singers…. I risked a great deal when I said I was Romani and I want to sing in my own language…. Romani women were afraid at the time to say they were Roma. – they said they were Turkish, Macedonian, Albanian, anything but Roma…. I opened the way for Roma, in the first place, to admit that they are Roma, and not to be ashamed they are Roma" (interview, 20 June 1996, New York City). At Radio Skopje Stevo was repeatedly told: "Take… other singers – why a Gypsy?" His colleagues said, "Stevo why have you brought this Gypsy to disgrace us" (Teodosievski and Redže-

pova 1984: 95). The taunts became so stifling that in the 1960s Stevo and Esma moved to Belgrade, Serbia, the capital of Yugoslavia, where they had less harassment and more opportunities.

Yugoslavia's ethnic policy of "brotherhood and unity" supported the cultures and languages of official minorities (Albanians, Turks and Hungarians) but Roma were not recognized as a *narodnost* (nationality, minority). In addition, each Yugoslav republic had its own policy. For example, Romani radio and music received state support in Kosovo in the 1970s. In contrast, in Macedonia, exclusion was so virulent that Esma's songs were not played on radio and television for 25 years. Esma bitterly recalled: "Two or three persons had closed the doors of Radio Skopje for us" (Katin 2015: 257).[4] But eventually her fame did overcome her exclusion in Macedonia. Esma moved back to Skopje in 1990 when war in Serbia was imminent, and the city government leased her prime land to build a home and museum of her life. After her death, unfortunately, there has been no official commemoration. Her legacy has been ignored, and her home is in ruins.

Esma's display of her Romani ethnicity resonated with historic tropes of the iconic "Gypsy" entertainer who was born to perform. Her characteristic use of emotional vocal styling echoed the stereotype of how "Gypsies unlock the soul of their patrons". Press reviews during Esma's early years reveal stark gendered, racialized, and bodily terms. Critics described Esma as dark-skinned, hot-blooded, happy-go-lucky, and genetically talented: "Esma has a lovely dark complexion, it would be a wonderful advertisement for suntan creams and lotion; it has the shade of well-baked bread. She has large, almond shaped eyes, the color of shiny coal, slightly prominent cheekbones and shiny pearly teeth" (Teodosievski and Redžepova 1984: 141).

Stevo and Esma cultivated these stereotypes as long as they were positive. Vulnerable groups may self-stereotype when necessary for marketing purposes, echoing Spivak's "strategic essentialism". Historically, Roma have had few opportunities to alter their imagery because they have never been in control of their representations. Esma and Stevo strategically crafted an image that retained the allure of the "Gypsy" woman as beautiful, sensual and fiery, but made her respectable. One route to respectability was through staging scenarios of a wholesome family, with a maturing Esma as a maternal symbol. All ensemble members came from the school for poor musical children that Stevo established in their Belgrade home; all received lodging, meals, and clothing free of charge; and their music instruction launched their careers. Reflecting their "family", Esma's songs were staged as dramatic performances with the whole group dancing and swaying. The youngest boy, often barefoot, drummed on a *tarabuka* (hand drum), evoking humble poverty. Not only did young drummers provide charismatic visual and

4 Note that according to Rasmussen, in the early 1980s the Serbian/Bosnian band Južni Vetar (composed of non-Roma) pioneered an "eastern/oriental" pan-Yugoslav sound that drew on Romani styles and was widely popular. They too were boycotted by television and radio media although they sold millions of records (2002: 123–4). Note that Serbian and Macedonian state media did produce some Romani music in the 1970s-1990s but it was not easy for Romani musicians to secure state work (Silverman 2012: 10). In contrast, in Bulgaria 1984–1989 Romani music was labeled corrupt and impure and was prohibited by the socialist government; musicians were harassed, fined and sent to jail (Silverman 2021). Post-socialist Serbia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria have healthy Romani music markets but racism in general has increased.

aural interest, but their participation also created a wholesome image, defusing the sexuality of a Romani woman. It also created intimacy with the audience and a safe window into the "authentic" Romani world.

Esma embraced her Romani ethnicity, but not exclusively; she broadened her appeal to Yugoslav multi-culturalism via repertoire and costuming. Thus, dressed in six folk costumes, she performed songs from all six Yugoslav republics, in every language in Yugoslavia. She further broadened to songs of neighboring Balkan countries, and also songs in German, Hebrew, Russian, and Hindi. In addition, she toured to countries with a significant Yugoslav migrant population (such as Australia, Austria, Canada, and the US). Thus, she became a global singer. She was also a global humanitarian, organizing numerous benefit concerts for orphanages, hospitals, disabled people, etc. She had a special interest in women's issues and in 1995 the Macedonian Association of Romani Women incorporated her name in its title. In 2002 she won the Woman of the Year title from the magazine *Žena* (Woman) and in 2010 she took part in a United Nations conference on women as part of the Macedonian delegation. Although she eschewed activism specifically for Roma (and was criticized by Romani activists for this stance), Esma was a universal humanist, stressing pacificism and cross-cultural understanding. She paved the way for female performers, and she remains a music icon for Roma around the world.

Pretty Loud: Pioneering Female Romani Rap

As the first female Romani band in Europe, Pretty Loud has achieved remarkable recent success by rapping about women's empowerment issues that apply to both to the Romani community and the wider non-Romani society. Arranged marriage, domestic violence, and discrimination are all targeted in their lyrics. According to band member Silvia Sinani: "We want to stop the early marriages … we want the girls themselves, and not their parents, to decide whether they want to marry or not. We want every woman to have the right to be heard, to have her dreams and to be able to fulfil them, to be equal" (Gec 2021). The band promotes the economic independence of women through education. Band member Živka Ferhatović stated: "be educated, make your own salary… so you don't depend on your husband or anyone else – fight for your yourself… This is your life lesson".[5] They said in their speech accepting the 2021 Elle Magazine Style Award for activism: "… We are here for the girls who want to make their own decisions…today 'the day against violence against women,' we present our song because assault has to stop". They have been profiled in dozens of international news outlets (including the *New York Times* and *Deutsche Welle*), on social media, and on numerous talk shows.[6]

To understand the genesis of Pretty Loud it is necessary to delve into its sponsoring NGO GRUBB (Gypsy Roma Urban Balkan Beats, formerly called R-Point). GRUBB was founded in 2006 by non-Roma in the UK and runs after-school centers in Belgrade and Niš (previously in Novi Sad) that combine academic tutoring with training in the arts.

5 Posle Ručka. 2021. Television Interview with Pretty Loud. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI-vonGj04E (accessed 4 July 2022).

6 See https://www.wearegrubb.com/news.

Children up to high school age attend after-school classes in Serbian and English languages, literature, history, and mathematics. The arts program encompasses visual arts, theatre, photography as well as music and dance. Their website states: "We run educational and artistic programmes, working predominantly in Serbia with Roma children and young people. GRUBB's aim is to further their education in order that they may access mainstream employment, thereby facilitating their long-term social integration".[7] Most GRUBB employees are Serbs, but recently several Roma have become teachers.

From the beginning, the music/dance genre that GRUBB introduced to Roma was rap/hip hop. It is possible that rap was chosen by non-Romani administrators because it was new, global, and marketable for performances. It is also possible that the children themselves requested it, although the hip hop scene was still underground in Belgrade in the 2000s.[8] But the association of poor/oppressed racialized Roma with Black Americans living in ghettos surely played a role. Hip hop culture is often interpreted as a form of expression coming from people of color in ghettos; it often relates to youth rebellion and addresses injustice. African American rap and hip hop have, indeed, been reinterpreted by many minoritized groups around the world as part of a broader process of claiming a public identity (Banić-Grubišić 2010). Regarding R-Point's Belgrade rap classes, Banić-Grubišić insightfully asks to what extent do "Romani people as our Blacks in their Hip hop music borrow basic patterns of an Afro-American cultural idiom? Does it mean some kind of symbolical identification between 'colored people' with 'colored people'? Is there some sort of imagined concurrence in struggles to the 'achieved' emancipation of Afro-American brothers?" (2010: 89).

Unlike Pretty Loud, other Balkan rap groups have arisen in a grassroots manner, for example, Gypsy Mafia, which formed in Serbia and migrated to Austria, (Banić-Grubišić, interview, 12 January 2021). Schoon (2014) writes about rap in Istanbul Romani neighborhoods emerging in times of crisis. In North Macedonia, Šutka Roma Rap raps in Romani about the hard life in the sprawling Romani neighborhood of Šutka. In contrast, rap in GRUBB, originated in a "top down" manner, i.e., "hip hop created from above" (Banić-Grubišić 2010: 86). Yet during the last fifteen years, GRUBB has created a culture where younger children actively want to learn rap to emulate the now-famous elders.

The production of shows and videos, however, is enacted "top-down" by teams. The first level of supervision includes the male rappers who were the former stars (such the band Roma Sijam - I am Roma) before women took the spotlight. Pretty Loud members insist that this process is a "collaboration" whereby they bring their lyrics to their experienced male Romani colleagues, who help reformulate their ideas into more professional lyrics and dance moves. Indeed, videos of their work sessions reveal Pretty Loud members performing in front of male mentors. I inquired if their feminist messages also get reworked by their male mentors, and they said yes. Silvia Sinani explained that these male colleagues are close friends with whom they have grown up, and that they too have a feminist sensibility: "They have sisters, mothers – all of them all have the same problems as we women" (interview, February 17, 2022). She expanded: "In our neighborhood

7 See https://www.wearegrubb.com.

8 Neither the administrators nor the teachers I interviewed knew anything about this history, but I am still investigating.

we have male colleagues who help us. I grew up with them and I watched how they had more rights. Now we work as equals with men".[9]

A higher level of supervision involves GRUBB inviting international guests to teach workshops, including Guillaume Doubet (music producer, Paris and Los Angeles), Raul Guevera (b boy dancer and hip-hop choreographer), Serge Denoncourt (Canadian director and choreographer), and Nico Archambault and Wynn Holmes (So You Think You Can Dance, Canada). Although professional training is certainly valuable, some patronizing statements regarding Roma are voiced by Denoncourt on the GRUBB website; "Education is not in their culture… we give them a sense of responsibility… and an opportunity…with the possibility of a show at the end". My analysis of multiple levels of production (lyrics, choreography, staging and costuming) reveals that Pretty Loud's branding and media presence are also supervised by GRUBB.

Pretty Loud coalesced in 2014 when several women attending GRUBB advocated for their own group. GRUBB's early shows that toured Canada and western Europe featured only male rappers; females merely danced behind the rappers. Silvia recalled: "We knew we wanted to talk about women's rights – because there was this male group – the emphasis was always on the men – let the men rap and the girls can dance. Why, when we can rap!"[10] GRUBB founders/donors in UK supported the idea of a female group.

Although they are all Romani women from working class families, Pretty Loud members have differing life stories that offer intersectional insights into gender, class, and age. Silvia Sinani, 24, one of the oldest members, grew up in an activist family; her father helped found the Romani organization Vakti, and her mother, living in Germany, is also an activist. Her dancing was noticed at a Romani wedding by a GRUBB teacher and she was invited to dance classes where she learned hip hop; eventually she was promoted to teach hip hop. Zlata Ristić, the eldest, is a single mother of a son, who married willingly at 16 years of age, but now realizes she was too young: "I got married and gave birth when I was 17… It was my own choice, but I made a mistake. That's why we aim to encourage other young girls not to let their parents arrange a marriage they don't want". (Jovanovic 2021). Zlata now also teaches dance. Živka Ferhatović and her sister Dijana were raised by their grandparents when their parents moved to western Europe for work; they are still in high school. Sisters Selma and Elma Dalipi are the only two members who sing in addition to rapping. Like the male rap group Roma Sijam that preceded them, Pretty Loud combines Romani vocal styles and melodies with rap. Silvia recruited the sisters.

Pretty Loud's artistic trajectory is truly revolutionary considering the conservatism of their community. Like Esma in Macedonia and Nadya in Bulgaria, Pretty Loud members faced severe restrictions while growing up not only on public performance but also on mobility and socializing. Female wedding singers similarly face accusations of lewdness and lose morals, and their family members often prevent them from assuming professional roles. Zlata Ristić articulated the barriers to becoming a performer: "Why wouldn't I do it—just because my neighbors or the community might think it's wrong or hate it?"[11]

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9 Posle Ručka. 2021. Television Interview with Pretty Loud. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI-vonGj04E (accessed 4 July 2022).

10 Jovanovich, Joey. 2022. *Pretty Loud*, documentary film in progress.

11 Jovanovich, Joey. 2022. *Pretty Loud*, documentary film in progress.

On the other hand, members cite support from select relatives. Some had to earn from the elders the right to attend GRUBB by getting good grades in school (note that this dispels the common stereotype that Roma do not support institutional education). Others simply defied family expectations and boldly claimed their independence.

Pretty Loud members have faced prejudice from the wider Serbian society not only for being Roma, but also for being female public performers. In an interview they stated that although they were recognized in their community and had street credibility, they still experience discrimination (VoxFemiae 2021). Dijana recounted a disturbing incident of harassment while performing: "Three men pointed fingers at us… I don't know why they were laughing—was it because we were Roma or because we were talking about women, but I think that kind of prejudice should not exist". Silvia then expressed her panic at having to participate in panel discussion with these three in the audience: "Imaging staying to talk about Roma and them laughing at me" (Jovanovich 2022).

Pretty Loud's 2020 breakout hit, 'Pretty Loud Mashup', which was created through teamwork from several rap fragments that the members wrote, tells about Samantha's dilemma of arranged marriage. But it also deals with empowering women's voices and addresses discrimination against Roma. Filmed in Zemun, and featuring locals of all ages, it projects a strong sense of pride in their Romani neighborhood:[12]

(Romani) …..Don't give me away, dad
I'm too young for marriage
Her life's already been decided
Samantha had to put up with abuse
It's hard for her to leave home
But she has to do it
To obey her father's word…
(English) …. Stand proud and fighting for our races today
For tomorrow for women standing equal to men
…. My skin is different, so they always want me out
… (Romani) Because of who I am and where I'm from, I have to prove myself
… So what if I'm a woman, I have the same strength
I'm smart so why would I stay quiet?
…My dreams are big but I will make them come true
Our voices brought us to where we are now.

In 2021 Pretty Loud released 'Ravnopravno' (Equally) on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, produced in cooperation with the United Nations and the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia. With a more disturbing message than 'Mashup', the text cites high statistical high rates of domestic violence, offers personal testimony, and delivers a clear message both to men and women:[13]

12 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-ezaPqeWwQ. They gained international visibility at the Women of the World festival in London in 2020. In 2021 they won an award from the BeFem feminist center in Belgrade.

13 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85uoOsHFpaM.

….(Serbian) None of us should have to watch or suffer violence. Bruises are not our makeup!
(Romani) Don't pretend to be smart
Don't raise your hand against me because I'm a woman
I will fight with you for equal rights….
I had no voice, only pain in my heart from seeing the violence inflicted on women.
My father beating up my mother right in front of me….
Violence does not make you powerful…
…I call to all women sharing my destiny to unify our strength to fight for a better tomorrow.
…Let's stop the violence against women…

Pretty Loud has seized the spotlight and they have bold plans for the future. They are working on a song about Romani history; they recently performed for the Obama foundation; they are the focus of a new documentary film (Jovanovich 2022); they qualified for the semi-finals of Croatia's 2021 Supertalent show; and they won the 2022 Muzzik Video Awards 2k21 in the category Video With a Message. They are also becoming bolder in their interviews: "… We fight against discrimination against both women and Roma people because we felt it as Roma and women" (Živka Ferhatović, 2022, Kosovo Trust Building). And finally, they take their roles as public models seriously. Zlata Ristić explained: "I am delighted when women of different ages, who do not know us, … send us messages of support… They motivate us. Our grandmothers and mothers did not have the opportunity to talk about these topics, and some women do not have it still at this very moment. … It is a big responsibility to give someone a good example" (2022, Kosovo Trust Building).

Conclusion

Comparing the three generations from which these female artists come, we can see that while some patriarchal restrictions have eased, most persist; in addition, stereotypes about "Gypsy women" also persist. In the oldest generation, Esma, with a male mentor/husband but no female mentors, pioneered a new respectable female niche in Romani music. Nadya, a generation later, had female singer models (though few of Romani descent) but no mentors and faced a family crisis plus a hugely competitive music scene. The young members of Pretty Loud have benefited from both feminist advances and assigned male mentors, but still face the double discrimination of being Roma and being women.

These artists illustrate bold leadership roles of Romani women in vocal music. They were motivated to expand both women's expressive choices and their economic independence. Some had institutional support while others did not. Pretty Loud is the product of a well-funded non-Romani institution; how much independence members will have in the future remains to be seen. Esma was initially shunned by established institutions, but later was embraced by them; her husband/mentor initially made artistic choices for her but later she determined her own artistic choices. Nadka had neither institutions nor mentors to help her – she was completely on her own, and thus vulnerable.

Although following very different paths all of the women profiled came from poor families to forge creative ways of dealing with patriarchal constraints against female public performance. While downplaying her Romani ethnicity, Nadya became a star of Bulgarian wedding singing and established a remarkable level of independence. Esma became a global superstar and ambassador of Romani music. And Pretty Loud is emerging as a beam of innovation, boldly delivering pointed messages about female empowerment and Romani pride.

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Assumptions of Normality: How Three Women with a Disability Changed the Face of Music

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Abstract: *Since the last 30 years, women musicians with a disability have remodeled the laws to integrate disability in the professional musical world, changed the way music is presented, understood, and taught, and integrated music as a form of activism. In this chapter, I give three examples of women I interviewed, who transformed the musical landscape through their actions. Evelyn Glennie is the first woman to develop a career as a solo percussionist. She had to show her teachers that deafness would not prevent her from achieving her musical studies. In her TED Talk "How to truly listen" she explained the methods she used to learn music through vibrations in her whole body, that she often presents to music students today. Gaelynn Lea is an American folk singer, violinist, and public speaker, very present on musical stage since winning NPR's Tiny Desk Contest in 2016. By changing the traditional way of holding her violin, she proved that physical limitations do not mean musical limitations. Lachi is an American singer, songwriter, composer, and producer. She advocates for a better diversity, equity, inclusion, and disability awareness in the music industry. As a blind musician, she faced the lack of role model figure when she was progressing in her career. Today, she wants to hold this role for the next generation of artists with a disability. In conclusion, I situate these three artists in our society, through the lens of gender diversity in the music industry.*

Keywords: *disability, assumptions, music, activism, leadership.*

From 2020 to 2022, I interviewed musicians working in varied musical styles, all having in common a professional role in their field, and the fact that they have a disability. The study was about the impact of their disability on their musical education, progression, and career. Mostly virtual through video conferences, meetings were carried out in North America (Canada and United States of America), in Europe (United Kingdom, France, Finland) and in Cairo. Through our conversations I could also evaluate the significance of the social and local contexts, depending on the musical genres, the localities, and the societal behaviors regarding disability. I used Critical Disability theory as a framework, which defines several models of disability through cultural, political, economic, and social lenses.

Among the interviewees, three women, whose actions changed the frames and rules governing the field of classical and popular professional music, captured my attention. This chapter dives into forty years of lived experiences of Evelyn Glennie, Gaelynn Lea and Lachi, and their journey as music professionals, through contrasting situations of disabilities, personal convictions, and lessons learned. The topic of education, of teaching people how to consider life from different perspectives, is common to the three journeys. What diverges is their relation to their own disability, the way it has been perceived by themselves or by others, although this important aspect of their identity has driven their musical itinerary and their careers. Evelyn Glennie was the first student with a disability who changed the law in academy to allow students with any disability to apply. She also developed a technique of hearing sound differently through vibrations that she improved year after year, and that she teaches today. Gaelynn Lea found a new way of holding and performing her instrument. Through her touring she discovered disability activism and is now an advocate for accessibility in professional music. Her path crossed the one of Lachi, who also became a disability culture defender and who filled the need for role models and disability presence in the music industry.

The Social Model of Disability

The domain of Critical Disability Studies (CDS) offers considerations and distinctions about disability applied to different models, the two most important being the social and the medical models of disability. As opposed to the medical model, which analyzes disability from a strictly medical and functional point of view (i.e., spinal cord injury leading to the use of a wheelchair), the social model of disability states that the causes of disability are found in the way society is structured around "able" bodies, rather than individual disability in bodies. The social model also examines the entire person with their capacities, feelings, emotions, possibilities, and social interactions with others. These two models have led to the distinction between the terms "impairment" (which refers to bodily condition) and "disability" (which refers to social obstacles). Mike Oliver (2012) and Colin Barnes (2013), both pioneers in the field of Disability Studies, have written extensively on the subject. Barnes (2012: 14) points out that historically:

> In order to understand the significance of the implications of social model reasoning it is important to remember that until very recently "disability" was viewed almost exclusively as an individual medical problem or a "personal tragedy" in Western culture.

Their thorough vision of disability as defined by the social model led to a completely new vision of the rights of disabled people within our society. Disability activism has given means of expressions to people who want to be heard and seen, declaring their rights to politicians, and asking for a fair position in their communities. Oliver (2013: 1024) states:

> The idea behind the social model of disability stemmed from the Fundamental Principles of Disability document first published in the mid-1970s (UPIAS 1976), which argued that we were not disabled by our impairments but by the disabling barriers we faced in society.[1]

In addition to the social model, a cultural model of disability appeared in the early 1980s in the United States. Based on the idea that disabled people are an oppressed minority group with a particular culture, several movements were born from this concept. Crip Culture celebrates diversity. The term "Crip" is an identifier, reclaimed from the archaic "crippled", a derogatory term for disabled people that was used throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century. In the cultural model of disability, "crip" has been reclaimed to represent a broader range of people who are different and showing pride in these differences, and serves as a tool for disability activism. For instance, there is a distinction between being deaf (i.e., being impacted by a medically recognized deafness or hearing impairment) and being Deaf (i.e., living a life in which deafness is part of the language, the identity, and the culture).

The social model redefines the way disabled people see themselves, represent themselves, talk about themselves. Falling into the category of being disabled, I was recently involved in a conversation[2] about the manner of being addressed, i.e. a disabled person vs a person with a disability. It was argued that claiming to be disabled is acceptable, as it was bringing the idea that "it was not something that we did wrong to be disabled". The counterargument was that the image of being disabled was often associated with the idea of being made less capable of doing something. For me, there is a parallel between the term "disabled" and fashion. It changes depending on the period, and on the social trends that governs our world, politically, financially, culturally, socially, and medically. In the same conversation, it was drawn to our attention that the current tendency was to use Person-First Language,[3] recognizing that disability is one of the multiple identities of a person, that disability does not define the person. Person-First language places the person before the disability: a disabled person should be called a person with disability. However, Person-First Language does not apply to all scenarios of identities and disabilities. More generally, a distinction should be made between Identity-First Language, which is preferred by the disabled community, and Person-First Language. Although the debate is ongoing, we agreed that using a more polite way to refer to disability would not get non-disabled people to look past the person's disabilities but might bring the discourse around disability into the public arena.

People are still engaged in disability activism today. The underrepresentation of disabled artists in the field of professional music led to a rise of disability inclusion campaigns in several areas from musical education to professional musical life. Historically, it borrows from the concepts of civil rights movements. Disability rights movements,

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1 UPAIS stands for Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, an early disability rights organization in the United Kingdom founded in 1972.

2 The following paragraph quotes excerpts of a private conversation between people with diverse disabilities.

3 About People-First Language, see Titchkosky 2001. A list of different mentions to disabilities is given as an example.

i.e. fighting for people to be included as individuals with identities and rights in society, has led to active protests such as the "504 Sit-in" in April 1977, protesting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an American legislation that guaranteed certain rights to people with disabilities. Another fight led to the amendment of the American Disability Act, or ADA, in 1992 to recognize the status of people with disabilities as a minority group. In both cases, artists, and musicians in particular, have been actively protesting, composing songs that helps us understand the movement today. Among them were Jeff Moyer,[4] dubbed the "troubadour of the 504 demonstrations", and Elaine Kolb,[5] who composed the theme song of ADAPT,[6] "We Will Ride", during the protests against inaccessible transportation.[7]

Nowadays, artists with disabilities are willing to talk and take actions, until they are heard. The three women featured in this chapter embrace leadership positions in the professional music industry, though their approaches to disability and to music are different.

Evelyn Glennie, Touch the Sound

In post-secondary music education, the rigidity of conservatories and music schools is a topic that has been well covered from the second part of the twentieth century to today.[8] After the first administrative steps of application in the process of integrating university or high school, admissions to these high-level establishments come with a series of interviews and auditions that need to be thoroughly prepared by candidates. The jury has full power in the decision-making process. The rules have not changed for many years and are closely followed by all the participants. Once a decision has been made, appeals are rarely considered. The participant will have to wait until the following round of admissions, usually once a year. When Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie[9] applied to the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1981 at the age of 16, she followed the same process as other students. The jury first refused her application because they felt it did not make any sense to admit a musician who was profoundly deaf. As Glennie explains in an article that she wrote in the early 2000s and revised in 2015, profoundly deaf means that "the quality of the sound heard is not sufficient to be able to understand the spoken word

4 Jeff Moyer is an American musician and disability rights activist. See https://jeffmoyer.com/about/ (accessed 29 June 2021).

5 Elaine Kolb is an American disability rights activist, singer, songwriter, and performer. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/events/pride-parade-music.page (accessed 29 June 2021).

6 ADAPT stands for American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today. It is a non-violent disability justice group.

7 For more about music as a tool for Disability Activism, see Kolin 2021.

8 As an example, see two recent studies, the first one by Tim Palmer and David Baker (2021) about the experience of four classical musicians in conservatoires in the United Kingdom, and the second one by Lotte Latukefu and Jessica Pollard (2022) about the professional perspectives of conservatoire students in Australia. The references to the application rules to such institutions are also covered in these articles.

9 Contents of this part come from Evelyn Glennie's interview by Diane Kolin, 29 October 2020. When more resource is available (articles or books written by Glennie), the reference is also given.

from sound alone" (Glennie 2015). She relies on lip-reading, an art she masters as she combines it with face-reading and body-reading. Developing her own technique of feeling, rather than only hearing, the music, with her percussion teacher when she was 12, the importance of the vibration produced by the instruments became the central point of her musical progress, pushing her to remove her hearing aids as the sonic amplification the devices involved was depriving her from focusing on the vibrations. Her method constantly improved, as did her willingness to become a professional musician, particularly a solo percussionist. In the 1980s there were no women holding this position. There were no obstacles on her road until she applied to the Royal Academy of Music. The jury thought that there would be no future for a deaf musician who might be unemployable after three years in the academy, if she could manage to stay for three years. But Glennie did not want to work with orchestras, her aim was to become a solo percussionist, which was even more inconceivable to them. The assumption that deafness meant silence, and that silence meant that music was inaccessible, was driving their decision. Glennie decided to prove them wrong. She appealed, asking for another chance to demonstrate her abilities. Furthermore, a person should not be judged on presumptions, or differences. She was determined to get a second chance. The jury accepted, and the rest is history. After she entered the Royal Academy of Music, which made her their first student with a hearing impairment, not only did the admission policies change to add non-discriminatory admission rules, but these rules were also adopted in all music academies and conservatories in the UK, soon followed by other countries. She also fulfilled her objective to become the first woman solo percussionist, a major commissioner of new compositions for solo percussion, and sought after by the most famous orchestras.

Her discography is impressive: her first recording was Bartók and Brahms in 1988, and she has since then released more than 40 CDs, two of them being rewarded by a Grammy award in 1989 and 2014. She has been awarded many honorary doctorates from universities around the world, became an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1993, was promoted to Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 2007, and appointed to the Order of the Companions of Honour (CH) in the 2017 New Year Honours.[10] Not only has she commissioned over 200 compositions for solo percussion during her career, thus expanding the existing repertoire, she also catalogues percussions from all over the world. She owns more than 3500 percussive instruments. Her idea is to create the largest digital percussion database with an educational purpose, recording the sound of her instruments one after the other. Her office in Huntingdon, in the suburbs of Cambridge, hosts one of the most impressive collections of percussion instruments in the world. Her series of videos published on her YouTube Channel, entitled "The Evelyn Glennie Collection",[11] shows how she connects to each instrument and draws all the sound possibilities from it. This collection adds to her tireless exploration of sound and its multiple angles.

10 See: https://www.evelyn.co.uk/about/biography/(accessed 21 January 2022).

11 See: "The Evelyn Glennie Collection" at: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMI2RgJjeg7CmLON5Ezj_kr36NV-yaRgI (accessed 21 January 2022).

Figure 1: Evelyn Glennie. Roto Toms and Octobans © Philipp Rathmer/Brigitte.

In the TED Talk conference she gave in 2003, entitled "How to truly listen", she offers the key concepts of the technique she developed to listen to music differently.[12] In this conference, she explains how music can come with a range of emotions that can be perceived in different ways by the performer and the audience. When she works on a piece of music, she reads the notes, which she calls "the instructions", but she also needs to tell her own story of the music, and this is what makes her a musician. Since she feels the music instead of hearing it with the ears, the story is built around what her body perceives. In her conference, her aim is to make the audience react. When she asks them to participate, she does not hear the audience, but she can see and sense the feedback and the applause. This is the same way she conveys her own feelings to the audience when she plays.

In order to feel the oscillations of the instruments through the stage, Glennie performs barefoot, stressing the importance of the combination of eyes and body experiences. This method reminds me what I have observed with deaf dancers. The entire body feels and reacts to the vibrations, that is, the rhythm and the dynamics of a piece of music. Nowadays we also find wearable pieces of equipment that converts music to vibration,

12 Evelyn Glennie, "How to truly listen", TED Talk, 2007, https://youtu.be/IU3V6zNER4g (accessed 21 January 2022).

such as the Woojer,[13] a little device that can be worn around the waist and that vibrates according to the sound frequencies of the musical source connected to it.

Glennie's world is surrounded by sounds that can be touched, felt, and lived. What she tries to demonstrate in her many talks, masterclasses and interviews is that everybody can experience sound the same way, one just needs to extend the listening beyond the hearing. The documentary *Touch The Sound: A Sound Journey with Evelyn Glennie*, directed by Thomas Riedelsheimer (2009) illustrates this approach to sound, showing her in action in diverse periods of her life, creating new compositions, performing on different types of instruments including some percussions she never tried before, in various kinds of spaces including places that were not designed for music, and in the city full of urban noises that can become music when one feels them and listens to them differently.

However, if she is recognized as the person who changed the admissions policy regarding disabilities, and deafness in particular, in music institutions, she refuses to self-identify as deaf or disabled. Her deafness is not so important to her. In the conclusion of her "Hearing Essay" she affirms:

> My hearing is something that bothers other people far more than it bothers me. There are a couple of inconveniences but in general it doesn't affect my life much. For me, my deafness is no more important than the fact I am female with brown eyes. Sure, I sometimes have to find solutions to problems regarding my hearing and its relation to music, but so do all musicians. (Glennie 2015)

It has indeed bothered other people. I will not risk saying that her relation to deafness is driven by a fear of judgment or of categorization. She simply wants the audience to think of her as a musician, not as a "deaf musician". By redefining hearing, Glennie distances herself from the society's misconceptions of hearing loss. Thus, she also pulls herself away from the Deaf community (with an uppercase D), constituted of people who are deaf and who do not consider deafness medically, but socially, with its own language (sign language) and its own culture. Rather than trying to correct deafness with hearing aids or cochlear implants, the Deaf community embraces new forms of communicating and experimenting with artistic practices. Movements such as Dip-Hop, or Deaf Hip-Hop, were born with the idea of a connection between languages, a communion of spoken or sung words and a body language, almost like a dance, with signed words, based on a full sensory experience.[14] Glennie wants her deafness to be considered as "normal", arguing that the sound can be received in many ways and that everyone's hearing is different, even if we compare two persons who do not have any particular issues with the ears.[15] It is true, but I still believe that her deafness and her technique of hearing differently gives her something positively different, which we can feel as an audience member:

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13 The technology used by the Woojer is called haptic technology, which uses tactile sensations to stimulate the sense of touch in a user experience. More information on their website: https://www.woojer.com/pages/technology (accessed 21 January 2022).

14 On the d/Deaf communities and sensory experiences, see Holmes 2017: 171–220. Her article mentions Evelyn Glennie and her complex relation to disability, but also examines in detail the definitions of deafness through the lens of the d/Deaf communities, and the history of sign languages in different parts of the world.

15 She talks about her relation to deafness in her recent book, *Listen World!* (Glennie 2019).

when she is on stage, one can see visually the range of emotions that she transmits, along with her skills as a solo percussionist.

As we have seen in this section, Glennie's leadership has many facets, from the moment she proved that musicianship is more important than disability in music education, to the demonstration of the power of vibration in music that led to a redefinition of listening. She holds a prominent position in performing, growing the percussion repertoire, and instructing different ways of experiencing music.

Gaelynn Lea, Live Music is for Everyone

Gaelynn Lea,[16] an American singer and violinist, was born with a physical disability called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, or Brittle Bones Disease. She grew up with bent arms and legs and has used an electric wheelchair since early childhood. In fifth grade she became interested in the school orchestra. After hitting a perfect score at the listening test, she joined the ensemble. The teacher suggested that she start with the cello, but the instrument was too big for her to use it in a conventional way. She then switched to the violin. With the help of her teacher, she developed a technique of playing her instrument that still applies today, 27 years later: she holds the violin upright as she would a cello, and holds her bow – which is a half-size smaller than a traditional bow – like a double bass player. This ingenious adaptation has proven wrong anyone who wouldn't allow a child with disability to learn an instrument because of the impossibility of playing it as it has usually been taught. The problem unfortunately still exists. If the teacher would not have been open enough to go against conventions to consider adaptations and other options for her student to perform, Lea would probably never have learned music. Lea was classically trained in this orchestra but could only use three fingers for her fingering, and had limited range for bowing. With the help of her teacher, she practiced a different bowing style and positioning, but most importantly, she re-fingered the scores of the pieces she played. This is a complex and time-consuming task.

Growing up, Lea knew that she wanted to go one step further in music, but because of the limitations described above, she would not picture herself as a professional classical musician. She decided to explore other genres and discovered Celtic music and folk music. In 2006 she joined her first band, playing and singing Celtic Fiddle Tunes. Lea has a very distinct mezzo-soprano voice, which was described as "ethereal" in a local newspaper.[17] In 2011 she was introduced to the looping pedal, which transformed her performance practice. Since then, she would play a theme with her violin and make it loop, then sing over it. The same year, she composed her first song. In 2016, she entered the American radio NPR's Tiny Desk Contest, receiving over 6,000 applications every year, and won.[18] Since her music was promoted all over the United States, Lea and her husband

16 Contents of this part come from Gaelynn Lea's interview by Diane Kolin, 1 February 2021.

17 Denny Dyroff, "On Stage: Maurice Hines 'Tappin' Thru Life" in *Unionville Times* (Brandywine New Media, 20 October 2016). https://www.unionvilletimes.com/?p=32224 (accessed 6 February 2022).

18 NPR, Tiny Desk Contest, https://www.npr.org/sections/allsongs/2016/03/03/468923804/and-the-winner-of-the-2016-tiny-desk-contest-is (accessed 6 February 2022).

embarked in a tour that led them to take the decision to quit their jobs (Lea was teaching the violin), sell their house and travel the world for a tour. To date, she performed in forty-five states and nine countries.

During her tour she embraced the concept of disability pride, which consists of seeing disability as an ordinary component of our society and of our identity, of which one should be proud. Disability should not be associated with negative wording or feeling. Everybody who ages becomes disabled at some point. Disability is part of an identity, along with gender, race, and anything that makes someone special. Disability pride originates in these values. Seeing the world with the perspective of disability pride means acknowledging the barriers of the society, but also defending and celebrating open doors. Lea's approach of performing has evolved with her experience of touring. Being in a power wheelchair, she faced many occurrences of non-accessible venues, for a diversity of reasons ranging from the stairs in front of the building, requiring ramps that were far from secure, to a lack of access to the stage itself, forcing her to perform in front of the stage instead of on stage, or to the dressing room, or worse, to the toilets. Lea is pushing more venues to apply accessibility standards, but also all artists, with or without accessibility, to give their priority to accessible venues.

The perception one has of disability in society is constantly disrupted by biases and preconceptions that are often wrong. Lea became a public speaker, building awareness on what being disabled means, and how details such as the language used to speak about disability can make a difference. For instance, terms such "victim of a stroke", "suffering from a disability" or "confined to a wheelchair" are often heard. Disability activism offers alternative options to the pessimistic appellations often heard today. These terms can be simple: a person uses a wheelchair, experienced a stoke, is disabled, or has a disability. Lea highlights the emotional impacts of the current labels on members of a community who do not recognize themselves in the negative denominations. Moreover, these words support the medical model of disability as opposed to the social model explored earlier in this chapter: the medical model endorses the idea of disability as being broken and needed to be repaired. Disability can be associated to a range of positive words such as innovative, creative, flexible, and powerful. Terms used can affect self-confidence and self-esteem.

Finally, Lea emphasizes the importance of teachers for apprentice musicians with disabilities. Accessibility in music institutions is not only about accessing the building, the classrooms, and the toilets. It is about music instruments adaptations or bodily adaptations. The task requires the educators to think beyond what is considered as a limitation, and perhaps to make multiple tries together until the adaptation suits the student. What is important is to give the pupil enough confidence to pursue their musical studies. To go further, young musicians with disabilities often lack a model. There are many musicians who are happy to share their experiences. Children are usually curious, and the earlier they have access to other forms of music-making, the more they will be willing to think out of the box.

Lea's leadership comes with her ability of expressing her strong positions about disability in professional music, either with her compositions or with her public talks. Her presence on the field has opened conversations about the accessibility of performance venues and music education.

Lachi, Full Disclosure

The American singer Lachi[19] was born in Maryland. She is legally blind, which means that her visual acuity is less than 20/200 (or 6/60) in both eyes. From birth, she has a disease called Keratoconus, causing the retina to develop only partially, thus she grew up with low visual acuity. She started being interested in music at an early age, around three or four. As a child, she struggled at school because of her blindness, however others around her put her hassles on the account of daydreaming. As a result, she was not very social at school and spent hours writing poetry, composing, and singing songs. It changed in college where she joined musical clubs, and played the piano and sang on Saturday evenings in her dorm. Rapidly, she was noticed, and was asked to play more. Supported by her friends, her audience, and her teachers, she met with her counselor at school who encouraged her to go to New York University (NYU). Climbing steps of the music industry through her studies was full of challenges. As her disease affects her optic nerves and her retina, glasses were useless. After she graduated, in 2010, she got signed to a record deal under the label EMI. It was a very exciting time but also somewhat frustrating: the label used the fact that among the band were some musicians who were legally blind or visually impaired, portraying them in a manner which Lachi's group did not feel appropriate. When the label was sending the band on tour to promote the album, there was no accommodation regarding their disabilities. Although the 2010 contract was originally an attractive deal, the band resigned. This decision gave Lachi enough confidence to appreciate and value her position as a musician, as a woman, and as leader in her own business choices. She never denied being a musician with a disability, on the opposite, she embraced disability pride: her disability is a strength, not a weakness. She embarked on a journey that would change her image, as an artist and as a disability advocate. Since then, she became an award-winning recording artist, working with major producers and labels (among which Sony and Universal), being featured on TV, radio, and print (among which *The New York Times* and *The Huffington Post*).

19 Contents of this part come from Lachi's interviews by Diane Kolin, 23 October 2020 and 17 January 2022.

Figure 2: Lachi. © Lachi.

Eventually, her role in disability advocacy grew bigger. Working in the music and entertainment industry made her realize that there was a lack of artists with disability in her field. In a society where Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is frequently mentioned, disability should be part of the Diversity category. She is very vocal about her own disability, and she would like to see more artists disclosing their disability as part of their identity, being proud of being a musician as much as being disabled. Artists with disabilities grew up without role models. There were no known singers with blindness Lachi could reach to ask for advice when she was studying. Today, she wants to be a model for young artists, and she wants her peers to do the same, affirming that disability disclosure should be part of music education. More discussions about disability in the arts need to happen. She remembers the first event that made her become aware of this gap. The organization *Women in Music*, helping to propel women and those who identify as female in the music and entertainment industry, organized an online Diversity and Inclusion panel, that Lachi attended with enthusiasm, as these talks were still rarely happening. Subjects such as race, sexual orientation and religion were discussed. Lachi sent them comments, inquiring whether disability could also be considered. Her reflections were ignored, until one of the organizers finally mentioned the topic, agreeing that "we don't talk enough about disability", but the conversation ended there. However, after the panel concluded, someone from the organization contacted her and proposed her to moderate a panel for disability awareness, which she did. The event was successful and well attended. Following up, musical and non-musical organizations requested their own talks: the Grammy Awards, Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI), the American Society of Composers,

Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), some record labels, the White House Office of Public Engagement, the Kennedy Center (where she also performed). She was approached by non-profit organizations to become their ambassador. She became the co-chair of the Advocacy committee for the Grammys Awards Recording Academy in New York, allowing her to connect them with more artists with disabilities. She was invited to attend the Foundation Fighting Blindness Gala, which led to collaborations with artists such as the Filipino American rapper apl.de.ap, member of the Black-Eyed Peas, who also has a visual impairment. This project was uplifting since it was about education and disability, as the title suggests: "Dis Education". The song was premiered at a Foundation Fighting Blindness event in September 2021. Lachi's point was that songs about disability are usually sad, and in 2021 we should be able to change that, which was the case for this song, carrying the idea that people with disabilities do not have to feel sorry for themselves, that they can be confident about their lives and what drives them to be who they are.

Since her first experiences of moderating panels, she has learned about disability activism through Critical Disability Studies and the social model of disability. Of course, she has crossed paths with Gaelynn Lea several times, until they eventually contacted each other to put ideas in common. They both believed that disability awareness talks, if helpful, could be complemented with something more significant. Lea participated in the Grammy Disability Panel moderated by Lachi,[20] after which the Recording Academy told Lachi that they would "come back to them". There was no "them", the participants invited were individual musicians. Lachi and Lea realized that what was needed was an organization. Thus, they created a coalition of music professionals called RAMPD (Recording Artists and Music Professionals with Disabilities),[21] of which Lachi is the president and Lea the vice president. The concept behind the name is that ramps are needed for concert venues and awards shows. But for her, it goes a step further:

> One of the biggest things about me that I really wanted to do as a leader as it pertains to music, but also as a leader in disability, is to fight for disability culture. I want to elevate disability culture in my own way. I believe that if we amplify disability culture, we will start getting people to fall in love with disability, not just as a charity, but socially as something they envy or appreciate.[22]

The organization is still in its early stages, in the process of actively recruiting professional members, calling for worldwide applications.

Recently, Lachi became aware of an issue closely related to Critical Disability Studies: the vast problematic of intersectionality. As a disabled black woman, she realized that many studies in CDS are led by white researchers, and the mainstream is portraying wheelchairs when thinking of disability. As we have seen, she is involved in disability awareness and education, but she feels that public representation of disability, race and gender needs to evolve. Since then, she added a component about intersectionality to her disability awareness talks, reminding that Disability Justice has been developed by

20 Grammy Awards, "Grammy Disability Panel: Music, Purpose, Community with Lachi", 27 April 2021. https://youtu.be/Ux5SDPBxpqw (accessed 12 February 2022).

21 RAMPD, launched on 21 January 2022. http://www.rampd.org/ (accessed 12 February 2022).

22 Lachi, interviewed by Diane Kolin, 17 January 2022.

black, queer and trans people, such as Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern, who were women of color who identified differently, and other women who have contributed to the disability visibility and advocacy movements, in mainstream and academics conversations. As per Lachi, intersectionality should be included in the discussions about disability, as much as disclosure, visibility, and pride.

Like Gaelynn Lea, Lachi's ideas of using her acquired knowledge in CDS to create an alliance between professional musicians has strengthened her leadership position. She seeks other partnerships in order to offer more opportunities and advocate for more accessibility in the music industry.

Conclusion

Gender diversity in the music industry has been discussed since many years. In the main dictionaries and historical musical references, such as the *Concise Oxford History of Music* (Abraham 1980), and online encyclopedias such as the *Grove Musical Online,*[23] very few women are mentioned in comparison to men. A parallel can be done with disabled artists. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002, 2005), a prominent figure of CDS in the study of the intersection between Feminist theories and Disability studies, made a thorough analysis of the existing and possible theoretical frameworks, arguing that Feminist disability studies challenges stereotypes about disability, gender, bodies, and identities, in the context of rights and exclusions, through the lens of disability representations in society. Her writings were followed by many issues of authors covering Feminist disability studies as viewed by Garland-Thomson and derived from her thoughts.[24] The attempt of adding more discussion about Feminist theories in disability studies have been ongoing in the field of Disability Justice. Disability Justice is about looking at social justice, crossing work with intersectional systems of oppressions such as ableism, supremacies, patriarchy, transphobia, capitalism, and racial justice. Many disabled people come to Disability Justice because they do not see themselves reflected in the more mainstream disability rights movement.

From the first discoveries of music to their actions in their communities, Glennie, Lea and Lachi have climbed various stages of growth in their identities, as a musician, as a woman, and as a leader. Whether they disclose it publicly or not, the three artists see disability through the lens of the social model, as defined by Critical Disability Studies. Although Glennie lived and grew up in a different period than Lea and Lachi, they all faced the difficulties of social biases and decided to make it part of their lived experience of music. Glennie's disability advocacy started with her fight against a system that was not recognizing disability in the spheres of music education. As the first student with a disability in her academic institution, her arguments in considering music before disability in the admission process made a significant difference, pushing the institution to revisit their past and change their own rules. This event places Glennie as a pioneer

23 Grove Music Online. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic (accessed 21 January 2022).

24 For more about the history of Intersectionality of gender, race, and disability, see Naples, Mauldin, and Dillaway 2019.

and leader in disability justice, though she does not consider herself as such. However, she became the first woman solo percussionist, role that she recognizes with pride. It is rare enough to be mentioned since she was able to belie two preconceived ideas: a deaf musician cannot become professional, and a woman cannot become a prominent professional percussionist. She did not only become the first woman solo percussionist; she also grew the percussion repertoire. Her efforts were recognized, and she was named Dame Evelyn Glennie in 2007. Thus, she became a role model for many students, with and without disability. As for Lea, she was the first artist with a disability to win NPR's Tiny Desk contest. The role model figure is important in disability justice and in the social model of disability. The topic interested both Lachi and Lea, whose views about the importance of having a strong public appearance converged. Growing in a world without role models, they both struggled to find their marks in the music industry, having no disabled figures toward which to turn in their musical genres, when they were training. It goes back to the role of education, important in CDS. Only by sensitizing the audience but also the education system itself can preconceived notions about disability disappear, in favor of ability, accessibility and inclusion. The three artists agree on this point. Glennie teaches musicians and audiences how to hear music differently, not only through the ears but through the rest of the body thanks to vibrations. Lea addresses musical venues and offers them advice on how to make their place more accessible to the audience and the performers. She also sustains changes in instructional methods, based on teaching adaptive instruments and having disabled musicians as guests. Lachi is a proponent of educating preponderant institutions, such as the Grammy Awards, arguing that the lack of disabled artists representation in the musical professional world stops young musicians from envisioning a musical career. By continuously and actively engaging in these conversations with their respective public, they sustain their leadership and role model position in music, as women, as musicians, and, whether recognized or not, as disability activists.

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Female Leadership in Iranian-Arab Shi'a Rituals from Khorramshahr, South-western Iran

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Abstract: *Islamization of Iran over the centuries has caused the marginalization of women. After the Islamic revolution of 1979 and with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the position of women in society changed fast. Iranian women struggled to recover elements of their freedom, social roles, cultural rights, and artistic activities that had been encouraged and supported by the last Iranian monarchy, the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925–1979). While women's cultural activities in music and dramatic arts reduced, Iranian women from religious Shi'a families developed and expanded private cultural activities, among them several religious rituals, which are public to all women from their cities. Many of these rituals involve musical and theatrical elements. They are led by at least one female leader who guides the ritual attendees and performs the ceremony. While in some traditions, female leadership is assigned a completely political role, in many local cultures, this kind of leadership is predominantly related to artistic or religious activities. This chapter deals with the female leadership in local ritual traditions practiced by Iranian-Arab-Shi'a women from an ethnographic perspective. It explores how female leaders have or have not been able to adapt, sustain, and develop their practices. The main focus is on the women's rituals from Khorramshahr city in the south-western Iranian province of Khuzestan.*

Keywords: *Iran, Shiism, rituals, women, leadership.*

Persian nationalism and the Islamization of Iran over the centuries have caused the marginalization of women and non-Persian ethnicities. After the Islamic revolution of 1979, the position of women in Iranian society changed fast. While women's cultural activities in music and dramatic arts reduced, Iranian women from religious Shi'a families developed and expanded private cultural activities, among them several religious rituals. These religious rituals were strongly suppressed during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979). They were perceived as old-fashioned, non-Persian and therefore not required in a progressive society. In the post-revolutionary time, the new government began to promote any form of Islamic arts. Therefore, anthropologists like Azam Torab (1996: 235) refer to this period as "religious revival".

Religious rituals have deep roots within the Iranian history. They involve a rich variety of poetic, musical and theatrical elements. There is a large and varied range of female rituals by different ethnicities across the country[1]. They differ from each other, depending on each region, geography, languages and religious beliefs of the ethnic groups. Most of the female rituals are led by at least one female leader who guides the ritual attendees and performs the ceremony. To some extent, the leading role of women performing rituals can vary. While in some traditions, female leadership is assigned a completely political role, in other traditions, especially local cultures, this kind of leadership is predominantly related to artistic or religious activities. This chapter explores the female leadership in local ritual traditions practiced by Iranian-Arab-Shi'a women minority from an ethnographic perspective. The main focus is on the women's rituals from Khorramshahr city in the south-western Iranian province of Khuzestan.

Shi'a Women's Rituals in Khorramshahr

Khorramshahr is a south-western Iranian port city located on the Iraqi border. The intermingling of Arab and Persian cultures and cultural exchanges with Iraq influenced the culture of Khorramshahr over the years. The majority of people living in this city are Iranian Arabs, a minority group in mostly Persian Iran. Therefore, the languages used in everyday life and in many rituals are Arabic and Persian. The female Shi'a ritual scene in this city consists of a considerable amount of joyful and mourning rituals, family rituals, and Qur'anic sessions.

Iranian Shi'a and many family rituals are held for men and women separately[2]. One can find some exceptions, where both sexes can attend the ritual at the same time, like the procession rituals of the sacred month of Muharram, which take place on public streets. In Muharram rituals, Shi'a people commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the third Imam of Shi'a Islam, who was martyred by the Umayyad caliph Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya (Aghaei 2005; Akhavi 1983; Kasi 1918; Nakash 2007). Shi'a Muslims around the world believe that Hossein, as the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, should have become the next Caliph. Hossein's claims to the caliphate were not recognized by the former Caliph, Yazid and caused him to lead a rebellion against the impious tyranny of the Sunnis (Akhavi 1983: 208). These conflicts and disagreements of Imam Hossein with the caliph as well as the resistance struggle led to the catastrophe of Karbala[3] in 680 and the

1 Studies on Iranian women's cultural lives include: Aghaie 2005; Ansari and Martin 2002; Bahramitash and Hooglund 2011; Beck and Nashat 2004; Goldin 2009, 2004; Hemmasi 2017; Hendelman-Baavur 2019; Huang 2014; Kalinock 2004, 2003; Khosronejad 2015; Kousha 2002; Molana and Sadat 2020; Najmabadi 2005; Ohanlelham 2020; Soomekh 2012.

2 Iran is a country with over 85 million inhabitants and various gender categorizations exist in the country. Yet, all other gender and sexual categories are taboo subjects in Iran and nobody speaks about them. Moreover, I did not focus on other gender groups during my research. Therefore, I will refer only to the two broad male and female categories that are the normatively connected to masculine and feminine genders in the country.

3 The former desert of Karbala in central Iraq is now a pilgrimage city, which is visited by Shiite Muslims throughout the year, especially during the mourning month of Muharram.

tragic death of many Shi'a saints, among them Imam Hossein. Hossein's death is the culmination of historical events within Shi'a Islam.

Procession rituals are held with the active participation of men as performers and women as audience. While men practice their rituals in public places, women's rituals are invisible and take place in private houses. Pious women dedicate a large room in their houses to religious purposes and call it *hosseiniyeh*. This spiritual space with its male designation is a female platform, which offers women a place for religious and artistic activities, socialization, and even representation of their wealth and power relations as each ritual is strongly combined with socio-economic aspects. Hierarchical structures mould every ritual. At the top of this hierarchy are the ritual leaders, followed by hosts and guests.

Pre-wedding ceremonies, weddings, birthday celebration of saints or *mowludis*, the celebration of arrival from pilgrimages, Qur'an sessions, food rituals and mourning rituals are some religious events that take place in a *hosseiniyeh* (*mollāyeh* Um[4] Hamid, personal communication, 7 February 2022)[5]. Shi'a weddings[6] and pre-wedding ceremonies consist of two male and female sections. Women ululate, clap and sing joyful non-instrumental religious songs, sung solo by a ritual leader. Her verses are repeated by the audience like a call and response.

Pre-wedding ceremonies like henna feast are also accompanied by joyful religious songs. Women put henna on the bride's hands, who is dressed in red. During these ceremonies the most performed songs are those praising the Prophet Mohammad or his daughter Fatimah-Zahra, also sung for *mowludi*, a well-known Islamic festivity that is the birthday celebration of Shi'a saints. Rituals like celebration of Mecca pilgrimages, Quran readings, and mourning rituals consist of ceremonial votive gatherings with food and drink consumption, melismatic recitation of the Quran and prayers, all led by a female preacher. Some mourning rituals, especially the commemorations of martyrdom of Shi'a saints, are tied with highly artistic performances of ritual leaders. In Khorramshahr these mourning rituals are well-known in two genres, *rowzeh* and *ta'ziyeh*.

While each *rowzeh* includes narrations, metrical and non-metrical songs, flagellations, and prayers, *ta'ziyeh* resembles a theatre piece with musical performances about the Battle of Karbala. Both rituals are organized by female ritual hosts for their female audience. Hosts are responsible for invitation of ritual leaders. Although the hosts have to put a lot of effort into the whole arrangement and payment for the events, ritual leaders are the ones without whom the ceremonies cannot take place. They are the main performers of each ritual and play the role of a singer and a conductor at the same time. The contemporary female ritual practices in Khorramshahr are shaped and preserved in their current forms by these preachers and leaders, known as *umlāli*. They learnt their

4 Married Arab women of Khorramshahr who have children are always named with "um" (mother of) and the name of the first son, or the oldest child if they do not have sons. This type of name designation in the region is a form of respect and valuing the women's position in society as being a mother.

5 In this chapter, the names of all the people I interviewed have been replaced with other names.

6 Studies focused on Shi'a wedding ceremonies include: Goldin 2004; Khosronejad 2020; Koutlaki 2020; Shanneik 2017; Zarei and Sadri 2012.

leading and performing skills from the older generation of *umlāli* and will pass it to the next generations.

The word *umlāli* is the plural of the word *mollāyeh*, an Arabic word stem from *al-mawlā*, "lord".[7] There are also men who serve in this same kind of role in men's religious scene. The male counterpart of *mollāyeh* is *mollā*. One should not mistake a *mollā* or *mollāyeh* for *mullās* who are considered as low-level clerics in Iran.[8] Both terms *mollā* and *mollāyeh* are religious titles. People with these titles are known to be responsible only for reciting the Quran or religious songs in Shi'a events. Religious Iranians have always associated with and sought guidance and advice from preachers of this sort. They are spiritual clerics who, like mentors, show the people – unofficially – the right way to live to enhance one's religious life.

In Khorramshahr, *umlāli* are highly respected women. They are regarded as virtuous women working for the sake of God and Shi'a saints. This appreciation can be seen in all rituals and all over in the city. Being recognized as a *mollāyeh* and holding such a religious title manifests the faithfulness of one's entire family. Moreover, they make a valuable contribution to the preservation of their local culture, which is appreciated by people from the city. Therefore, *umlāli* can play a beneficial role in the social status of their families because religion and religious gatherings are part of life-time celebrations that play a vital role in the community of pious Shi'a Muslims of Khorramshahr.

Shi'a Rituals and Iranian Society

In the majority's opinion, practicing sacred rituals contributes to a healthy society. Islam reached Iranian territories in the earliest phase of its spread. Contemporary Iran has been moulded by Islamic culture for more than 1400 years. Although Persians were originally not Muslims, over the centuries they embraced Islamic religion as an essential element of their identity as individuals and as a group. The rules of Shi'a Islam are deeply embedded in the structures of society. In the 16th century, Iranian monarchs declared Shiism as the official religion of the country. Shi'a traditions and rituals as well as the clergy started to play central roles in society. A discussion of Islamic morality and its realization in society is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, suffice it to say that over the centuries the integration of the moral aspects of the religion as well as political factors helped to establish Islam as a predominant presence in every aspect of social life.

The Islamic revolution helped re-establishing religion at the centre of society, after the western-oriented and laic reign of the Pahlavi dynasty. The wide acceptance of the new government as a keeper of tradition, religion and sovereignty supports the practice, development, and preservation of Shi'a religious activities both by men and women. The practice of Shi'a rituals by Muslim women reinforces the main goals of the government and thus, perpetuates the religion. The fact that Shi'a Arab women belong to the country's majority religion plays a major role in how they maintain their religious lives. Also, the fact that their mother tongue is the language of Islam and of the Prophet Mohammad

7 https://www.britannica.com/place/Iran/Religion (accessed 13 June 2022).

8 https://www.britannica.com/place/Iran/Religion (accessed 13 June 2022).

is another reason why Iranian Arab women can move more easily in their religious scene, while the situation seems to be completely different for the women of non-Shi'a minorities. Indeed, the government offers Shi'a men and women of all ethnicities freedom to practice their religion. Although we are dealing with private women's rituals that are invisible to the broader Iranian public, the practice or existence of these events are publicly visible and to some extent audible within a local context. Everyone in Khorramshahr is aware of women's rituals. Announcing flags are hanging above the front doors of the *hosseiniyehs* and one can see the women in groups on the streets going to their rituals. Moreover, one can hear blurred sounds of the religious sounds from the *hosseiniyehs*, due to the acoustics and architecture of the buildings.

Female Leadership of *Umlāli*

Umlāli function as ritual leaders[9] in every sense. They plan, among other things, when the ritual should begin and end. They say how participants are supposed to behave. For example, in the mourning rituals of *rowzeh*, many of them warn the guests to keep their heads down. Some even ask the participants to hide their faces behind their headscarves. Keeping the head down is a sign of modesty and high respect. In some rituals, guests are also asked not to look in the eyes of a *mollāyeh* who is performing. Therefore, many women cover their eyes with their hands or behind their scarves.

In joyful rituals such as weddings or *mowludis*, *umlāli* decide if women should dance or not, or if they should take off their scarves or not. They guide the participants in the way they find more appropriate. Dancing has always been an ambiguous debate in Islam. Therefore, one must be careful with that art form. Wearing *hijab* is also debated in women only rituals. The decision whether to wear *hijab* or not is often made by the ritual leaders. Some pious women assume that the souls of the Shi'a saints are present in the room and therefore, women must wear *hijab* as a sign of respect.

Ritual attendees in women's gatherings must only be women and their children. Until they are about five or six, small boys are also allowed to participate in these female-only rituals as they normally stay with their mothers. Not every *mollāyeh* agrees with the participation of children of any sex in some rituals. Some disagree with the presence of boys in female gatherings. While many *umlāli* believe that children need to become familiar with the religious values from early their childhood, other *umlāli* find the presence of children in such a serious context inappropriate. I observed some *umlāli* who called the small children forward so that they could sit in their circle. They had a special appreciation for the children's participation and wanted to reward them with their attention. After all, children need to know the regional culture to shape the future. On the other hand, some *umlāli* threatened the ritual organizers, saying that as long as the children were present, they would not perform.

Umlāli decide which prayers, Quran chapters, religious songs, and how many of them have to be recited for each event. Therefore, they are the decision makers who determine

9 Studies that focused on female leadership in Iranian Shi'a context include: Aghaie 2005; Kalinock 2004, 2003; Khosronejad 2015; Torab 1996.

the styles of performances and shape the format of each event. They decide who should recite which songs if there are several *umlāli* in one ritual, like in rituals with many participants. In such events, *umlāli* sing in turns and it is rare for one *mollāyeh* to perform two songs in a row. As a group, they decide who takes which songs, shortly before the ceremony begins. Based on the experience, ritual hosts can know approximately how many people would participate. Therefore, they evaluate how many *umlāli* are needed for each ritual. Ritual organizers, as the hosts, are responsible for inviting the *umlāli* and their payment.

Habitually the oldest *mollāyeh* in a ceremony, who is usually a more famous preacher among her colleagues, opens the ceremony. She begins with salutations and greeting words to the Prophet Mohammad and his family. Then, she welcomes the guests with short prayers and shows her gratitude for their participation. She speaks loud and clear to get the attendee's attention. Nowadays, *umlāli* use microphones in all rituals. As soon as a *mollāyeh* starts a ritual, participants must follow her instructions, which, regarding the musical aspects concern mainly the volume, that everyone should sing along, and at some points either produce shouts or ululate, depending on each ritual. In these ceremonies, no political or religious speeches by the *umlāli* take place. This is different from what happens in many religious rituals and women's gatherings in Iran, where political, religious and social discussions in the context of a lecture and subsequent question and answer sessions are very common.

To be able to lead the audience professionally, *umlāli* must have good musical and also rhetorical knowledge. Many songs and prayers sung at these Shi'a rituals are based on the musical form of call and response. Depending on each song, the responding phrase can be either the same phrase sung by the *mollāyeh*, or another phrase, sung and introduced by her at the beginning of the song. *Umlāli* repeat the melodic phrases until they are sure that the audience can sing them without difficulties. According to my observations, almost all participants already know the songs and prayers and do not need extra preparations.

In addition to their professional leadership at rituals, many *umlāli* teach the art of recitation to younger women and children who want to learn to perform. Students like to accompany their teachers and to have a chance to sing with them in ceremonies, serving as a group of assistants. This allows them to perform and be recognized by the women of the city and ritual arrangers gradually. It is common for *umlāli* teachers to take their students to their own performances, support them and allow them to sing a chant or two. Private classes usually take place in a group of six participants. The participants are called in Arabic *sāne'*. Each *sāne'* has her own goals and reasons for attending these lessons. According to *mollāyeh* Um Hamid (interview 20 July 2015), "every *sāne'* wants to sing as powerfully and clearly as her *mollāyeh* teacher. When I was a *sāne'*, many colleagues wanted to develop the same roughness in their vocal timbre as that employed by the *mollāyeh*". This exceptionally rough voice timbre of the *umlāli* is highly desired by both Arab and Persian audiences. Amnon Shiloah (1995: 15) writes about the voice quality in Arab culture, stating that "Arab authors considered the voice a reflection of the human soul's mysteries and feelings. For the mystics, it symbolizes divine life and puts man in vibrating resonance with the celestial and universal".

Classes usually take place in the house of the *mollāyeh*. During teaching, no men are allowed to be in the near of the classroom because they may hear the female voice. Due to the Islamic morality, it is indeed inappropriate for men to hear the voices of women who are not their grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, or nieces. Therefore, practice sessions as well as any kind of female rituals, must always take place in private spaces. This is also the reason why such rituals remain in their local context and are not publicly known to the whole country.

The learning process is based on imitation. Students use no musical notes or other symbols in a class. Students have to memorize many songs and practice several modes. The modes are known with the Arabic word *lahn* (literally "melody"; plural *alhān*). Each *lahn* is a series of tones or specific intervals that move around a tonal centre with melodies that usually begin and end on that tone. These intervals can be halftone and whole-tone steps as well as the microtones that occur in Persian art music or the regional music of Khorramshahr. There is no fixed rule as to how many tones should be in a series to have a *lahn*. Nobody knows how many *alhān* exist and how many of them are used in the religious songs of female rituals. Moreover, in comparison with Arabic musical modes (*maghāmat*) or Persian classical music (*radif*) there are no specific names or labels for each *lahn*. My research participants describe the aesthetic properties of the *alhān* with adjectives such as beautiful, energetic, sad, pathetic, etc. Students learn the *alhān* by heart without referring to them using specific names. Instead of using labels, one sings only a phrase and the others know which mode or *lahn* is meant.

Thanks to cell phones and the Internet, *sāne'* can now engage in extra practice at home. Many *umlāli* record their voices during the teaching sessions and send their recordings to their *sāne'* in order for them to practice at home. Many religious people buy records of famous male preachers. Younger *umlāli* learn and prepare these songs for their repertoire, too. For this reason, they send the original recordings of these songs to their *sāne'*s. From male singers, Khorramshahri *umlāli* and *sāne'*s learn different things, such as new melodies, lyrics, vocal techniques and ornaments. This also shows how teaching methods can adapt to the times.

The leadership role of *umlāli* is evident in the variety of important tasks that they take on in Shi'a rituals in Khorramshahr. They are the vocal performers of the rituals who get paid for their performance. They guide the whole ceremony and its structure and give the participants instructions on how to behave and what they expect from them during the ceremony. Since they are role models for many younger women and children, with the influences they have on them, religious leaders contribute to enhancing the participant numbers in such communal activities and help with religious network building in their society. *Umlāli* are furthermore teachers and within this task as well as using the technology from the 21st century, they sustain and develop their practices and pass them to the next generations.

Working with Umlali in the Field[10]

From the very beginning of my research, I was curious to know why and how women choose to become *umlāli*. Speaking with these women about their profession and their role as ritual leaders in their community, as they view it, was sometimes combined with their doubtful reactions. The first reaction of nearly all of them was an excited childish smile and saying: "couldn't you find a better, more important topic for your research?! Another common self-diminishment that I frequently heard from them was that "we only perform for the sake of God and saints and nothing else". It might seem that the *umlāli* as religious leaders do not value their profession. Their self-diminishment might also be a *ta'ārof*, which is an exaggerated form of politeness in the Persian culture. The linguist Ahmad Izadi defines the *ta'ārof* as over-politeness and writes that "it reflects the moral order of considering others to the point of putting their feelings, needs and desires prior to one's own" (Izadi 2015: 84).

Umlāli are cautious to talk about their profession. As I observed in the field, they are the stars in the scene. Most of them even have their own fans, participants who come to religious sessions especially to hear the sound of their particular voice, following their telling of the story as they move from one event to the next. Besides being humble and making *ta'ārof*, one reason for this cautiousness could be that they want to protect the position of their husbands and their own as wives. This is because in this Shi'a community, according to traditional gender roles, women have to be at home and do their daily duties. There should not be rumours about them, they are the focus of someone's research. Another possible reason is that no one has ever asked them about their job as *mollāyeh* in an academic context. I started by getting to know them personally before I could successfully pursue my questions. Only after talking in unofficial interviews about the topics most of the *umlāli* were interested, like health and the current social and political issues, did they tell me about their life stories.

Based on my observations, most women who are either *umlāli* or ritual organizers stem from families of middle or lower-middle classes who have always organized rituals in the city or had famous *umlāli* or male preachers among their relatives. Most of the *umlāli* with whom I made interviews are from the elder generation. They are very well-known personalities in Khorramshahr. Interestingly, these *umlāli* from the same generation have similar life stories. They all started to learn the art of being *umlāli* during childhood. Some of them learned the songs from their parents, who were also *mollā* or *mollāyeh*. Some others have been supported and sent by their parents or wealthy family members to study with famous *umlāli*.

Mollāyeh Um Saleh, the oldest and the most famous *mollāyeh* of the city has, since her childhood, a very beautiful and unique voice (Arabic: *sawt*). Shiloah (1995: 15) describes the aesthetics of the *sawt*:

> Another important aspect was the growing awareness of the potential expressiveness of the human voice and its multiple nuances. The term *sawt* may designate sound,

10 All interview material in this section comes from several formal and informal interviews with three *umlāli* from September 2019.

> voice, or occasionally, song. In the living traditions of the Persian Gulf, *sawt* indicates a musical genre. […] Now, however, the knowledge of voice became a major concern for both sacred and secular music.

According to my interviews, younger *umlāli* who are still learning the religious songs dream about having a roughly textured vocal timber similar to that of Um Saleh. Her mother was a renowned *mollāyeh* in Khorramshahr and had many students, among them her daughter. During the lessons, the young and playful Um Saleh learned from her mother that practicing Islamic traditions is a serious task and not every person can fulfil this task. Therefore, she tried her best to become the best student of her mother. I heard similar stories from other *umlāli* from the same generation of Um Saleh. Usually, these *umlāli* perform together. If such experienced *umlāli* find out that a younger *mollāyeh* with less experience is also performing in the same ritual, they may decline their own invitation. The solitary exception in which these older women will tolerate a young *mollāyeh* is if she is or if she was once their own student. In this case, they even choose complicated and famous songs for their students to perform and become known by the audience. It reveals that *umlāli* have a special network of their colleagues with whom they would like to perform.

Another famous *mollāyeh*, Um Javad, was supported by her generous uncle to learn the Quran from a *mollāyeh*. Her official profession began during the years of war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1988). While Khorramshahr was occupied by the Iraqi army, many people had to leave the city and became war refugees. Like many people from Khorramshahr, Um Javad and her family moved to Kashan, central Iran. Khorramshahri women in the new city thought about practicing their rituals. They already knew that Um Javad had experience and asked her to lead the ceremonies. Gradually, the rituals became famous and were best-attended by Persian women in Kashan. Organizing such tradition in the new city played an important role in enhancing the sense of identity of the Khorramshahri women. Musicologist Even Ruud writes about the same aspect in a musical context that, in my opinion, can also be applied to my context:

> "A strong sense of identity derived from music can contribute specifically to the following four aspects of health: a sense of vitality (of being alive, of being empowered, of having internalized supporting self- objects), a sense of agency (of self- efficacy, of empowerment, of ownership of the "locus of control"), a sense of belonging (of participation, of a network, of social capital, of being recognized) and, not least, a sense of coherence and meaning (of strong emotional musical experiences, flow, transcendence)" (Ruud 2017: 589–590).

Talking about the war years is very common in almost every ritual, as one can still feel and see the unhealed wounds of those days in Khorramshahr. Women of the city say: "If you want to hear the most impressive elegies, you should visit the mourning rituals by Um Saber[11]". Um Saber opens her rituals with salutation to martyrs who sacrificed their

11 While writing this chapter in the summer 2022, I tried to contact Um Saber. Unfortunately, I found out that she has passed away after catching Covid-19. Her voice and elegies will remain undoubtedly in the memories of many women of Khorramshahr.

lives for the war. She is considered the best interpreter of elegies and she knew that she could sing the saddest songs better than any other *mollāyeh*. Sometimes she even has to stop and cry during her own performances. Apart from the fact that Um Saber was not allowed to perform for a certain period in her life, she always wanted to be a *mollāyeh*, no matter whether singing in mourning or joyful rituals. Many *umlāli* had a period in their life during which they were not allowed to perform in religious rituals, at least for some years due to their marriage or raising children.

Now as an elderly woman, Um Saber acts more independently. She told me stories of her life with a great sense of humour and making fun of men and jealousy while other women, including younger ones, sat and listened. Her confidence and humour made her a role model for many women. She talked about her suspicious husband that he did not allow her many things in life and spoke about her dream in an empty *hosseiniyeh*, with a poem book of *rowzeh*. In her dream, a tall woman in green clothes[12] suddenly appeared and commanded her to mourn and sing for her son. Um Saber cried and claimed that she saw Fatimah – Zahra. Then she explained everything to her pious husband, who found her dream a great sign and a big duty for her. With this narrative she was able to persuade her husband to allow her to sing again in rituals.

My conversation with Um Saber was one of the many cases in which a *mollāyeh* spoke about miracles to me. Miracles or miracle makings play an inevitable role on the pathway to becoming a well-known personality in this religious scene. The more miracles happen in a house, the higher would be the position of the hosts and *umlāli* and the more women will participate in the rituals in that house.

Conclusion

Iran is the cradle of several religions and ethnicities. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the situation for the practice of religious rituals has improved remarkably. Today, in nearly all Iranian cities, including Khorramshahr, women form religious networks and preserve their sacred rituals in women-only gatherings. These gatherings are public to all women from their cities. Female ritual leaders contribute to the formation of such networks by their charismatic characters and artistic performances. They lead other women and small children to their religious events, where they entertain and educate them by taking the role of preachers, solo singers and conductors. In such rituals, they lead the entire ceremony artistically and morally. In an Islamic society where women's singing and also leading are highly debated topics, women's cultural activities as well as their leading roles seem to be invisible. However, female ritual leaders of Khorramshahr enjoy a great respect and popularity in their community because they dedicated their work to Shi'a saints and therefore everyone knows about their position in the religious network.

These women spent their whole lives learning the Shi'a history, Quran, rhetoric, expanding their vocal techniques and song repertoire to be able to lead and perform. They teach and help the younger generation to become professional performers as well. These

12 Green symbolizes Islam.

women practice and work beside their daily duties as wives and mothers while practicing outdoor activities in the community we deal with is quite difficult. However, their job is not only a great way to express their hidden musical knowledge, singing skill and their talent for guiding amateur singing groups, it is also a good method to earn money and support a family. The practice of Islamic rituals not only fulfils women's religious duties, it largely contributes to their well-being and provides the ritual leaders with opportunities to enhance their status among other women.

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God Has a Woman's Voice. Liturgical Music and Agency of Eastern European Migrant Women in Rome

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> Then Judith began to sing this thanksgiving in all Israel, and all the people sang after her this song of praise.
> *(Bible, Judith 16,1)*[1]

Abstract: *This chapter deals with the musical role of women in the Christian services of migrant communities in Rome. As numerous other European capitals, Rome is currently a multi-ethnic city, but one of its specificities is that some of its migrant communities are mainly feminine. Such women, usually coming alone from Eastern Europe, are fully invested in the new market of care for the elderly. Whether Latin Catholic (Polish community), Greek Catholic (Ukrainian community) or Orthodox (Georgian community), the lack of men in their own communities pushes them to take on societal and musical roles which were not originally thought for them in their countries of origin. By necessity, these women have to take the leadership of the choir and the musical repertoire of their churches and, doing it, they become the voices to the Lord and, especially, of the Lord. Thus, they push back the gender constraints imposed by their religions for several centuries. In this chapter, I investigate how liturgical music can be an important place of female agency. Taking possession of the "Word of God", both through the acoustics of the worships' place and through their female voices, becomes an essential and indispensable element in the execution of the service. In other words, they use liturgical music to develop, in a new country and through new codes, their own agency and somehow, control the socio-religious space that surrounds them.*

Keywords: *liturgical music, Rome, Eastern Europe, agency, women.*

In this chapter I discuss how Catholicism, through its liturgical music, can be an essential element of agency for migrant women. For this, I focus on three Christian communities: the Polish (Catholic of Latin rite), the Ukrainian (Greek Catholic) and the Georgian

1 *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford University Press, 2008.

(Orthodox).[2] Every Sunday, I went to the churches lent by the Vatican to these migrant communities in the center of the eternal city. Beyond attending the liturgies of these churches, I was able to observe the women in their community life: their meals, their discussions, their rehearsals and other gatherings. Altogether, there are about thirty-five choristers with whom I was able to explore various religious, musical and gender-related topics.

In the first part of this chapter, I present these migrant women, examine how they are perceived by the majority of the Italian people, and, above all, what place they have in society. Then I analyze how liturgical music, by its allocution, its specialization and its transmission, can really become a way to earn agency for these women. In particular, I discuss how do my interlocutors manage, consciously or not, to use and bypass religious codes to take ownership of music that was not initially meant for them to perform.

The *badanti*: A Peculiar Social Class in Italy

Since the 1990s, female migration to Italy has been gradually increasing, with women becoming the majority of migrants fifteen years later (Dossier Statistico immigrazione 2018). During the last thirty years, migration has gone hand in hand with the aging of the Italian population and a birth rate that has constantly been decreasing since the 1960s (ISTAT). With no state support, Italian families in the south, then in the central part and finally in the north of the country had to rely on women from abroad to take care of their elders. According to the report of the *Osservatorio Nazionale DOMINA sul Lavoro Domestico* [DOMINA National Observatory on Domestic Work] (2019), domestic workers number around two million, of which over half are undeclared. According to official figures, women represent 88,4% of these two million.

These female immigrants, known as *badanti* (caregivers), work six days a week and are usually housed in their employers' homes. Moving alone, leaving their families behind, their working conditions in Italy isolate them drastically from any kind of social life. Under these circumstances, one of the main pillars of their social life is on Sundays, when, in their national churches, they can finally speak their language, sing their songs and, after the Mass, cook meals from their countries and spend time with their co-nationals. Whether they come from the Philippines, Latin America or Eastern Europe, faith and ritual often structure values in their new lives as migrants. In the Eastern European communities of Italy, because of the very limited number of men,[3] women had no choice but to take responsibility for the liturgical music of their own parishes. Thus, the choirs of the three communities that I present in this chapter, the Polish, Ukrainian and Georgian ones, are entirely composed of women.

The term *badante* (pl. *badanti*) has been used since the late 1980s. It was widely disseminated in the bureaucratic and journalistic language in the second half of the 1990s. Long

2 In this chapter I present elements of my doctoral fieldwork carried out between 2016 and 2021.

3 According to ISTAT 2019 figures, women represent 74% of the Polish population living in Italy, 78% of the Ukrainian population and 81% of the Georgian one.

considered patronizing and denigrating to both the people who did the work and the people who received the care,[4] the word resisted and eventually, the workers defined themselves as such for simplicity and clarity. Today, every Italian knows who a *badante* is and what she does: first of all, she is a woman. They are most often foreigners (from Eastern Europe or more rarely from South America, the Philippines or elsewhere) and, according to the stereotypical view, they are armed with great patience and physical strength to take care of the elderly and their homes. They wash, dress, take care of, listen to, control, look after, iron, clean, shop, cook, keep company and often also manage the household economy and the person's relationship with his or her family circle. The term *badante* (feminine noun) comes from the verb *badare* – to guard, care for, protect – but seems to take on an enriched meaning as the *badante* must also be kind, sympathetic, patient, helpful, available, modest, friendly, deferential, sincere, genuine, respectful and give affection, warmth and comfort to the people in her care. Indeed, as Italian anthropologist Francesco Vietti (2009: 37) has remarked "the verb *badare* is halfway between working and loving". *Badanti*'s work fits perfectly into the concept of emotional labor that Arlie Russell Hochschild describes in her book, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, as "the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself" (Hochschild 1983: 5), and often this is compounded by the emotional task of repressing one's feelings so as not to affect the client/patient (ivi: 154).

The majority of Italians have a number of preconceived ideas about the *badanti*. First, the *badante* "embodies" the image of a poor person, far from her country, alone and lost, in search of help, who, thanks to work in homes and with the elderly, can in return, help her own family. She is a woman who can work full time, and easily works overtime in her spare time because she has nothing to do outside work. She is, therefore, a person to be welcomed and "integrated" into the society of "our country". Finally, it is natural to help her and to look for privileged channels to obtain a residence permit for her because, in the end, she is not really an immigrant. She has nothing to do with the undocumented migrants who have often arrived by boat and who must be pushed back as far as possible. The *badante* is neither dangerous nor threatening, on the contrary, she takes care of people's relatives (Colombo 2007). Finally, apart from a few cases, for millions of Italians, the *badante* has become a "family member" in her own right (Anderson 2000). For the employer as a relative of the elderly person, accepting the *badante* as "one of the house" also means being able to reduce her/his "management" role and enjoy more affective and rewarding activities, while leaving the heavier and more unpleasant tasks to the *badante* (Colombo 2003). In this situation, the *badanti* are put in the weaker position of an asymmetrical relationship of power, class and gender. There is general agreement in the literature on domestic work that "being one of the family" perpetuates inequalities rooted in a feudal conception of domesticity, where the domestic is bound to her master for life.[5]

4 For this reason, other names were proposed such as *collaboratrice domestica* or *collaboratrice famigliare* (family assistant) and *operatore socio-assistenziale* or *assistente di cura* (care work operator).

5 For this topic, see the chapter "The politics of Intimacy" in Parreñas 2001: 142–150.

To counteract preconceptions, it is important to point out that a large majority of these women are highly educated and worked in professions of great responsibility prior to their migration. Essentially, Georgian and Ukrainian's singers had some important artistic or technical training. Here we can hear about some of the Ukrainian choristers.

In this regard, Sofia's story is revealing. She told me:

> I was born in 1949, I am now 69 years old. I have been in Italy since 2002. Before coming here, I have been a geography teacher for 36 years in a school near Ternopil and at the same time, for 20 years, I have also been the vice-president of the school. This was between the age of 33 and 53 (Sofia, interview, Rome, 27 May 2018).[6]

Later in the same interview, Sofia explained that she had also been a regional deputy, which had already led her to travel several times to Europe and Italy before 2002.

Halina also recounted:

> I graduated as a turbine generator technician for atomic power plants and then I worked for 15 years in an atomic power plant. […] Later, I worked in a big hydraulic analysis laboratory (Halina, interview, Rome, 26 November 2017).

Similarly, Mariya T. presented her story:

> In February I'll be 69 years old. I arrived in Italy in 2001. I have a degree in mechanical engineering and I worked as a hydraulic engineer for a long time. After university I worked in the laboratory of a chemical industry for 10 years, then for a company in the Soviet Union repairing heaters. I was good at it, even though I had to learn everything on my own. I studied in Donbass, where there is a war now. I studied there, worked there, got married there, had my daughter there and then finally got separated there. I was there for 14 years from 1966 (Mariya T., interview, Rome, 12 November 2017).

These few life stories easily illustrate the pattern of Ukrainian female emigration. Like some other Ukrainian choristers, all the Georgian church singers interviewed graduated from the National Conservatory of Music or University. On the other hand, the importance of university degrees and previous professional lives in Polish migration is less obvious: Polish women usually arrive in Italy at a much younger age than the other migrants, because their country is a part of the European Union and they can travel to Italy more easily, so some/most of them just have a secondary education.

The Agency of the Subalterns

The term agency, applied to gender studies, was initially a notion conceptualized by Judith Butler in the 1990s. This term brought an interesting answer to the notion of the *total social fact* as elaborated by Marcel Mauss (1923–1924). For Butler, the agency is a way to go beyond the thought of social constructivism (Bourdieu and Foucault), which "asserts that gender is a social construction imposing itself from the outside on a subject that would

6 The author translated all quotes from fieldwork interviews from Italian into English.

therefore already exist" (Haicault 2012: 19). Agency allows the introduction of the individual's self-awareness and thus makes the individual capable of consciously choosing to conform or not to the constraints of norms and values imposed by his or her social environment (Butler 1990).

In "Can the Subaltern Speak", Gayatri Spivak (1988) takes up the term *subaltern*, theorized by Antonio Gramsci thirty years earlier.[7] For Gramsci, revolt is the only way for the subaltern classes to make themselves heard but, in her work on gender in postcolonial contexts, Gayatri Spivak discusses the idea of subalternity by asking whether, even in times of crisis and revolt, the voices of the subordinated – in her case, Indian women – can really be taken in consideration by the dominant social group.[8] To her, sexism is to be understood as a metaphor of colonization. The latter was considered as limited to relations between white men and men of color, and women were not concerned, reduced to the functions of objects and spectators. Therefore, women cannot express themselves precisely because they are twice put in a subaltern position: by white men and by men of their own communities.

Following Gramsci and Spivak's definitions, the *badanti* can be defined as subalterns: they are women, migrants and specifically valuable for the service of the elderly. Also, their legal status is precarious and contributes to their subaltern position: being an illegal immigrant makes them vulnerable and uncertain. According to the *Osservatorio Nazionale DOMINA sul Lavoro Domestico* (2019), 57,7 % of the two million *badanti* in Italy work illegally: without any contract, which prevents them from obtaining a residency card, social and medical care, legal protection, etc. Most of my informants obtained their residency cards after six to eight years in Italy. During this time, they could not return to their families, nor could they demand social protection. Most *badanti* are largely invisible in Italian society and voiceless or silenced – in short, without agency.

The Voice of Women *vs* the Voice of God

In sound studies, several works have shown why and how women work on their own voices to adapt to the political and media environment.[9] On the internet, it is easy to find advertisements for training courses and voice coaches to make women's voices deeper,

7 In the original Gramsci's elaboration in Prison Notebooks (1948–1951), the term refers to a set of classes and individuals (slaves, proletariats and peasants) ruled by a single dominant class. For more details, see Liguori 2016.

8 The author describes the practice of Sati – a Hindu ritual that envisaged the suicide by immolation of the widow, the latter joining her dead husband on the pyre. Spivak understood this as a possibility of agency for the women who chose it, to escape the brutal Hindu laws in the hope of a better reincarnation in the next life (Spivak 1988: 302–303). British colonists abolished this sacrifice, which was never made compulsory by religious law. Spivak interprets it as an act that is at the same time colonial towards Indian men and patriarchal towards Indian women, as "white men saving brown women from brown men" (1988: 297).

9 See, in francophone scholarship, Deutsch and Giron-Panel 2016, Coulomb-Gully 2011 and 2014 and, on a larger scale, the researches proposed by LERASS : https://www.lerass.com/axe-genre/ where mansplaining and manterrupting are widely analyzed.

just as it is not uncommon to hear, in journalism schools, this recommendation made to women to "take octaves" – meaning lower the pitch of their voices by several tones – to make their voices "more radio-friendly".[10] The injunction is always the same: women must readapt the pitch of their voices to satisfy a social expectation normed by men.

In a ritualized environment such as Christian liturgies, singing is particularly controlled and codified – by men and for male voices. In such situations, music provides a voice that is difficult to interrupt. In this section, I examine how women, consciously or unconsciously, emancipate themselves through the prism of music in three different ways. Firstly, it is important to observe that these women's voices express God's Word. Secondly, the voice as a medium of communication, holds an acoustic power capable of taking possession of a given space and of asserting itself as an authority. Finally, I discuss how assuming positions within the Italian religious musical landscape beyond their respective community, Ekaterina and Halena, respectively choir masters of the Georgian choir and the Ukrainian choir, in a certain sense defy the victimizing and objectifying vision of migration shaped by institutional paternalism.

"The Word Became Flesh" (John 1:14)

According to Christian theology, God's "Word" became flesh through the Holy Spirit who impregnated the Virgin Mary. Thus, the "Word" is as much a form-giving action, as it is an action that informs. Said otherwise, that word expresses the act of insemination, of creation, but it also refers to the act of communicating, informing other people. Communication is already a verbal translation of thoughts, of a written message. Music as a verbal translation, is audible:

> Music gives voice by translation […]. By "translation" we refer to the ways in which the words of a sacred presence are made audible and meaningful. […] To hear sacred voice is to hear music as enchantment. (Engelhardt and Bohlman 2016: 14)

What the authors mean here is that, through musical interpretation, the members of the choir become, in a way, *messengers* of the "Word of God".

Back at the beginning of the last century, in the encyclical *Inter pastoralis officii sollicitudines* Pope Pius X (1903) expressed very precisely the mission of sacred music and its performers:

> Sacred music, as an integral part of the solemn liturgy, participates in its general purpose, which is the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful. […] It must be holy, and therefore exclude all profanation, not only in itself, but also in the manner in which it is proposed by the interpreters (Pius X 1903, Chapter I: Principia generalia).[11]

By then, the liturgical choir was exclusively masculine. If need be, Pius X was very explicit on the subject:

10 See, among dozens of examples, the site https://www.kriss-coach-vocal.fr/.

11 This and the following translation of the encyclical are by the author.

> It follows from the same principle that [male] singers have a true liturgical office in the church and that women, however, being incapable of this office, cannot be admitted to the choir or the musical chapel. If, therefore, the high voices of the sopranos and altos are to be used, they must be supported by children, according to the ancient custom of the Church (Pius X 1903, Chapter V: De cantoribus).

Undoubtedly, the situation has changed somewhat since then. Even if women's voices are now allowed in both Orthodox[12] and Catholic[13] liturgies, this does not mean that they are promoted or particularly encouraged. On this matter, it is interesting to note how deeply the masculine imprint on the religious remains in the choristers' minds. The Ukrainian and Georgian women whom I spoke with are categorical on this point. Although they say they are happy to sing in church, most of them nevertheless believe that men's voices are "more beautiful", "more prestigious" and "more appropriate" for the liturgy. This idea is so widespread that it explains why, among other issues related to the gendered division of labor, in Georgian Orthodox churches, men's choirs are paid as professionals while women's choirs remain volunteers. In Georgia, only important churches like Cathedrals and other historical churches can afford to pay for a professional choir and none of them would have a female choir. On the other hand, the churches of the suburbs and minor cities are mainly composed of women's choirs.

Without being fully aware of it, by taking charge of liturgical music in Rome, Ukrainian, Polish and Georgian women are also taking charge of "the Word of God". In the three communities studied, the initiative to form a choir for liturgical services came from the choir directors, who are women. As such, they are entirely autonomous in selecting their respective repertoires. Thus, to take up the terms "solemnity", "purity" and "integrity", as strongly recalled in *Inter pastoralis officii sollicitudines* (Pius X 1903), it appears today that "the Word of God" passes through the voice of women, more particularly here, through the one of migrant women. Thus, without making a revolt as Gramsci advocates, it can be claimed that, even for a position close to Spivak's concept of subaltern, one can indeed have a voice and make herself heard in proclaiming "the Word". Those rendered invisible are finally heard and listened to, both by the faithful and their clergy.

The Authority of Acoustics

In terms of acoustics, in the liturgies of Saints John Chrysostom and Basil the Great – used by Ukrainian and Georgian communities – the choir has a bigger place than the

12 In the Georgian Orthodox Church, for example, historically the presence of women is not clear. I have not found any evidence either of a ban on women's choirs or the presence of women's choirs – except in convents – before the Soviet ban on religion (1921). It was only after 1991 that women's choirs appeared in liturgical soundscapes. An article on this subject is being prepared by Tamar Chkheidze and should be published soon.

13 In Latin Catholicism, it was in the encyclical letter *Musicae sacrae disciplina* (1955) by Pope Pius XII that the Church formally authorized women's and girls' choirs – usually trained inside convents – to sing liturgies outside their convents. However, it was not until 1965 that mixed choirs were officially accepted (Laguë 2002). Since a couple of centuries, in Greeek Catholicism, mixed choirs are the norm, but all-women choirs are not welcome (Galadza 2010).

clerics. This is easily explained by the very nature of the Orthodox ritual: most of the time, the officiants stand behind the iconostasis, reciting their prayers in a low voice. In all the cases encountered, the female voice is all the more imposing as it comes from the gallery, overlooking from the back the faithful and the clerics: this is the case with the choir of the Ukrainian community in Rome, which is always placed in the gallery and this was also the case with the Georgian women, who for the most solemn feasts, such as Easter, stood on the balcony, until it was recently abandoned, due to its deteriorated condition. Likewise, Martyna, the Polish choirmaster, plays the organ in the gallery and, for practical reasons, the choir often stands there with her. This position of the organ, common in most Catholic churches, is not insignificant. Tanguy Mercier (Mercier et al. 2010: 27) points out that its elevation "allows for a better homogenization and distribution of the sound level in the assembly. Furthermore, the elevation allows for the promotion of radiation by offering the necessary reflections to the sound […], thus providing a better spatialization of the sound".

The question of the relationship between acoustics and place of worship is not new and the issue of what drives this relationship is undoubtedly fascinating. Was it the evolution of architectural technology that served as a springboard for new musical possibilities, or was it the need for musical creativity that led to the development of new architectural arrangements? Without denying the potential for a reciprocal influence between architecture and sacred music, Victor Desarnaulds (2002: 108) argues that it was religious music that adapted to the architectural and acoustic evolution of places of worship:

> As Winckel has pointed out, the adaptation of music to acoustics is not only about the evolution of the reverberation of churches, but also about the spatial organization and the conditions of diffusion, which are particularly important for musical listening.

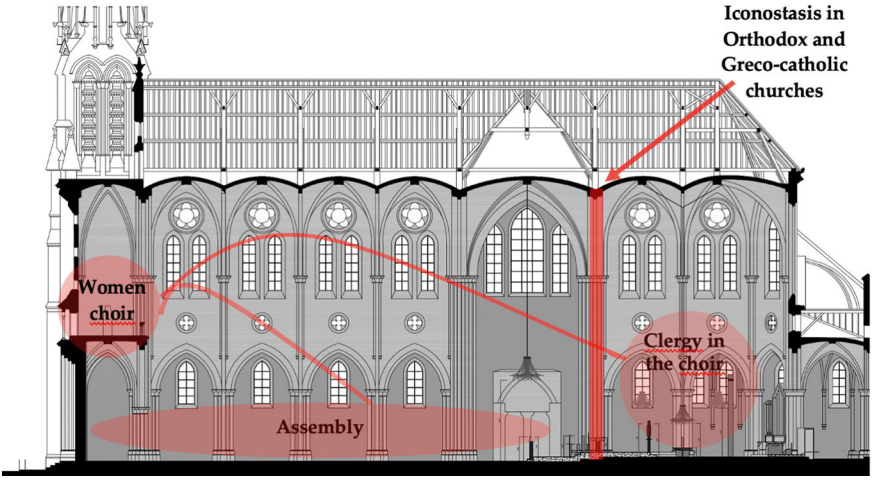
Although this thesis may seem convincing, I am not in a position to validate it. Here, my aim is to remind that two thousand years of Christian musical history are conjugated in the plural. In terms of acoustics, these histories show the supremacy of the male voice, however they were limited to that, as the many examples of daily nuns singing in Latin and Orthodox convents show. As I mentioned, if the Latin Catholic voice was represented by men's singing for a long time, the latter was increasingly accompanied, and even competed with, the voices of young boys and castrati. Nevertheless, if one observes a cross-section of any church with the location of the various protagonists in their respective places, a new model can be grasped and the image is particularly striking. We observe there the place taken by the *badanti* of Rome in the sound space of their respective liturgies:[14]

Here, the women – put in a subaltern position – without insurrection, dominate the entire place of worship, physically and sonically. As sound waves, the voices of these women take possession of the place, in this case a church, and thus, fill it. Through their voices, the women impose a strong authority that gives them a specific power. Again,

14 Only the Georgian women no longer sing in the gallery for reasons of safety due to the architecture, but this does not prevent them from occupying the second most important place in the church, beyond the choir: in front of the left door of the iconostasis.

without really being aware of their capacity of action, they express themselves and impose silence around them.

Figure 1: Position of the different protagonists in the church space. Scheme by François Lacoste.



Re-evangelization through Female Migrants' Voices

The Western stereotype often sees female migrants as victimized and objectified. When referring to the issue of refugees, a large number of authors[15] points out the institutional paternalism exercised by humanitarian[16] state and religious government discourses and practices, which places migrants, especially women, in a victimized status devoid of any agency. Similarly to Spivak's (1988) discussion of British colonialist and patriarchal interventions in India, Saba Mahmood (2005) demonstrates how US policy has created a neo-conservative rhetoric based on the need to "save" Muslim women from the clutches of Islamic fundamentalism in order to legitimize its war actions in the Middle East. Mahmood criticizes the narrow perception of Western liberal feminism (from which she comes) that cannot imagine Islam as a source of agency for Muslim women. Finally, Mahmood argues that, whether they come from a secular state or a religion, patriarchal norms are always present. The cases of Ekatarina and Halena, who participated in my fieldwork, may challenge the stereotypes, highlighted by Spivak and Mahmood, depicting women as subdued and system victims. For several years now, in addition to her role as choirmaster of the Georgian choir, Ekaterina has been working daily as a

15 See the extensive bibliography structuring Aurore Vermylen's (2016) article.

16 Notion developed by Didier Fassin (2006). According to the author, humanitarian governments "administer populations in the name of a higher moral principle that makes the preservation of life and the relief of suffering the supreme values of action" (Fassin 2006: 16).

choir leader for the Sant'Egidio[17] community. This choir, made up of men and women of different nationalities, allows Ekaterina to practice her profession outside her diasporic community circle and gives her a voice that goes beyond the "borders" of her immigrant community. In a way, this gives her the power and agency to challenge the clichés too quickly spouted by state, religious and/or humanitarian structures. The same is true in the case of Halena who, in addition to her choir director's role in the Ukrainian choir, is the choirmaster of her Italian town's parish and a piano teacher in a high school. None of them is remunerated for their work in the national parishes, but their Italian employers do pay them. The reality is that no one among the Italian parishioners has the necessary skills to take charge of the musical part of the liturgy and, when liturgies are sung, they are only sung by the congregation in unison. If Italian masses are no longer sung, it is clearly due to the lack of people with sufficient musical training to take on this role. So, it is thanks to their musical training and competence that Halena and Ekaterina can take on these roles of leadership in religious music, which is also expressed through an economic return.

It is interesting to note that Italian parishes need women, Ukrainian or Georgian, to take charge of this indispensable aspect of the liturgy. This phenomenon is reminiscent of another, well known to French and Italian parishes: the arrival of young priests from Africa, Asia and South America in recent decades to compensate for the crisis of religious vocations in the countries of "old Europe". Like these modern-day male missionaries, Halena and Ekaterina were brought in to make up for lack of musical education in the Italian religious landscape. These two women, evangelized after the fall of communism, became in their turn evangelists, through music, in the very heart of the capital of Latin Christianity. This situation gives them empowerment and authority through music and puts these women in strong leadership position inside the religious practice.

Once again, these women, invisible to the society and its institutions, found a way to make themselves more visible and audible through music and, more particularly, through their voices. This reverses not only the stereotypical view of them as victims, but shows how liturgical music can be a space for *badanti*'s agency and leadership. Giving God a woman's voice, they obtain his authority and irrevocability.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated how women acquire a voice essentially through their musical roles. These migrant women use their country's liturgical musical tradition to develop their own agency in a new country and through new codes. They show us how migratory demographic changes lead the exile communities to conceive, revisit and readapt their own sociological, anthropological and religious practices. Ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes (1997: 23) explains how musicians are deeply involved in the gendered representation of societies:

17 Sant'Egidio is an association founded in Rome after the Second Vatican Council in 1968. Composed of lay Christians, its aim is to fight against poverty and today it works a lot with the migrants present in the local territory.

> Since gender is a symbol of social and political order, and the control of gender behaviour is a means of controlling that order, gender boundaries cannot be separated from other social and political boundaries. Gender boundaries articulate the most deeply entrenched forms of domination which provide basic metaphors for others, and thus constitute the most intensely "naturalised" of all our boundary making activities.

Indeed, musically, social changes can occur through voices, vocal timbres, tessituras, transcriptions, compositions. All of them are symbols that can put in discussion the social and political boundaries of gender. In the cases that I have described, these musicians from elsewhere took the power of the musical within their respective communities and, more broadly, in Italian churches.

The female musicians from Eastern European communities in Rome control a big part of the socio-religious space around them through their liturgical musical actions and performances. Every Sunday, they "enter the stage" and take possession of the space, hence confirming their authority, the power of their new status within their respective traditions, "making" them "powerful and problematic figures for the society at large" (Stokes 1997: 24). In fact, thanks to their high level of musical training, they not only control the "voice of God" and the sound space of the sacred place, but they are also wholly in charge of the choice of the musical repertoire of their churches, the musical training of the choristers and, last but not least, the vocal and sound aesthetic of their choirs. Managing and supervising liturgical music, they gained influence and the respect of both the religious body and the faithful. In this way, they have fully assumed a leadership position.

For centuries, Christian Churches have been committed to forbidding any female involvement in ritual and liturgy, going as far as to privilege the voices of boys to the detriment of those of women and even more so. The Catholic Church has encouraged the castration of generations of young men in order to reach tessituras, to which a man could not aspire. It's ironic that in the very heart of Rome, the re-evangelization of parishes goes through women and that the renewal of musical liturgy relies essentially on women.

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Winds of Change? Gender Segregation in Music Education and Production in Italy

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Abstract: *Gender typing of musical instruments is one of the main factors limiting the educational, occupational, personal and social experiences available to women in different music worlds, althought today women are formally acknowledged the right to access also educational and professional paths typically associated with masculinity. In practice, however, gender stereotypes in music are still diffused and influent, although to a lesser extent than in the past. This chapter discusses gender typing of wind instruments in contemporary Italy, drawing on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative evidences. In the last decades the traditional association of wind instruments with masculinity has considerably declined in the case of woodwind instruments (to the point of reversal for the flute), while it persists in the case of wind instruments and, remarkably, in the instrumental jazz courses. Gender typing seems to be even stronger in the music job market, where gender segregation persists both at the horizontal and vertical level. Female wind players refer of similar experiences contributing to build self-confidence and leadership in a field still mostl masculine. Those experiences, however, have an occasional character related to the specific path of each musician, while only recently a series of measures are being developed to raise awareness on the issue of gender segregation and promote a greater gender balance in music. Academic research might play an important role in disseminating reliable documentation of past and present activities of female musicians operating in different music worlds and evidence on the persistency of different forms of gender segregation, often hidden behind formal equality of opportunities.*

Keywords: *gender typing of musical instruments, gender segregation in education and work, gender balance in music, wind instruments, role modeling and mentoring in music.*

The Invisible Issue of Women's Segregation within Music Worlds

The gender typing of musical instruments (Abeles and Porter 1978; Abeles 2009) represents one of the main factors limiting the educational, personal and social experiences,

as well as the potential professional paths available to women in different music worlds.[1] The association of instruments either with men or women varies in time and place, as it relates to the socio-cultural construction of features and roles associated to gender in a given context. In modern Western societies musical practices tended to reinforce the socialization and embodiment of the binarism founding the patriarchal order (DeNora 2002), as attested by conduct books, paintings or sculptures referring to music making (Leppert 1995; Steiblin 1995). The musical education of young women, functional to the exhibition of family status and personal appeal, required compliance with the ideals of grace, decorum, discretion, deference, defining the esthetical and moral standards of feminine respectability valued in the marriage market (Loesser 1954). Girls were forbidden or deterred from playing instruments requiring them to adopt postures considered as obscene or provocative for women, or to alter their delicate poises for executive needs, or to manage technologically complex objects (Green 1997). Wind instruments, possessing all the features deemed to be incompatible with femininity, were strongly associated to masculinity.

The persistent influence of those associations in contemporary Western societies is hidden by the fact that today women are formally acknowledged the right to also access those educational and professional paths, typically associated with masculinity, where some of them become legitimated as "exceptions to the rule".[2] In practice, however, gender stereotypes in music are still diffused and, although to a lesser extent than in the past, significantly limit women's full participation in music worlds. Research noted how the persistence of gender segregation[3] may discriminate women not only in those music worlds more often displaying sexist cultural narratives, as rock or pop (Reddington 2012; Whiteley 2000), but also in those usually engaged with civil rights and anticolonial issues associated with progressive values, as jazz (Annfelt 2003; Buscatto 2021), or in those where women's integration is often considered an accomplished process, as classical music (Bull 2018; Scharff 2018).

This chapter brings to the debate on women's segregation in music the discussion over the gender typing of wind instruments in contemporary Italy. First, it considers gender segregation at the educational level through a detailed analysis of data on students' enrolments in National Conservatories of music. Second, it considers gender segregation at the occupational level, both in its horizontal and vertical dimension, focusing

1 The concept refers to Howard Becker's theory, defining an art world as "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that art world is noted for" (Becker 1982: x).

2 As observed by Tucker (2000: 330) the "exception to the rule" logic allows to transgress only temporarily the long-established patriarchal order, presenting women accessing typical male occupations as "perpetual phenomena phenomenon".

3 I shall here consider gender segregation – which can be generally defined as the unequal distribution of men and women in different social fields – in the educational and occupational fields (Barone 2010; Maestripieri and Insarauto 2020). Within the occupational field, gender segregation is described with reference to two directions: the tendency of women and men to work in different sectors and occupations (horizontal segregation) and the clustering of men and women respectively at the top and bottom of occupational hierarchies.

on two organizational settings for music production: symphonic orchestras and jazz festivals. The discussion integrates the analysis of quantitative data updated for this volume with that of qualitative research previously realized by the author.[4] A final section refers to the resources and strategies helping interviewed musicians to overcome implicit biases and silent discrimination encountered during their educational and professional journey as female wind players. Conclusions point to the relevance of disseminating the results of research on gender and music, offering evidence on the fact that the issue of gender segregation is not an outdated feminist question, but a social concern for democratic societies, to be tackled through specific measures and policies.

Gender segregation and wind instruments today: the case of Italy

a) Educational segregation

A useful source to trace the historical evolution of the association between musical instruments and gender is offered by statistical data on students enrolled in Italian National Music Conservatories, the most legitimized institution for music training in Italy. Data are available from the second decade of the twentieth century till today,[5] a wide span of time during which institutes have adapted to significant changes. If in the school year 1926–27 there were only 15 Conservatories counting nearly 4.700 students, eighty years later the number of institutes rises to 78 and that of students to 45.000. For the past twenty years Conservatories underwent a major reorganization, following the implementation of a national law (n. 508/1999), inserting them with other applied arts institutes within the tertiary level of education. In the academic year 2020–21, when the number of Conservatories still was 78, the number of students enrolled in graduate and postgraduate courses amounted to nearly 26.500 units, while pre-academic students – to be gradually allocated to secondary level institutions – were nearly 15.400. The reorganization also led to a widening of the curricular offer, limited to the classic music canon until 1999, to include specialization in a greater variety of repertoires, genres and subjects (from ancient music to electronic, jazz and popular music, from ethnomusicology and traditional music to musicotherapy) offered by each Conservatory according to its size and resources.

In general, Conservatories students' population appears to be gender balanced since the beginning of the twentieth century, when girls' presence almost equals that of boys – differently from other segments of the national system of public education, such as secondary school or university, where equal participation was reached only decades later. This gender balance remains stable, with small fluctuations, throughout the twentieth

4 The quotes reported in the chapter refer to interviews and focus groups organized for the purpose of research at jazz festivals in Sardinia (Casula and Firinu 2016), an investigation on the reversal of the gender-typing for the flute (Casula 2017), a study on Italian Conservatories of Music (Casula 2018) and a case study on two Italian female brass bands (Casula 2021). The text of interviews was translated from Italian to English by the author. Information on interviewees refers to the time of the interview.

5 Data prior to the 1999 reform were collected from the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), while those following the reform from the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).

century but, since the 1999 reform inserting Conservatories within tertiary education, the percentage of female students decreases to nearly 40%, especially within postgraduate courses, more directly linked to professional specialization.

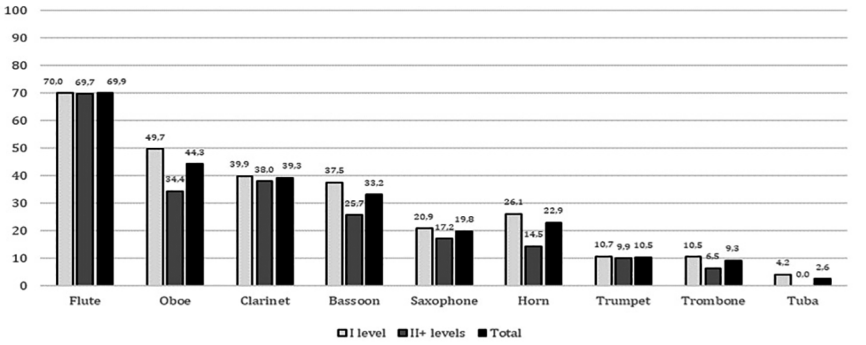
The distribution of male and female students attending different courses offered by Conservatories during the twentieth century, however, followed a strong gender typing of instruments. Data on registrations for the school year 1947–48, in the aftermath of the second world war, shows female students segregated within the classes of harp, piano and organ (where they represent, respectively, nearly 98%, 80% and 60% of the overall students), while their presence is also considerable in the classes of singing (35%) and violin (34%). No record of female students is present for the classes of wind instruments (including nearly 500 students), both in the case of woodwinds and brass, remaining an exclusive male dominion.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the dynamics of registrations per sex shows a gradual increase in feminine participation to several courses, starting with the instruments of the string family (with the exception of the double bass). Within the wind family, object of our focus, the increase follows two different tracks: a faster track for the classes of woodwind instruments, leading to a reversal of the original gender association in the case of the flute (Casula 2017); a very slow track for brass instruments classes. Figure 1 represents the percentage of female students registered in wind instruments classes of both classical and jazz courses for the academic year 2020–21,[6] per instrument and degree level (graduate and postgraduate courses). As we can see, female students represent the great majority (nearly 70%) of flute students, a significant percentage (respectively 44% and 39%) of oboe and clarinet students and one third of bassoon students. As we shift from woodwinds to brass instruments' classes, the picture changes: if women represent the 23% of students registered in horn classes, their presence declines to almost 20% in the case of saxophone,[7] around 10% in the case of trumpet (11%) and trombone (9%), and to less than 3% in the case of tuba classes. A further element that we can notice is that the percentage of female students declines as the education level rises for all instruments – although for some with a narrow gap – implying a decreased presence of women in those segments of training preparing students' transition to the labor market as professional musicians (rather than as music teachers or amateurs).

6 Given the relatively recent introduction in Italian Conservatories – only after their 1999 reform – of courses differing from the canonical classical curriculum, the number of wind students enrolled in jazz courses is still relatively low (nearly 360), when compared with the more consistent numbers of the classical curriculum (nearly 4900 students), often including also future musicians in jazz or other music fields. For this reason, I have here aggregated the data on wind students of jazz courses with data on wind students of classical courses.

7 Although the saxophone is technically classified within the woodwind family, because of its use of a single-reed wooden mouthpiece and its initial crafting in wood, it soon was realized in brass and thus became associated with the brass wind family.

Table 1: Percentage of female students enrolled in wind instruments' classes of Italian Conservatories, per instrument and degree level (academic year 2020–21). Source: MIUR-AFAM data (http://ustat.miur.it/dati/) elaborated by the author.



In-depth interviews with students or musicians playing wind instruments allowed us to explore some of the mechanisms favoring the persistence of the gender typing of musical instruments. Women playing brass instruments – as the musician quoted below – seem well aware of the role played by cultural and social expectations in influencing girls' conformity to conventional patterns of musical practices associated to femininity:

> Perhaps it's a question of cultural and social conditioning, that we don't know if it is the cause or the effect [of the gender-typing of instruments]. In the sense that a girl grows with expectations upon her: "Will she play the violin? The flute? The piano?". We have to see if she matures a true desire [for an instrument] or if her choice coincides with expectations – but: will she feel comfortable with that [expected instrument]? (Nicoletta, trumpet and sousaphone player, female, 43, focus group, Pula, 2018).

Awareness was acquired by female wind players through their personal experience of the resistances and skepticism encountered given their choice to play an instrument traditionally associated to masculinity, contradicting conventional expectations on femininity. Resistance seems milder within more informal settings for music training – as local bands or public schools – but stronger in the more formal ones – as music Conservatories. In the first of the following quotes, a girl playing the baritone sax within an all-women street band today recalls how at first the music teacher associated her with a recorder, promptly substituted – after her disappointment – with an alto sax. In the second quote, an 18-year-old girl tells us about the double logic adopted in her instrument choice: when enrolling at the Conservatory she followed conventional expectations, choosing instruments conforming with the typical ideal of femininity (piano, violin, viola), while within the local band she felt free to choose the instrument she loves (the tuba), despite the fact it is typically associated to men.

> The music teacher in my junior high school loved wind instruments in general (…) Initially he told me: "You'd go well with the recorder". And I [*with a disappointed voice,*

> *n/a*]: "Well, the recorder, actually…" (…) When I went to the music school [where he also taught] he told me: "I found something for you: here's the alto sax!". Thus I started with the alto sax. Then, years later, within the [all women brass] band there was the need of someone at the baritone part and I shifted: more than for the band's need, for a personal thing: I felt the baritone parts, its sound attracted me, so it was [more] my need… (Morena, alto and baritone sax player, female, 26, focus group, Pula, 2018).

> I started to play music during my fourth grade, but the piano (…) [then] I started playing the violin and after a year I decided to enter the Conservatory… last year I switched from violin to viola. At the same time, for passion, I play the tuba (…)
> *C.C.: How did you get to the tuba?*
> The tuba is… [*she laughs*] a love that I have since I was little, since I was playing the piano… but I saw it as something a bit difficult [to realize] … instead three years ago, I started too (…) I knew that there was a band (…) I went there and asked how I could start: I did a year with a teacher [of the band] and then I carried on, so now I play there, also… (viola student at the Conservatory, tuba player in the band, female, 18, focus group, Latina, 2014).

Within local bands – music ensembles associated to semi-amateur proficiency quite diffused in Italy,[8] especially in rural areas – girls are today usually assigned all kinds of instruments, according to the mutable needs of the ensemble. Gender equality was however only gradually reached: developed since the eighteenth century, local bands were originally open only to male members, while women where allowed for ancillary services (cleaning rehearsal rooms, rearranging uniforms, preparing lunch or dinner) (Cresti 2006). Since the 1970s, female members have started to be admitted, thus contributing to challenging conventional expectations on their incompatibility with wind instruments.

Italian Conservatories, however, opposed stronger resistance to those winds of change and defended conventional restrictions over legitimated female musical practices, gradually softened annexing those instruments following the harp and keyboards in the social prestige ladder, namely the violin and viola first, the cello and flute in a second step and gradually also other woodwind instruments, but still excluding those at its base, as the double bass, brass instruments or percussions (sometimes labelled within Conservatories as the "agricultural instruments", see Casula 2018: 183). Older generation of Conservatory teachers often activated social distinction mechanisms, separating the noble path of professionally and culturally legitimated classical musical training offered by their institution, from amateur practice realized in rural communities' local bands. However, in the last decades, the force of this banning declines in light of the cultural and organizational changes that left their impact on Italian Conservatories: on the one hand, the turnover of classical courses' teachers leads to the entry of new generations of musicians with a more crossover or a less canonical approach to classical music; on

8 See Raganato 2020. A website dedicated to Italian musical local bands records more than 2.364 active ones (https://www.bandamusicale.it/, last accessed on 19 February 2022).

the other hand, the reform upgrading to the tertiary level of education Conservatories requires them to search for breeding grounds where young musicians are raised, given the inadequate public offer of pre-academic music training in the national system of education.[9] As a result, female students learning to play wind instruments in local bands are increasingly recruited within Conservatories also in brass instruments classes, although mainly of classical courses. Jazz courses, conversely, seem to remain a masculine realm, where women's presence is legitimated only as singers. The persistence of this strong gender segregation within jazz courses is supported by the analysis of both qualitative interviews and quantitative data.[10] In the following quote, a female sax player in her 20s, member of a brass band and enrolled in the saxophone class of the jazz course, notices she is the only woman not only in her class, but in all the instrumental jazz classes offered by her Conservatory, where other female jazz students follow voice classes.

> I have started this year [in 2019–20] the class of jazz saxophone at the Conservatory of [X], I'm the only female student of the class, actually of all jazz courses, all the others [female students of the jazz courses] are singers. (Ilaria, baritone and tenor sax player, female, 20, focus group, Fluminimaggiore, 2019).

Female brass students are often a prime target for those male colleagues or teachers still considering their field as a distinctively masculine realm. Our interviewees recall how, during their Conservatory years, they had to endure a repertoire of dirty jokes and limericks about the skills of women working with their lips or comments suggesting their achievements were based more on their appeal than on merit or relegating them in a sort of "second class" ranking for female musicians. Especially in the case of jazz courses, as recalled in the following quote, those strategies contribute to undermining female students' confidence over their possibility to become professional wind players:

> In my local band [where I started playing] there were other girls playing wind instruments, so I didn't experience discrimination. That I experienced later, within the Conservatory, and I still experience it today [within the labor market]. That remarking […]: "For a woman, you are good". At the Conservatory, quite annoying: "Ok, teachers gave you a mark higher than mine because you are pretty". It's hard this thing, it's very recurrent, especially in the jazz world […] I had registered as postgraduate student for the trumpet jazz class, but I couldn't make it: besides the fact that you have to attend regularly – while I also had to work – there it's even harder because all women can do within the jazz world is singing. I really experienced that, I always felt… it wasn't a source of pride – as I think it should be – to be

9 After the 1999 reform inserting Italian Conservatories in the tertiary level of education the offer of pre-academic music was left to musical lyceums, which however are reduced in number and present a restricted curricular offer.

10 MIUR data on the academic year 2020–21 register nearly 11% of female students for the classes of classical trumpet (76 out of 677 students) while for the classes of jazz trumpet the percentage is to less than 4% (3 out of 76 students, none of the three in postgraduate classes). In the same year female students enrolled in classic sax classes are more than 23% (170 out of 735), but less than in 10% jazz sax classes (24 out of 221).

> a woman in jazz, but as something unfeasible. (Leonarda, trumpet player, female, 44, focus group, Pula, 2018).

b) Occupational segregation

The persistence of gender segregation in music education significantly limits not only the educational experiences available to female musicians, but also their possibility of launching a career as wind players. In what follows I shall discuss the issue of occupational gender segregation, both at the horizontal and vertical level, considering two types of organizational settings for the production of classical music and jazz where wind instruments are widely used.

The first organizational setting is given by the orchestras of the 14 state-funded Italian Lyric-Symphonic Foundations[11]. As shown in the table on the left of figure 2, female players amount to less than a quarter of full-time members in the orchestras (24%). Besides the harp – whose seats, the least numerous with those of tuba, are all taken by women – each section registers a higher percentage of male players. Women represent a significant presence within the rows of flutes (43%) and violins (41%), but a minor one within the wind sections. This is especially the case for brass instruments which, as just seen, are still strongly associated with men already in the educational field; women's presence, however, is relatively low also in the rows of other woodwind instruments (as oboe, clarinet, bassoon), today studied by a significant percentage of female students within Italian Conservatories.

The table on the right of the same figure 2 shows the percentage of female orchestra members assigned a leading role within their row. This indicator can offer us a measure of vertical segregation, clustering men at the top of occupational hierarchies, while leaving women at the bottom. Overall, only 15% of women cover leading roles. With the exception of the harp rows (where, as seen, there aren't male players), women seat much more rarely than their male colleagues as first parts, more prestigious and better remunerated. This holds true even in the case of those sections showing the highest participation of women (as violins or flute), suggesting perhaps a more difficult acceptance of female musicians to stand out against their male colleagues. However, it is interesting to notice that in the woodwind section the proportion of women in leading roles is for some instruments higher than that in all roles, a fact that might reveal the outstanding level of the new generations of female musicians managing to be selected within sections still largely guarded by men.

11 The Fondazioni Lirico-Sinfoniche are institutions organizing operatic and concert activities related to classical music, largely subsidized by the Italian State on the basis of their recognized contribution to the musical, cultural and social education of the society. Data were collected by the author from each of the 14 Fondazioni's websites, season 2021–22 (accessed 20 February 2022).

Table 2: Percentage of female members in Italian Lyric-Symphonic Foundations orchestras, season 2021–22: all roles and leading roles. Source: author's elaboration of data from Italian Lyric-Symphonic Foundations' official websites (season 2021–22).

All roles 2022	MF	%F	Leading roles 2022	MF	%F
VIOLIN	365	40,5	VIOLIN	62	19,4
VIOLA	146	28,8	VIOLA	28	3,6
CELLO	118	20,3	CELLO	30	15,4
DOUBLEBASS	88	6,8	DOUBLEBASS	27	11,1
FLUTE	47	42,6	FLUTE	23	21,7
OBOE	52	17,3	OBOE	23	13,0
CLARINET	55	9,1	CLARINET	25	12,0
BASSOON	53	11,3	BASSOON	24	12,5
HORN	74	5,4	HORN	21	4,8
TRUMPET	54	12,5	TRUMPET	26	3,8
TROMBONE	51	0,0	TROMBONE	24	0,0
TUBA	12	0,0	PERCUSSIONS	23	8,7
PERCUSSIONS	55	10,9	HARP	13	100,0
HARP	13	100,0	TOTAL	349	14,6
TOTAL	1183	24,4			

With reference to the second organizational setting, we chose to focus on the last edition of Umbria Jazz Winter. Umbria Jazz is the oldest and most renowned international jazz festival in Italy (Santoro and Solaroli 2013), taking place since the 1970s during the summer and also offering, since nearly three decades, a shorter winter version. At Umbria Jazz Winter #28 women represented less than 6% of all instrumental musicians involved in the main 17 concerts scheduled between December 2021 and January 2022 and none of them played a wind instrument (although wind players represented nearly 37% of the musicians participating to the festival). The presence of women among instrumental musicians was limited in the case of musicians with a supporting role (11%), but almost inexistent among performers with a leading role, where only one woman (pianist, singer and songwriter) was invited to share the stage with the other 41 male colleagues presented by the official program.[12]

12 Information was retrieved from the program presented in the official website of the Umbria Jazz Festival: https://www.umbriajazz.it/programma-umbria-jazz-winter-28/ (accessed 20 February 2022). On the issue of gender segregation in jazz production in Italy see also the report realized by the association JazzMine (2021).

Table 3: Number of players at the Umbria Jazz Winter #28 (2021–22 edition): total number and percentage of female participants, per role. Source: author's elaboration of data from UJ website (accessed 20 February 2022).

Role	MF	%F
Leading	42	2,4
Supporting	28	10,7
All roles	70	5,7

To explore the reasons behind the enduring segregation of female musicians playing wind instruments in organizations for the production of classical and, especially, jazz music in Italy we shall once more refer to our interviews.

When questioned about the issue of horizontal segregation, several female musicians point to the persistent diffusion in the Italian society of the stereotype representing women as "the weaker sex" – related to a gender binary model defining men as the stronger one – deemed incompatible with the technical skills and the stamina required by the musical profession, especially in the case of wind instruments, and ultimately discriminating them in the labor market. Male musicians, in opposition, often start claiming that the structural discrimination of women in music is an obsolete issue and that today their lower presence is rather due to personal choices. In exemplifying those choices, however, they often reveal essentialist views on women's nature, as either mainly fulfilled by an engaging maternal role requiring them to put the career on the back burner (as suggested in the first quote by a flutist working in a symphonic orchestra); or as usually disinterested in certain music genres, such as jazz, designed as a masculine field (as implied in the second quote by a jazz player and expert):

> I don't know, maybe it also depends on the woman's nature (…) That's my educated guess (…) but I think it is very important for a woman to find fulfillment on the family front, so to become a real woman, to procreate… so I think this role takes her away a bit of the energy [needed] to achieve her career goals… (flutist, male, 30, phone interview, 2016).

> In the past, yes, it was a cultural question, but now it has been overcome. Probably not many of them [female musicians] are interested [in jazz], so that the final result is that in a festival of 100 musicians there are maybe 10 women, because the sector is built in this way. An interesting thing to notice, in my opinion, is that when women are present, they are extremely good, maybe because there is a greater selection at the basis. (guitar player and jazz expert, 55, interview, Berchidda, 2016).

The closing sentence of the second quote refers to a comment shared by both male and female interviewees: those women that manage to establish themselves as renowned wind musicians in their respective music world are usually "super-talented" artists. In the process of gaining full recognition in a field where men remain the aspirational model of reference and the main source of legitimation, "super-talented" female musicians are often labeled as "masculine" – with reference to their sound, their way of playing, or even their

persona – by male teachers, colleagues o commentators. In the case of "ordinary artists" (Perrenoud and Bois 2017), however, most female wind musicians experience a harder time than their colleagues in building a musical career.

Female interviewees note how the segregation experienced by female musicians is not different from those experienced by women in other working sectors, commonly described with the "glass ceiling" or "sticky floor" metaphors (the first one referring to the invisibility of obstacles hampering women's ascent to the higher rungs of the career ladder, the second to the mechanisms gluing them to the lower ones). Again, male interviewees tend to explain the lower presence of female wind players in the higher professional levels pointing to issues related to femininity, rather than to structural gender asymmetries. In the following quote, a principal flutist of a symphonic orchestra observes how talented female musicians often refigure their priorities after motherhood, indirectly implying that this hinders them to reach the highest standards in the profession, requiring a total dedication incompatible with caring duties:

> I have noticed that for women, at a [certain] moment in life, different priorities arrive (…) For someone like me, music is my fulfilment, [totally] absorbing, my thing (…) Instead I see many [female] colleagues, friends, [who are] amazing, who at some point say: "Yes, but it is not the most important thing in the world, there are other [things]". I don't want to say that it's motherhood, because otherwise we fall back into the argument that after a woman becomes a mother there's nothing left. But it is a fact that, at some point, they have, you [women] have the rationality to understand that [the profession] is an important thing, but it is not a priority, it's not the one thing that absorbs all your energy… (flutist, male, 50, interview, Rome, 2016).

Indeed, the balance between work and family represents one of the main factors influencing women's participation in the labor market. In Italy, where the scarcity of caregiving services is accompanied by a strong gender asymmetry in the distribution of domestic unpaid work, balancing costs are mainly borne by women (Maestripieri and Insarauto 2020: 30).

c) Becoming a female wind player

Female musicians interviewed for my research are those that have managed to overcome most of the obstacles that, as just seen, still pave the way of female wind players in Italy. An interesting aspect to investigate are thus the resources and mechanisms that enabled them to overcome those obstacles.

Role modeling and mentoring emerge as two crucial aspects for women to live the association between gender and instrument as unproblematic. This happens in the case of girls coming from musical families, used to see wind instruments at home, or those from villages with a local band, where nowadays female members are fully integrated, or those who happened to meet open-minded teachers, avoiding gender-typing in music. The girl of the following quote felt attraction for the sax because her female cousin played it, besides the fact she liked the glittering appearance of the instrument:

> My idea was to enter [the band] playing the sax because my cousin had it: I liked the fact that it was golden [*the other girls of the band laugh, n/a*] and that she played it! (Adele, tenor sax player, female, 18, focus group, Fluminimaggiore, 2019).

Role model may be seen at work both in terms of seeking other examples of female wind players or in looking at oneself as such, as in the case of those players "pioneering" in more secluded domains (Nenić 2015: 149, Wehr 2016: 481). This was the case, for instance, of the sousaphonist of an all-female marching band, seeing her performances as a sort of "double mission": the mission to assert the reality of a female sousaphonist and, at the same time, to disclose to others "the possibility that a woman can make it":

> I don't know if there are other female sousaphonist in Italy (…) for me to play it, [means] that if a woman looked at me thinking: "Wow!" and she would feel the desire to play, I would be extremely pleased. I feel it as a sort of "mission", both the mission to play it and also the mission to disclose the possibility that a woman can make it. (Nicoletta, trumpet and sousaphone player, female, 43, focus group, Pula, 2018).

Another factor contributing to make female wind instrument players feel comfortable in their role is the normalization of the experience of playing wind instruments within organizational settings offering a comfortable and familiar environment, where learning takes a collective dimension based on cooperative relations between members. This was the case of musicians who started their journey in the local band of their village, or who participated to more or less stable ensembles touring together. As in the experience reported in the following quote, the collective dimension of learning may take an intergenerational depth, if linked to the exchange of knowledge between a more experienced and a younger member, the latter motivated from the supervision of the former, at its turn rewarded from the recognition of the proficiency achieved:

> For example, in the last concert I was [playing] close to the little girls and I really liked it, eh, because you feel proud of your journey, since you understand how much they, from my [point of] view, needed attention from someone older, playing better: from their point of view I am really good, [I represent] something to strive for… and this is a beautiful thing! (Adele, tenor sax player, female,18, focus group, Fluminimaggiore, 2019).

Other times, as in the next quote, the collective dimension of learning concerns the crossing over of technical or interpretative skills requiring members to pool knowledge derived from their different individual training paths or to adopt a "mutual aid" approach to performance, conceived in terms of teamwork towards which they share responsibility. This collective dimension of music making allows to define skills not in terms of inborn talent of exceptionally gifted individuals, but as a proficiency to be patiently developed through practice and shared experience. Similarly, leadership is not defined in terms of superiority or control over other members: the saxophonist quoted below, who guides an all-female street band, describes leadership in terms of a responsibility shared with the other band members, sometimes needing only a gaze or a breath to coordinate their ac-

tion, each acknowledged specific assets constitutive of the specific character of the band as a whole:

> I am the leader, but it is right to decide together who makes the solos, who plays the [main] themes, then we alternate one section with the other. For instance, within the saxophone section I've always done classical music, Tatiana does jazz, so she's great with solos. So, it's also a matter of managing ourselves: "Hey, don't worry, two bars before the solo, take a rest" … But it is more a management internal to the sections, rather than dictated by me; even a look, a breath, sometimes, during a choreography: "Hey, I'm tired". Sometimes there are also quarrels [*mimicking a riled dialogue between two band members, n/a*]: "Hey, I told you I was tired!"; "But I didn't look at you!" [*the other girls laugh, n/a*]. (Ylenia, tenor sax player, female, 25, focus group, Pula, 2018).

Conclusions

In contemporary Western societies, the participation of female musicians to music worlds, although formally granted, is still limited by a series of stereotypes, social expectations and tacit rules defined according to the old patriarchal order, creating gender-segregated educational and occupational paths, although to lesser degree than in the past. Our discussion has shown that in the last decades the traditional association of wind instruments with masculinity has considerably declined in the case of woodwind instruments in Italy (to the point of reversal for the flute), while it persisted in the case of wind instruments and, remarkably, in the instrumental jazz courses. Gender typing seems to be even more persistent in the musical labor market, where we have observed the persistence of gender segregation both at the horizontal and vertical level, in organization of musical production, again more striking in the case of jazz.

The female wind players interviewed for my research, although presenting different educational and professional profiles or belonging to different generations and contexts, point to similar experiences contributing to build self-efficacy for successful participation in a field still mainly associated with masculinity: the intergenerational encounter with role models or mentors, the participation to organizational settings based on cooperative – rather than exclusively competitive – relations between musicians, the adherence to a leadership model not defined in terms of superiority or control, but as a responsibility role shared with the other players.

Those experiences, however, have an occasional character related to the specific path of each musician (and thus refer to factors such as family background and territorial origin, personal resources or chance encounters), more than to collective change towards greater equality within music worlds and society as a whole. A series of measures, pilot projects and networks have been developed[13] in the last several years in Italy, often along

13 To give a few examples collected during my participation to the panel *Diversity, Inclusion and Gender Equality* of the National Conference on *The Future of Music Education* (CNSI, Conservatory of Florence, 25–26 May 2022): in order to promote a greater equality both in music education and the music industry symphonic orchestras are gradually introducing anonymous audition rounds

the lines of what has already been launched in other Western countries, in order to raise awareness on the issue of gender segregation in music and to offer female musicians, as well as organization for music education and production, a series of tools and resources, promoting a greater gender balance in music. For the same purpose, academic research on gender and music might reach a wider audience and scope, disseminating reliable documentation of past and present activities of female musicians operating in different music worlds and evidence on the persistency of different forms of gender segregation, often hidden behind formal equality of opportunities.

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in their recruitment procedures, while music associations and organizations are joining international projects (as the *Keychange* initiative or the *PRIhME* partnership) or creating national networks (as *Equaly*, *Curating Diversity* or *JazzMine*).

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Introducing WMLON: The Women's Musical Leadership Online Network

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Abstract: *Musical leadership, across many musical genres, remains male dominated. Musical leadership itself is often constructed as residing in male authority figures, quintessentially exemplified in classical music through the maestro conductor. This 'maestro myth' (as Norman Lebrecht characterised it, 1997) has been perpetuated since the mid-nineteenth century through the 'maestro writing tradition' of male conductors from Berlioz (1843) and Wagner (1869), through Stokowski (1944), Furtwängler (1953), and Boult (1963), to Boulez (2003). This chapter shifts the spotlight to considering women's musical leadership and explores the impetuses behind the founding of the Women's Musical Leadership Online Network (WMLON), by the authors in 2019, and its initial findings. With the dual aim of both researching women's musical leadership and acting as a support network for women musical leaders and potential leaders, WMLON interrogates the current context of women in musical leadership with a specific focus on three areas: women in the music industries, women in educational leadership, and women leading contemporary musical practices. WMLON asserts that women's approaches to leadership are often different to those of men and calls for women to take ownership of this difference as a positive. Women are more likely to take part in 'transformational' training and are often 'more participatory, democratic and interpersonally sensitive' as leaders (Rhode 2019). This chapter acknowledges that there are feminist ways of knowing-doing and interrogates the need for women to have mentors, training, and support to break 'glass-ceilings'.*

Keywords: *leadership, women's leadership, musical leadership, mentoring.*

Musical leadership, across many musical genres, remains male dominated. We define musical leadership as a concept which incorporates the roles musicians, in practice, take not only as conductors and musical directors, rather encompassing all leadership activity, all musicking activity, from project managing events, to leading workshops and lessons, to managing charities and networks, to leading change on the ground in small-scale projects, to leading instrumental ensembles, to leading sales and marketing, outreach work, to leading advocacy and activism activity. The focus here is the specific role of women in this context. Musical leadership itself is often constructed as residing in male

authority figures, quintessentially exemplified in classical music through the figure of the maestro male conductor. This "maestro myth", as Norman Lebrecht (1997) has characterized it, has been perpetuated since the mid-nineteenth century through the "maestro-writing tradition" of male conductors from Berlioz and Wagner, through Stokowski, Furtwängler and Boult, to Boulez. The maestro tradition was so powerful for so long that it actively and effectively marginalized other voices within musical leadership, including those of women. Given its dominance, this chapter first considers how the maestro tradition first arose in the nineteenth century and how it came to endure so strongly well beyond. Discussion is then shifted to considering women's musical leadership and exploring the impetuses behind the founding of the Women's Musical Leadership Online Network (WMLON), by the authors in 2019, and its initial findings. With the dual aim of both researching women's musical leadership and acting as a support network for women musical leaders and potential leaders, WMLON interrogates the current context of women in musical leadership with a specific focus on three areas: women in the music industries, women in educational leadership and women leading contemporary musical practices. WMLON asserts that women's approaches to leadership are often different to those of men and calls for women to take ownership of this difference as a positive. Women are more likely to take part in "transformational" training and are often "more participatory, democratic and interpersonally sensitive" as leaders (Rhode 2017: 5). This chapter acknowledges that there are feminist ways of knowing-doing and interrogates the need for women to have mentors, training and support to break "glass-ceilings".

Confronting the Legacy of the Maestro Tradition

Dag Jansson (2019: 865) has noted that: "The conductor role, as we know it today, is a product of romanticism in the nineteenth century". The figure of the baton-wielding conductor raised above the instrumental players and facing them from a podium emerged only gradually. During the earlier nineteenth century, the tradition of leading from the keyboard persisted; whilst in England "divided leadership" – with the directing role alternating between the keyboardist and the first violin – continued well into the nineteenth century; conducting with the hands, rather than using a baton, meanwhile, remained common within choral music. Although there have been accounts of musical performances being directed by sticks or rolls of paper dating back to the late sixteenth century, the use of the baton only became generally accepted between 1820 and 1840 (Bowen 203: 101). The baton itself, as José Antonio Bowen (2003: 94–5) has commented, "has long been a symbol of power: the Pope has his staff and the Queen her scepter". The baton is also, as Jeanice Brooks (1996: 98) has observed, a potentially phallic symbol.

As the role of the conductor crystalized during the nineteenth century, two conducting techniques emerged. Bowen and Raymond Holden (2003: 114) have identified these as "Mendelssohn's more mechanical model of a 'transparent' conductor […] and the more 'subjective' approach of Liszt and Wagner, where the execution of the 'external' musical details was dependent upon finding the true 'internal' meaning of the work". With its clear association with Austro-German Romanticism, the Lisztian/Wagernian model came to dominate, helping "to establish a core repertory of Austro-German musical

works and the German Romantic ideology that sustained them" (Bowen and Holden 2003: 114).

The conductor's place upon the podium consolidated and visually enforced their position as a powerful gatekeeper of the emerging Austro-German-dominated classical music canon. As this canon shifted from a living tradition to one which was preserved and curated through concert performance, their role as medium to the music's inner transcendental meaning grew and they replaced composers as the music's focal point. As Bowen and Holden (2003: 114) have observed:

> With the deaths of Wagner and Brahms, the public's admiration and loyalty shifted from the composer to the virtuoso conductor. On posters, programs, and record jackets, the names of conductors grew larger as they gradually began to dominate the publicity that accompanied orchestral and operatic performances. By the middle of the twentieth century, conductors had become central to the marketing of music by record companies, opera houses, and concert organizations and were powerful figures in the music business.

Thus, conductors effectively replaced composers as the superstars of classical music.

Conductors were also active in fashioning their central positions within musical leadership through their own writings. As Jansson (2019: 865) has commented:

> The shapers of modern day conducting, Wagner (1869) and Berlioz (1843) […] were also those who started to write about it, a tradition that continued into the twentieth century […] These represent the "maestro writing" tradition: the great master sharing his own experience and ideas.

Berlioz's *Le chef d'orchestre: Théorie de son art* (1843, revised edition 1855) and Wagner's *Über das Dirigiren* (1869) laid the foundation for a long tradition of conductors writing about conducting which stretches into the twenty-first century, with contributions from, amongst many others, Leopold Stokowski (1944), Wilhelm Furtwängler (1953), Adrian Boult (1963) and Pierre Boulez (1981 and 2003) (Logie 2012: 282–5). As Jansson (2019: 386) has observed: "The maestro-writing tradition clearly shows that conductors at the outset took ownership of the notion of musical leadership".

The maestro-writing tradition has had a strong influence on popular writing on conductors. Notable examples of this distinct genre include David Ewen's pre- and post-Second World War books, *The Man with the Baton: The Story of Conductors and Their Orchestras* (1936) and *Dictators of the Baton* (1948); Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Conductors* (1967); and Helena Matheopoulos's *Maestro: Encounters with Conductors of Today* (1982). Norman Lebrecht, on the other hand, has critiqued the "maestro tradition", referring to it ironically as the "maestro myth" in his book *The Maestro Myth: Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power* (1997). "Maestro-writing" prose, and that which it has influenced, is very heavily masculinized. The "maestro-myth" genre focuses upon the supposedly "great" conductors whose origins lie in the Central European tradition, which includes such names as Hans von Bülow (1830–1894), Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), Otto Klemperer (1885–1973) and Herbert von Karajan (1908–1989).

Recognizing the romanticist drive of the maestro tradition is vital. Not only did the maestro tradition ground musical leadership – characterized as conducting – within one

musical tradition – but it also identified it with a particular set of characteristics: white, middle-class, able-bodied, male. Embodying the maestro figure in such a way has (historically) sought not to allow space for women or others outside the demographic it focused upon, including people of color, those of lower socio-economic class, or differently abled people. The long shadow of romanticism has been particularly hard to dispel when it comes to considerations of musical leadership.

Despite both the conscious efforts which male conductors took to center themselves upon the podium and the heavily masculinized rhetoric which was developed to bolster their position there, women have been active as conductors for centuries, although this tradition has (until recently) often been hidden from mainstream historiographical narratives. All-women orchestras were a particularly vibrant feature of nineteenth and earlier twentieth-century concert life. Josephine Amann-Weinlich founded the Wiener Damenorchester in Vienna in 1868, whilst the Los Angeles Women's Orchestra was established in 1893. Scores of similar all-women orchestras were founded in Europe and North America between the later nineteenth century and World War Two. These provided employment for the many professional women instrumentalists who struggled (with some exceptions) to be accepted into male orchestras and provided directing opportunities for women conductors, who often found it easier to find work with all-women orchestras. The situation changed when the military conscription of World War Two opened desks for women instrumentalists within the previously all-male orchestras, and very few all-women orchestras survived. Beyond some notable exceptions, such as Nadia Boulanger and Veronica Dudarowa, opportunities for women conductors in the mid-twentieth century were few (Hamer 2021: 65–71). This has changed since the later twentieth century, when women conductors started to gain greater acceptance. Now women such as Marin Alsop, Xian Zhang and Dalia Stasevska, to name but a few, are pursing international careers and recognized amongst the most successful within the profession.

The strength of the maestro tradition as embodied by both male conductors and the heavily masculinized rhetoric of the maestro-writing tradition did, historically, make it difficult for women conductors to be accepted. Manifestations of this ranged from hostile or sexualized reviews, through discipline issues with male performers, to difficulties finding work. Opera and choral direction have often been an exception, as women such as Sarah Caldwell, Sian Edwards and Simone Young have pursued high-profile careers in these fields. J. Michele Edwards (2003: 233) has opined that this may be because "the conductor works in the pit rather than in the spotlight". The all-women mentorship and training schemes, such as Alsop's Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship in the US and Alice Farnham's Women Conductors Program in the UK, which have developed in recent years to support aspiring women conductors have had a tremendous positive impact (Hamer 2019: 37–8). Women conductors are now emerging as leaders of orchestras in much greater numbers.

However, within classical music such a strong prevailing association between conducting and musical leadership, and such a strong equivalence between the role of conductor and the male maestro figure can at times feel hard to see beyond. The deep identification of the figure of the conductor with the white, male body belies both the historical and the present-day reality of the conducting profession, which is much more diverse. Musical leadership itself, both within and beyond classical music, encompasses a

much broader set of activities and agencies than purely musical direction. Finally, unlike conducting – which has typically been a solitary pursuit – musical leadership conceived more broadly can incorporate both collective, as well as individual, leadership.

WMLON: Impetuses behind the Founding of the Women's Musical Leadership Online Network

The Women's Musical Leadership Online Network (WMLON) was initially founded by the authors in 2019: Women's Musical Leadership Online Network (WMLON) | Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (open.ac.uk). WMLON was established – originally as WMLOP (the Women's Musical Leadership Online Project) – following the first International Conference on Women in/and Musical Leadership (held in London, 7–9 March 2019) and speaks in partnership with *The Routledge Companion to Women and Musical Leadership: The Nineteenth Century and Beyond*, co-edited by the authors. WMLOP was initially funded by The Open University for a six-month period between January and July 2021. This pilot project enabled the authors, along with Research Collaborator Dr Laura Watson (Maynooth University) and Research Assistant Ann Grindley (The Open University), to organize two exploratory online workshops: "Women Leaders within the Contemporary Music Industries" (8 March 2021) and "Women leading Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Music Education and the Music Industries" (4 June 2021). The awarding of a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) network grant allowed the development from WMLOP to WMLON. WMLON ran from January 2022 to November 2023. The research team was joined by Gabriella Di Laccio, founder and curator of the Donne Women in Music Foundation. WMLON organized five online workshops exploring different aspects of women's musical leadership, focused upon "Women Leaders within the Classical Music Industries"; "Women leading Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Music Education"; "Collectives and Activists: Women leading Change in Music"; "Women Leaders within the Popular Music Industries"; and "Women leading Change in Music Broadcast and Journalism". Each event presented a panel discussion, which brought together a diverse range of women musical leaders and a practical workshop, led by an activist for change towards greater gender equity within the music industries/education. For example, the "Women Leaders within the Classical Music Industries" workshop, held on 25 March 2022, brought together a panel comprising Diana Ambache, Ella Jarman-Pinto, Deborah Keyser and Karen Power, and the afternoon workshop was facilitated by Gabriella Di Laccio. WMLON concluded with the Second International Conference on Women's Musical Leadership, and also offered a mentorship scheme for early career women musicians, music industry professionals and scholars.

New Wave Feminism in the Music Industries

There have been many waves of feminism, and depending on the research or theory the ways in which these are titled change: broadly, the first wave of feminism concerned voting and suffrage, up to the 1960s; the second wave was much more focused on repro-

ductive rights and equality with some focus on equal pay, from the 1960s to 1990s; the third wave then looked to the patriarchy and to legal reforms and to gender mainstreaming, in institutions especially; and since, a fourth wave focused on class, conflict, family violence and the intersectionalities of race, class, faith, sexuality and gender. Intersectionality is a term originated from Kimberlé Crenshaw (2014) in her recognition that her lived experience was different to the dominating narrative of former feminist discourse and which has been developed much in discussions of race, gender, faith, sexuality and so on. A focus on equality is now outdated – it has become clear that experiences are different depending on our demographic criteria, as such equity is the word to focus on – we must look to giving equitable access and opportunity. As such, WMLON's aims recognize an intersectional approach to considering gender in the music industries, in that a focus on gender alone cannot resolve discrimination which targets race, class, sexuality, faith, and other characteristics. Feminism therefore can be too limited by its link to gender. The intersectional dimension must be recognized, and applied in the work we do together to make change. Intersectionality ensures we consider positionality and these issues as interconnected rather than as silos – the hope then is for better understanding via exploration which speaks across any perceived barriers. So, we consider also the barriers not only to women, but also those barriers experienced in terms of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ableism, faith among others. It is perhaps no bad thing, that, as Judith Butler (1990: 2) asserted, "woman is no longer understood in stable abiding terms". There is a will for leadership amongst women, but that appetite is often limited due to the many barriers which are actual and perceived. By speaking of women in the broadest sense (fully inclusive of transgender women), and by focusing on the intersectional context, we aim to support discussion of the different forms of leadership, the different ways in which training might take place, and the varied ways in which we can develop a peer- and co-mentoring scheme to facilitate individual development and opportunity of individual experiences. As Rhode (2017: 33) identified in exploring women and leadership in business, law and education, "women need advocates, not simply advisors".

This remains a concern. As Donne Women in Music has shown in their recent reports exploring the lack of representation in concert programming (2021 and 2022), programming of classical concerts remains largely male, white and privileged. Similar research data has led to strategies such as Keychange 50:50 supported by the PRS Foundation which seeks a gender balance in concerts/festivals by 2022 (the year we launched WMLON). There is in various parts of the music industries, and beyond, a leaky pipeline: "The higher you go" as Wangari Maathai noted, "the fewer women there are" (Maathai quoted in Adichie 2014: 17). In her book exploring feminism in punk, Vivien Goldman (2019: 11) also asserts that: "Women still have no controlling say in the multinational music industry for which we earn so much". It is notable that these claims of a lack of leadership representation in music span all forms of music industries including classical, pop, world and folk. In looking to political leadership, Lisa Pace Vetter (2010: 3) observes that: "Women find themselves torn between the need to take charge and exercise leadership, […] and the desire to work collaboratively with others". In the same collection of essays as Vetter, Lumsden (2010: 917) aligns the changing societal norms with the opportunities and achievements of women in the music industries, which reasserts that societal enculturation informs access, opportunities and achievements: "women have made significant

strides in Western Art music since 1800, encouraged by the changing role of women in society as a whole". Likewise, Goldman's (2019: 21) assessment of the changes in punk also align the musical developments to "a pivotal time for societal change".

The aim of our work is to inform change to ensure a wider range of voices can be represented at all levels, and so to support the training and experience, of women and others, to ensure different voices can aspire and attain positions in leadership. In referring to feminism at all, we are aware that this network then has to acknowledge that we must "face things squarely" (Sinclair 2014: 17), in ensuring to address and be aware of how women have had limited access to various parts of the music industries in a way that is systematized according to socialized practices: for example, that women who do make leadership roles will receive more negative responses than men, simply due to the perceived power and gender imbalances, and to recognize that "public platforms of leadership are often used, consciously and unconsciously, to advance this [sexist] agenda" (Sinclair 2014: 17).

Some of the urgencies of previous forms of feminist activity have died down, though not everywhere, indeed, lack of access to political and employment rights or to adequate healthcare or opportunities for education remain a reality for many women across the world, and still today American women are currently finding their rights are under attack, whilst similarly Northern Irish women face extremely restricted access to abortion. Two decades into the twenty-first century, there remain firsts for women, such as Alsop conducing the Last Night of the Proms in 2013. In musical circles, women are still struggling to achieve fair representation as conductors, as composers within concert programming, as singer/songwriters within festivals and more. Though women are well represented as music teachers, and in some forms of educational leadership, there are fewer women AR, managers, producers, songwriters and other senior figures (Hamer and Minors 2023).

Overview of Trends

The concept of leadership, in its broadest sense, has referred to leadership research and leadership models which are male, white, Western and assert often military metaphors (Sinclair 2014: 20). This is a restrictive view grounded in patriarchal, colonial language and terms. In her book, *We Should All Be Feminists*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014: 30) asserts that: "We internalize ideas from our socialization", which is a useful reminder that we understand our situation via our institutionalization, within working environments, and so within the music industries, the majority representation of male leadership has informed our understanding of that industry and what that industry can be. But in following Adichie's (2014: 38) call for us to reassess these norms, and to ensure we recognize the continued need for a feminist perspective to call for change, she outlines what she has been doing, that is a suggestion to us all: "to unlearn lessons of gender […] internalized while growing up". Joining an institution brings with it an induction process, which often includes an enculturation into an institution. Following an adaptive leadership approach though would encourage understanding of the institution, its practices, procedures and policies, but it would also ensure that a colleague and leader remains

open to new possibilities, new ways of doing things and therefore open to and critical of their own biases, in a way which is continually reflective, with check-ins for themselves to consider how their leadership practices impact those within their teams. This notion of reflective leadership within an adaptive approach is one which is encouraged as part of Aurora (a women's leadership training programme open to women working within higher education in the UK and Ireland), run by AdvanceHE. Though we recognize that mentoring schemes can only go so far, and in fact women need to be given opportunities to experience new roles, and enabled to develop, being able to demonstrate potential and not only proof of what has previously been done (Bishop 2022). These qualities of adaptive leadership have been identified in leadership research previously as those qualities most often associated with being a woman, in that a woman stereotypically nurtures, supports, encourages: "characteristics associated with women's leadership include good conflict management and interpersonal skills, being excellent listeners and showing tolerance and empathy" (Rey 2005: 5) This is limited, stereotypical and based on a metaphor and assumption of woman as mother, wife, as a carer and in a role in the home. Perhaps therefore so many assume that women would, as Rey notes, "lead from behind" (Rey 2005: 5).

Models of Leadership

Is women's leadership style different? It seems that it is, but is this actual, in practice, or is it only a stereotypical view we expect, or is it a learned experience from societal pressures? Research by Rhode (2017) and others cited here does show there are differences, and also that there is no equity in many areas leading to leadership, nor in terms of access, training, sustained career support and opportunities offered to individuals. Few women reach the senior management positions in the music industries. This has many reasons behind it – lack of representation, lack of role models, discrimination, but also societal impacts (which impact us from birth) of the imbalance in caring and parenting predominantly falling to women. But if there is a lack of support, then we need to recognize, as Rey (2005: 6) claims, that: "In hierarchical society, equality of opportunity rarely translates into women having an equal chance". What is called for is equity of opportunity and experience. Different paths are taken by people depending on their prior experiences, so the same training is not necessarily fairly applied, accessed or understood. If equity refers to a process whereby there is fairness of access, support and opportunity, resulting in a more balanced representation through impartial and inclusive recruitment and promotion strategies, then an equitable strategy and approach enables organizations, and here the music industries in particular, to suitably invest in training needs of specific groups, tailored to women, and marginalized and under-represented groups, of all kinds. If as Rey (2005: 6) and other have proposed, the different societal experience and socialization impact our opportunities then we need to ensure that "the path [women] take might be different from that taken by men".

Literature on leadership assumes and asserts that it can be taught (Rey 2005: 4), but that assumes equal access to these opportunities. It has not often tackled the fact that being given opportunities of experience means some learning through applied experi-

ence in non-formal training sessions, and that applied experience boosts confidence and can help generate resilience. Indeed, Robin James's (2015) book on pop music and feminism focusses on resilience as a way to further develop women's presence and a neoliberal approach to musical creativity. At present in the UK and Ireland there are burgeoning training programs to help diversify leadership and to find equitable ways to ensure experiences afforded some throughout their education experience is now afforded to all, to readdress the balance; the Aurora Leadership program aims "to take positive action to address the under-representation of women in leadership positions in the sector" (2022). Higher Education Charter Marks in the UK, such as Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter, ensure that institutions create action plans to mobilize change, and therefore support these action plans with additional training in-house. But that does not in fact help those yet to join the career networks to access such experiences and understanding: this is one of the many reasons why WMLON is open to all and free of charge, run online, to ensure the removal of travel, the need for budget and the need to be within an institution, to engage those with aspirations, those hoping to have an open dialogue about what might be done and those simply looking for role models or for ideas.

Leadership is a position of power, but a position not the same as "management" in the traditional sense of imposing activities, but one whereby someone can develop their influence, to facilitate others, to support, to engender trust and respect, to share values, to co-create a shared ethos and philosophy, to co-construct and develop an industry/company together. As such the emphasis can be on the process of leadership; how leaders perform in their role, working with their colleagues, rather than, a leader being synonymous with management and perhaps stereotypes of control. Adaptive leadership models are required to ensure that effective leadership is developed (Sinclair 2014: 19). Indeed, Susan Carroll's seminal work on political leadership defines an effective leader in similar terms to that of a coach or mentor: "one who empowers others to act in their own interests" not those imposed, but those they share with a team (Carroll 1984: 142).

In redefining leadership models and seeking to explore what women's leadership has been and might be, we focus on processes of leadership: we seek to support the empowerment of individuals, we seek to develop new relationships within our industry via supporting the field with workshops with time for sharing experiences and talking through the barriers that have been experienced and a mentoring scheme whereby opportunities for both mentor and mentee are advertised openly to the wider sector.

But what is optimal leadership? Though this will have many answers, depending on the situation, it is worth aspiring to achieve this. Transformational adaptive leadership seems to be one such way forward whereby we in the music industries co-create a new collective team ethos in our specific institutions. This means freelancers, which are the majority of our industry, need to be able to do this within sector unions as well. Indeed, recent work by Rhode (2017: 5) asserts that this approach is a women's approach to leadership: "Women tend to use a transformational style because it relies on skills associated with women, and because more autocratic approaches are viewed as less attractive in women than in men". Women's musical leadership therefore explores the particular practices women have taken which are often different, whether it be nurturing and facilitating activities, or in terms of leading from the front as in advocacy and activism, as well as leading from behind, in the fields of education (see Hamer and Minors 2023). Hamer's

and Minors's volume on women's musical leadership is the first in the field to explore the diverse range of practices across history, in conducting, in the music industries, within education, as well as activism and advocacy.

Focus on the individual is necessary to support confidence building, resilience development and support for access to the industries in the first place. To diversify leadership, to ensure a fair representation of voices at all levels, requires distributed leadership.

Interventions and Intersectionalities: Networks, Collectives, Grassroots

It is no surprise that in 2022 the focus for International Women's Day was #BreakingtheBias. WMLON shares the definition of leadership with Keohane's (2020: 236) work on women and power in leadership: "Leaders define or clarify goals for a group of individuals and bring together the energies of members of that group to pursue those goals". We are stepping forward to make change due to our collective experiences and those we have witnessed and researched. A call to arms (to borrow military metaphors) comes too from Goldman (2019: 53): "We must make a place in a market manipulated to pander to the cliched male gaze". Her model for change is to "break" current practice (similar to the 2022 International Women's Day theme), to "construct" new methods, to "position" women in a new way (2019: 53). Thereby, feminism, women's work in music, and our network speak to the ethos of punk, and we borrow Goldman's (2019: 183) assertive words to iterate this: "Making things happen wherever you are, cleverly circumventing obstacles based on your class, gender, race-that is also punk's heartbeat".

WMLON is not the only network/collective seeking to achieve change. *The Routledge Companion to Women and Musical Leadership: The Nineteenth Century and Beyond* co-edited by the present authors, includes Part 6, dedicated to "Advocacy: Collectives, and Grass-Roots Activism", which covers plenty of such examples. Notable is the work of Sounding the Feminist in Ireland, who seek to "promot[e] and publicis[e] the creative work of female musicians". Coming together to share experiences, Gender Relations in New Music (GRiNM) and the Yorkshire Sound Women Network (YSWN) share their processes of activism and organizational change through creating and affording experiences for women in training and in live events, there are far too many to list here in fact.

WMLON is aspiring to "do better", to encourage equitable access, equitable opportunity, and equitable support for all, to ensure that, as Adichie (2014: 48) closes her book: "*All* of us […] must do better". As educators, advocates, musicians and authors, WMLON is continuing the work of many prior feminists in this wave by not limiting the approach to complaining, or describing the problems and limitations faced, but by trying to foster change through mentorship, education, dialogue, in a way in which we recognize and harness the intersectionality of our identities, which we aspire to take beyond some historical forms of feminism, which as noted by Becky Thompson (2002: 336–60) in her research on multiracial feminism, has often been largely white and Western. In moving forward with our network, we seek to rephrase the 1972 call from the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* and Simone de Beauvoir's response to this call for equity (Walters 2005: 98–9), in taking up the baton ourselves into our own hands to work towards ensuring we move

beyond equality toward an equitable approach to ensuring access, training, support and inclusion for all musicians, to ensuring an equitable destiny for the music industries.

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Women in Music: Possibilities and Responsibilities of Cultural Management and Policy[1]

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Abstract: *Previous global research on the participation and share of women in music of the last three decades indicates a wide spectrum of causes and dimensions of inequality and a more difficult professional development path for them, in line with patriarchal social ideas, but also prejudices and stereotypes about youth. Young women in the music scene of Southeastern Europe are treated differently in comparison to their male and older counterparts, while their underrepresentation is often explained by mobilizing the discourses stressing individuality and psychological causes. In contrast to that, this chapter aims to discuss the reach and possibilities of cultural management and policies to influence gender and age equality within the cultural scene in Serbia and Southeastern Europe, as well as to contribute to a more extensive participation of women and youth in cultural production and decision making. This chapter presents the results of the experiment conducted in April and June 2022 when two concerts of young female musicians were conceptualized and organized in Belgrade in the framework of "feminist music management", based on the interviews and focus groups with female musicians of younger generations in Serbia and the region of Southeastern Europe throughout 2021 in both physical and virtual space. The research also comprises the analysis of several important instruments of national cultural policy in Serbia in 2021.*

Keywords: *cultural diversity, cultural rights, gender equality, participation, feminist music management.*

Some of the most important notions of contemporary cultural management and policy are related to improving cultural diversity, cultural rights and democracy, as well as inclusion, accessibility, participation and sustainability. Participation has been one of the key terms in cultural management and policy for decades, but still many stakeholders are satisfied with merely informing the public about the events, and attracting existing

1 This chapter is based on the research conducted through the project Female leadership in music (FLIM), grant no. 6066876, supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, PROMIS program.

audiences more often, rather than reaching out to people who are not already taking part (Jancovich 2015).

As stated by Jordi Balta Portoles and Milena Dragicevic Sesic, the protection of cultural rights still has a long way to go globally, regarding active participation in policy design and evaluation, recognition of obstacles that prevent it, as well as equal participation of all disadvantaged groups. Per these authors, some of the tools available for the implementation of the protection of cultural rights are creating forums for participation in decision-making and management, the decentralization of cultural resources and the identification of obstacles and factors which hinder participation in cultural life (2017: 170), and this position was inspiring for the development of this chapter. One of the roles cultural policy can play towards sustainable development is to safeguard and sustain cultural practices and rights (Duxbury, Kangas, De Beukelaer 2017), while sustainable development deals, in culture as in other fields, with the notion of intergenerational and intragenerational equity as well as diversity (Throsby 2017).

This chapter is focused on gender and age equality as part of the mentioned conceptual web of participation, diversity and cultural rights. Gender inequality, still present in the cultural sector globally, and proven, both in unequal pay between men and women in the artistic and cultural sector, as well as in a lack of visibility and voice of women, leads to "societies missing out on talent – in quality and quantity – and lacking a richer diversity of cultural content and forms of artistic expressions" (German Commision for UNESCO 2020: 2). This topic is particularly significant since cultural expressions strongly influence perceptions about gender identities and gender relations (ivi: 3). The German Commission for UNESCO articulates issues of equality two ways: as of *creative equality*, meaning access and participation, and *creative power,* that is, decision-making positions (ivi: 4).

Research has also shown the interrelation between gender stereotyping and inequalities, and barriers, discourses and subtle discrimination related to youth (Adamović et al. 2014). This is not to claim that older women do not face discrimination: on the contrary – research has also shown a strong connection between misogyny and ageism in the wider society (Jankovic 2019), or in music, as in the case of Madonna for example (Mitić 2015) but since this chapter has different focus, this topic has to be put aside.

Existing Research on Age- and Gender (In)Equality in Cultural Life and Policy

A study by Leila Jancovich (2015) showed "a clear disparity in perceptions between those who have engaged in participatory decision-making practices and those who have not. The greatest resistance to the concept exists where there is least experience of it in operation" (ivi: 12). An experiment on youth participation in the [mock] arts budgeting in the Arts Council England's North East regional office showed that there is interest among youth to take part in such processes: "The decisions were said to have been treated with the utmost care and seriousness by those taking part and 'if managed well, it could be dealt with on a much broader level' (Arts Council England staff)" (ivi: 11). Nevertheless, this was unfortunately not introduced elsewhere, nor continued. Even with the knowledge on information and cultural needs and practices of youth, and the resources in-

vested in producing the new (digital) channels for including audiences and improving relationships with communities, cultural institutions and stakeholders in Serbia also do not use these platforms to engage youth and do not focus on this group (Nikolić and Ilčić 2021).

On the other side, the national study on women in public cultural institutions in Serbia (Center for Study in Cultural Development of Serbia 2017) shows women constitute the majority of the workforce in this field in Serbia (58.9% compared to 41.1% of men). The study partially explains this figure by the lack of interest of men to work in the field of culture, which is caused by the poor financial conditions in this sector and poor status of the related professions (ivi: 101). Women are in leadership roles (general managers, members of the governing boards, members of the supervisory boards) mostly on the local level (45.6%), while they lead provincial or national institutions more rarely (around 30%) (ivi: 101–102). Female colleagues in the public cultural sector in Serbia believe the reason behind that is that men have more time for politics, they are more of team-players than women, and also that women themselves are not interested in those positions – 73% would not accept these positions even if offered (ivi: 102). Previous research on young female artists on social media platforms by one of the coauthors of this chapter confirms the self-perceived lack of capacity for self-promotion (Nikolić 2020), as well as low self-efficacy among young female jazz musician in the region (Jovićević and Nikolić 2022).

Even though women in public cultural institutions expect much harsher scrutiny and treatment from colleagues, in line with what they already face (Center for Study in Cultural Development of Serbia 2017), they refused to share any possible experience of gender discrimination with researchers, and at the same time explained that they know how to fight and do not allow to be discriminated (ivi: 70). This contradictory position puts responsibility for possible discrimination or its consequences in the hands of a woman herself, and similar is often showed in the interviews with female musicians in the region of Southeastern Europe (Nikolić 2016 and 2017). The example of women in tourism and events industry in the UK also proved "the riskiness of acknowledging gender inequality in the workplace for women. […] [t]heir eagerness to ensure that men would not feel 'left out', indicates insecurity in relation to their own position as women in masculinist organizations, and the risks of pointing out their femaleness for their own career progression" (Dashper 2019: 554).

Discrimination is nevertheless systematic and institutions bear responsibilities to address it and confront it proactively. In 2021, a gender sensitive analysis of the budget of the Serbian Ministry of Culture was conducted, rooted in the Law on Budget (Zakon o budžetskom sistemu, "Službeni glasnik" 149/2020) which proscribes that "every public institution should make a conscious and directed effort to dissolve negative gender stereotypes and to strengthen gender equality and non-discrimination through their work and through open calls for support to other stakeholders" (translation by the authors) (Swedish Agency for International Development and Cooperation SIDA 2021: 48). It showed, among other, that while women are 2/3 of the employees, there are only 14 female leaders in the 34 national institutions (ivi: 45), as well as that funds for supporting cultural production by and for marginalized groups were reduced by 7% in 2020 (year of Covid19) (ivi: 40). This report relates the dominance of women in the workforce with the ever shrinking resources in the field with the working conditions:

> Working in culture, arts and creative industries is characterized by the intersection of several aggravating factors such as non-formal work, the importance of networking and self-promotion, project-based funding, unstable jobs and highly competitive relations, followed by gender stereotypes (translation by the author) (ivi: 50).

The study underlined that neither "gender neutral" cultural policies nor measures exist and pointed out the necessity of introducing gender sensitive statistics and financial monitoring in the cultural sector, increasing participation of women in decision making and leadership positions, bettering access to resources and reducing the pay gap, fighting against sexual harassment in arts, as well as improving gender relations and stereotypes through cultural production (ivi: 48–51).

Selma Banić and Nina Gojić showed on the example of the Croatian city of Rijeka that over one third of female artists were exposed to mobbing in a work situation, "while ethics commissions, professional associations, and trade unions failed to be efficient allies" (2018: 45). Most of the respondents in that research experienced discrimination based on their gender or gender identification, such as "sexist remarks, insults, disparagement, segregation, being paid less than their male counterparts, subordination to their male colleagues, exclusion from (collective) decision making, exposure to (public) criticism, and inability to get jobs" (ivi: 58–59). Another relevant study in Croatia showed the dynamics of unpaid, underpaid and self-exploiting labor among women in creative industries, its necessity perceived as a choice, as well as the (lack of) appreciation and social value it receives (Barada and Primorac 2014 and 2018). This is especially interesting since female cultural professionals are often engaged in artistic programs and projects empowering other marginalized groups, such as migrants and asylum seekers (Nikolić 2019), working pro bono, for low honoraria and for the benefit of the oppressed communities.

According to the current national research that has included the public, private and independent sector in Serbia (Association of ICCS, in preparation, expected date Dec. 2022), throughout their education almost two thirds of the female artists faced lascivious and unwanted comments, and almost one third unwanted touches; 10% reported that they experienced sexual assault and violence and 6.5% sexual extortion. During their professional career, the percentage of those exposed to lascivious and unwanted comments and sexual extortion is even higher, while unwanted touch and sexual assault is slightly less occurring. It is particularly alarming that more than two thirds of the female cultural professionals in Serbia felt discriminated against in their professional environment as women, and more than 80% believes women are somewhat discriminated against in the field of culture, arts and creative industries in Serbia, with 25% of them expressing that as a fact.

Finally, although women account for the half or more of the total working force in the artistic and cultural field of many countries, the music sector is among those where inequalities also persist in rich countries such as Australia, Germany and Denmark (UNESCO 2019: 80). Even if the numbers of practitioners in the field is rather balanced, other issues exist such as income inequality, inequality in decision-making, gender portrayal, and sexual harassment and personal safety (ivi: 81).

Co-editor of this book and lead researcher of the project "Female Leadership in Music" Iva Nenić described the promising increase of the number of female musicians in the alternative music scene in Serbia and the region (2015). At the same time, she has pointed out the persistence of specific experiences of female instrumentalists, characterized by discontinuity with their predecessors, the skepticism they face regarding their capabilities, talent and skills, the constant reminding of their sex and pointing out their biological characteristic, double standards in comparisons to their male colleagues, and the tiring need to constantly prove their worth, all rooted in the same discriminatory pattern visible in the traditional music practices in the region from the middle age, the period of romanticism and later (Nenic 2019). Even though there are no clear restrictions and bans, women in music do still face implicit and ever present marginalization.

In line with the mentioned research results, during the past years, but primarily during 2021, we collected significant data on the experiences, challenges, obstacles and strategies of young women active in the field of the alternative music genres of rock, jazz, metal etc. in Serbia and the region of Southeastern Europe. In her previous independent and co-authored works, Nikolić researched experiences of inequality of primarily young women in the national music scene in Serbia and the region (Jovićević and Nikolić 2022; Nenić and Nikolić 2022; Nikolić and Gubaš 2013; Nikolić 2016, 2017, 2020). Those researches were conducted through individual and group interviews, analysis of media articles and appearances, as well as statistical data on the representation and participation of women in the relevant music festivals in Serbia and the region, on radio and television stations and programs devoted to alternative and indie music.

The interviews conducted with female musicians have indicated that the patriarchal characteristics of the regional music sector, both in terms of sexism and adultism, are continuously present in the Southeastern European societies in general. They have also indicated the subtle, but still hostile remarks, prejudice-based behaviors and treatment of young women in music, both in the educational and the performing context, the strongly assumed and ever mentioned incompatibility between private and family life, and the whole list of strategies implemented by young female musicians in order to overcome these gendered and age related obstacles. Per interviews, benevolent sexism is a common experience, defined as a seemingly flattering treatment, that is actually based in promoting stereotypes and traditional gender roles, limiting female behavior that is acceptable and positively valued, thus perceiving and framing women as inferior, week and less competent (Todorović 2013: 8–17). Female jazz instrumentalists in the region also face social isolation, incompatibility with social expectations, double marginalization – among male colleagues as well as within the international jazz scene and the mainstream discourse that the responsibility for inequality is on themselves; but they also emphasize the importance of the role models, female solidarity, cooperation, and networking (Jovićević 2022). The following segment digs deeper in some possibilities of the realization of the latter ideas and values in practice.

A Model of Feminist Music Management – Notes from the Conducted Experiment

Within the research project "Female Leadership in Music", funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia and conducted by the team of researchers from the Faculty of Music and Faculty of Dramatic Arts of the University of Arts in Belgrade, a concert was planned as one of the action-based research activities. One of the coauthors of this chapter, Tatjana Nikolić was a member of the initial team of FLIM research, and she proposed to Katarina Mitić Minić a collaboration around producing a concert together. Thus the project "Female Leadership in Music" joined forces with the Young Women's Collective FEMIX where Katharina is professionally engaged and where a series of concerts was to be organized during spring 2022. During the preparations, Tatjana took more the role of a researcher and evaluator, while Katarina took the role of a producer and the promoter, although the efforts were joined and both coauthors were engaged in different tasks.

It was agreed among the members of the research team that, based on the inputs collected through interviews, focus groups and observations conducted up to that moment, as well as theoretical research of female leadership, practices, collaborations, visibility and labor in music, a process of organization and realization of a concert was to be designed, that would adhere to the hypothetic notion of *feminist music management*, a concept we aimed to develop and explore. As a start this meant to produce a concert in a way to meet the needs and specificities of female work in music, and to prevent, reduce and mitigate the effects of the current patriarchal character of the music scene in Southeastern Europe as much as possible.

The first goal was to give a clear counter-argumentation to the constant sexist excuse of the negligent music editors, publishers and bookers "there are no women in popular music". In this regard, the selection of the songs for the unique free-to-distribute CD compilation promoting new emerging local musical acts was done through an open call. The selection was done in an anonymous way to prevent the conflict of interest, as well as through a group decision. The group consisted of four female musicians and music editors, with an aim to prevent the autocracy of one person selecting, all too often seen in the conventional, patriarchal led processes. In curating, we made sure to be understanding of the poor quality of the recordings sent as a part of a selection process, and to offer our support if needed, knowing that sometimes, when aiming for quality, the lack of resources and opportunities is the obstacle for the underrepresented groups in every profession. We aimed to also offer feedback to those who saw it as helpful and relevant.

The first, smaller one and less ambitious concert was organized on the 16th April 2022 in the Cultural Center "Parobrod" in Belgrade, Serbia, gathering four female musicians of younger generation alone or with accompaniment, some of them for the first time on stage. The cozy venue designed with *Tiny Desk* in mind (an extremely popular video series of intimate live concerts hosted by American National Public Radio Music at the desk of the presenter and musician Bob Boilen in Washington DC), was full with a little over 100 enthusiastic visitors.

Six weeks later, on the 4th June 2022, we organized another concert in one of the most important and technically best equipped venues in our town, the Youth Center Belgrade. This concert gathered 5 acts in front of 200 people. Those were mostly bands with female

leadership, combining completely unknown names with larger, already established female musicians and bands.

In selecting the acts for the concerts, the team decided to give significant space, resources and platform to the less known and younger female musicians and take that risk. We aimed to establish a safer space with a well-intending circle of colleagues, staff and audience, while developing a connection for them with one of the most well-known and best technically equipped venues in town. We set the tone of the collaboration so that it is okay to make mistakes, to experiment, innovate and be authentic, trying to reduce the pressure for perfection and the burden of gender representation in these female musicians. At the same time, our PR and communications were designed to avoid common stereotyping, sexualization and objectification when promoting female musicians, both in language, narratives and visual images. The organizing team got in touch with the relevant media and the most important music portals to ensure the presence of their journalists at the events, as well as put additional effort into publishing the reviews of the concerts. Some of these musicians performed in front of the audience for the first time at these concerts, and that was an additional reason to provide the greatest support in terms of promotion.

We made sure the musicians, although young and in a nonprofit organizational context, were adequately paid for their work, without the need for them to negotiate or bargain. Finances were transparent, equal and dignified. We also paid attention to whom we are engaging as production staff and made sure that female professionals are engaged for all positions possible. When men were recruited, there was no option for collaborating with colleagues who are known for sexist or violent behavior and those recruited were previously made aware of the values and expectations in terms of treatment of the female musicians. Jancovich (2015) argues that in order for true change to happen and the cultural sector to become truly participatory, a redistribution of funding is required, both to reduce the power of the existing elite and to widen the range of the voices involved. This again supported the idea of the model to invest all the financial means at the disposal to female participants – and associates.

The conversation with the performers was organized in order to communicate the values behind the process and the additional support they can expect from the organizing team. Among those values that we communicated and aimed to practice, were solidarity, mutual support, and avoiding competing and vanity. We discussed the ideas for solving possible problems in terms of their safety, privacy, inadequate audience or colleagues' behavior and made sure they were consulted as performers in different relevant aspects, in order for them to participate in decision making about their concerts.

We offered our knowledge and skills as an additional resource to them in their preparation for the concert and made sure that any expense that was not initially foreseen, but was a possible burden for them being women in the music industry, was covered by the organizers. We talked about making the venue welcoming, safer and adequate. Eventually, we conducted the evaluation to make sure we hear the feedback from the performers, as well as to learn and improve our approach for the next similar occasions.

In all this, it was important to balance the burden of the musicians with the one of the organizers, also being young women in the music industry wearing several hats – working in not ideal conditions and also confronting the patriarchal, sexist and infan-

tilizing treatment from stakeholders in our own work. This was the most difficult part – aiming for high standards in supporting the musicians, while preventing the burnout and the overstress in the members of the management and production staff. This topic is also something to be discussed in the further developing of the conceptual approach to feminist music management.

Lessons Learnt from the Experiment

Based on desk research, as well as according to empirical findings through individual and group interviews, mapping the festivals and music institutions and monitoring the media content and narratives, we advocate for introducing some of the previously described frameworks and tools in order to construct or enhance more sustainable, just, equal and female- and youth-friendly music and cultural scene and industry, through cultural management and policies focused on diversity and equality and based on alternative approaches to leadership.

This approach in cultural management puts emphasis on community and relationships building, rather than profit, which is why it is closer and more possible in the public and nonprofit fields, but also among actors in the private sector which are aiming to position themselves as progressive. It is also based on an approach to leadership (in music management) that reaches beyond traditional notions of leadership, commonly connected to men, hierarchy, authority and strong figures in power. Alternative approaches recognized in female leadership in music stand for pluralism of leadership styles and practices, including intragroup, community and intercultural leadership, leadership "out of necessity", collective, "generous" and transformative leadership (Nenić and Nikolić 2022).

A female-friendly cultural management has an active approach to fighting sexism, prejudice and stereotypes based on gender. Traditionally, cultural institutions and other actors defined their policies as neutral and merit based but actually gender and age equality are only achievable through proactive affirmative action. Those actions, additionally, need to recognize the diversity and pluralism of female and young existences and identities, instead of adopting an essentialist approach that is considering all women, or all young people the same, with the same needs, obstacles and ambitions.

One, but not the only way of conceptualizing the "female" and "young" can be in relation to bodies – in terms of shapes, strengths, sizes, but also of functions, such as growing, menstruating, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and other sexual and reproductive notions. Also, these approaches should take into account safety, privacy and dignity, with an active approach to avoid sexualization and objectification, in general and specifically for young people and women, which are the most exposed. Language should be inclusive and reflect diverse identities while ensuring a relevant and wide spectrum of role models and visibility and the representation of the marginalized social groups in all activities.

Going back to sustainability in cultural management discussed at the beginning of the chapter, sustainable practices care about the existing resources, aiming to make no damage while collecting benefits. Sustainable practices here would mean those that prevent the burnout of musicians and other professionals, those who protect the balance

between work and life – specially having in mind the particularities of female creative work and its re-domestication as described by Barada and Primorac (2018), as well as those who affirm diversity of practices, expressions and identities.

Implications for Cultural Policies

In terms of women's access to leadership roles and career opportunities, research shows that transforming the "culture of bias" requires adequate policies and awareness-raising, both in terms of structures, attitudes and practices. The report by the Hertie School of Governance (2017: 111) shows that it is necessary and effective to support legislative action, but also the development of support structures for self-regulation, and to make alliances among different stakeholders. Some female musicians think that policies, systemic change and encouragement coming from institutions and organizations could gradually improve and compensate for, for example, a lack of self-efficacy they witness in collaboration with other female musicians (Nenić and Nikolić 2022). At the same time, Leila Jancovich and David Stevenson (2021) showed that cultural participation policies can be improved by honesty and critical self-reflection among the decision makers and acknowledging their weak points and failures.

In the case of Serbia, based on the 2017 research results, the Center for Study in Cultural Development advised that, when defining measures of cultural policy, the Ministry of Culture and other decision makers should introduce principles of gender equality in all strategic documents, initiate open calls in order to particularly support female creators and experts, introduce awards entitled to female authors as well as awards for female authors and experts, and support public programs in the field of gender equality (2017: 105).

One opportunity to do so was the Strategy for Cultural Development of the Republic of Serbia, which was adopted by the Government in February 2020, but still in August 2022 at the moment of writing this chapter not ratified by the Assembly. In this document, written for the period from 2020 to 2029, the lack of participation of younger generations in cultural production was connected to the poor working conditions and social security and status of the artists (ivi: 19), especially in smaller towns and outside of big centers (ivi: 23). Children and youth were seen as future beneficiaries of the audience development programs, and it is quoted that 81% of youth feels insufficiently included in cultural production. In the Strategy, this is a part of the argument for stronger cooperation between sectors of arts and education (ivi: 84–85), which is a regular topic in professional circles but without significant improvements for decades now.

Instead of ratifying the Strategy in the National Assembly, the Serbian Government adopted a different document in January 2021. In the 13 pages document on Strategic Priorities in Cultural Development for the period from 2021 to 2025, gender equality in culture is again not mentioned by a single word, while culture for youth and children is the last paragraph of the last, 20th priority in the document.

In February 2021 there was an initiative from the Ministry of Culture to amend the Law on Culture. A group of women's organizations in arts and culture saw this as a window to make cultural legislation in Serbia more gender sensitive, while the national as-

sociation of theaters for children and youth advocated to put more emphasis on children rights to culture, but all suggested changes were ignored.

Unlike Serbia and the countries of Southeastern Europe, the Netherlands and Sweden were successful in reducing gender pay and pension gaps in the cultural sector and, together with France, in improving work-life balance with consideration of flexible and part time work, subsidized child-care and encouraging fathers in familial duties (Hertie School of Governance 2017: 111). The approach, proved effective by this comparative study, encompasses regulations, policy measures, soft measures and a lead role of the public sector, while it is not enough only to monitor but also to sanction non-compliance with the regulations (ibid.)

The German Commission for UNESCO gives a clear itinerary for national cultural policies with even advising compulsory gender trainings for the public sector and other cultural professionals, gender sensitive juries, and legally binding regulations and policies (2020: 4–9). Their list of recommendations includes providing targeted financial support to women as creative entrepreneurs, awarding higher grades for gender balanced project proposals and generally promoting infrastructure that allows for a better work-family-care (ibid.). Additionally, it calls for thorough analysis of the gatekeeping mechanisms, intersectional approach in terms of migration, rurality and other dimensions of marginality, using quotas to change power relationships, supporting empowerment programs just for women, and eventually, "acknowledging and fostering also the notion of artistic expressions as a collective and collaborative effort and not only as the fruit of the 'lone genius'" (ibid.).

This all goes completely in line with the methods used by the FLIM research team in organizing two concerts as part of our experiment described above and could easily serve as a to-do list for Serbian and Southeast European cultural policy decision makers. Music and cultural scenes in the region should be supported into becoming more female- and youth-friendly by intervening in regulations and legislation, providing funds, but also providing knowledge and skills through trainings and different capacity buildings, by consulting and ensuring participation of women and youth in decision making, distributing resources fairly, avoiding and sanctioning behaviors based on sexism and adultism, and acknowledging one's privileges, as well as mistakes. Different stakeholders in the music industry in Serbia and Southeastern Europe have slowly started to be engaged in the fight against gender inequality, but only with the systematic support of the local, national and regional policies will significant changes be seen.

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Women's Role in Sustaining the Practice of Tamburitza Instruments in Vojvodina[1]

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Abstract: *In Vojvodina, the autonomous northern province of the Republic of Serbia, the collective (orchestral) playing of tambura instruments (of varying sizes and tunings) represents a particular style of the region sound mapping. According to literature, this practice has developed from the nineteenth century till today through multiple forms and in informal and formal contexts. The start of the twentieth century led to changes in the creation of the corpus of tambura instruments and the increase of strings for tuning. An intensive development of music-making on these instruments influenced the transformation of performance paradigms through the roles of specific orchestral instruments, playing techniques, interpretations, repertoires and styles. Since the beginning of collective tambura performances, women have participated primarily as members of the orchestra, while their role over the past few decades has shifted significantly. This chapter investigates the contemporary practice in which women have a more significant position in its sustainability, considering their participation in the process of formal and informal education, performance and creation of new compositions. Female tambura players are students, professors, musicians, conductors and composers and they visibly contributing to the survival of traditional types of tambura music and the development of new interpretational and genre frameworks. In addition to individual female tambutitza players' activities, the creation of women's tambura orchestras during the twentieth century had special influence on the sustainability of tambura music.*

Keywords: *women, tambura instruments, Vojvodina, sustainability, education.*

Until recently, the image of tamburitza playing in Serbian music scholarship emerged as a practice commonly associated with men, particularly in the representative cultural domain. Female playing of tamburitza was perceived as an exception within framework of patriarchal culture. In recent years, however, the role of women in performing traditional instrumental music has become an object of study of gender-oriented ethnomusicology aimed at the identification of female performers in traditional and contemporary music practices in Serbia and the Balkans (Nenić 2019: 9, 14). This study attempts to show

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the importance of women in the tamburitza tradition in the northern region of Serbia known as Vojvodina[2], with a particular focus on those who, through their performances, have contributed to the sustainability of tamburitza performance in the contemporary context.

Performance contexts of instrument playing frequently interact with presumptions concerning women's skills and stereotypes about gender roles (Klenke 2018: 10, 20; Wrazen 2010: 44). Karin Klenke defines female leadership contextually within the nation, religion, family, sports, politics, technology, etc. She states that "contextual factors set the boundaries within which leaders and followers interact and determine the constraints and demands that surround the leader-follower dyad" (2018: 10). Thus, within the tamburitza practice, "recurring patterns" can be followed through various women's roles, and especially the positions of formal and informal leadership with the expert power based upon competency (Northouse 2008: 4–5). Women's roles in tamburitza practice became especially prominent between the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. This chapter is based on recent research compiled through interviewing and highlights women whose experience has been important for the development of tamburitza music in Vojvodina, as well as on literature survey of the general principles of tamburitza playing in traditional and contemporary setting.

Tamburitza Practice in Vojvodina before World War II

Different ethnic communities in Vojvodina, in particular Serbs, Bunjevci, Roma, Hungarians, Croats, Rusyins, and Slovaks, are known for playing plucked string instruments called tamburitza. The tamburitza players perform in small ensembles (usually consisting of up to eight musicians), or in larger orchestras with sixteen or more performers which, recently, become a representative practice in a formalized institutional context. The contemporary tamburitza practice relies not only on folk music, but also on the transcribed examples of art and popular music, as well as on originally composed pieces for this type of ensembles.

According to written sources, the tamburitza practice has developed in Vojvodina from the 19th century into multiple formats, within both the formal and informal context.[3] Relevant published data about tamburitza music in Vojvodina dates back to 1817, when playing on these instruments was recorded in Subotica (Sabo 1998: 55).[4] The first half of the 19th century is also associated with a development of orchestral music in Serbian Bačka[5] (Forry 2011: 141–142). According to information from the memoirs of

2 Vojvodina is a region in the North of Serbia with a rich multicultural population, formed through century-long complex historical processes.

3 Mentions of the tamburitza as musical instrument can be traced during the 18th and 19th centuries in various works of folk literature (Forry 2011: 139).

4 According to Ivan Sabo, the first mentions of the tamburitza in Vojvodina are related to 1817, when Matija Petar Katančić had the opportunity to hear singing accompanied by the tamburitza in Subotica (Sabo 1998: 55).

5 Bačka is a geographic region in Serbia and also a wider historic area that belongs partly to Serbia and partly to Hungary.

Jakov Ignjatović (1966: 84), in the same period Vojvodina tamburitza ensembles started performing in *kafanas*[6] and ceremonial halls of prestigious European hotels as arenas for negotiating public and private music making.[7] Performing in *kafanas* was especially important for establishing different musical practices and styles, exchanging experiences among performers and creating specific communication with the audience (Dumnić 2019: 140). Due to the fact that Vojvodina, as a part of Austria-Hungary during the 19th century, underwent modernization and urbanization, the development of tamburitza practice relied on permeability of the borders between rural and urban areas and hence on the exchange between folk and urban music (Ranisavljević 2011: 110). The repertoire of tamburitza ensembles included arrangements of traditional and popular dances and songs, as well as arrangements of popular works of art music (Forry 2011: 147).

A great technical leap in tamburitza music making took place at the beginning of the 20th century. The changes were related to the structure of the various tamburitza instruments and more specifically, to the number of strings, increased from 3 (tuned in fifths) to 4 (tuned in fourths). Furthermore, the instruments changed their shapes so that their formerly pear-like bodies would resemble those of the guitar, with the exception of the *prim*[8], which maintained its old shape. This change in the shape of the instrument led to a "fuller" timbre, which in turn influenced the volume in orchestral music (Salaćanin 1998: 48). Since these transformations in tamburitza's characteristics, the playing practice of this instrument developed more intensively, while new performance paradigms emerged through the roles of specific instruments in the orchestra, playing techniques, interpretation, repertoire, and style (Sabo 1998: 60). In both urban and rural settings in Vojvodina, tamburitza practice contributed to a growing number of count of orchestras popularizing this music such as the Tamburitza orchestra of Vojvodina students, the Amateur tamburitza orchestra of the Mačkaši brothers from Mol, the Tamburitza orchestra of the Kozarski brothers from Stari Bečej, the Sokol tamburitza society from Subotica under the direction of Pero Tumbas and others (Dumnić 2019: 157). At the beginning of the 20th century, popular ensembles recorded their performances on gramophone records with various European labels (Brzić 2912: 69–70). Classically educated musicians such as Mita Orešković (1816–1867), Vasa Jovanović (1872–1943), Marko Nešić (1873–1938) and others, who anticipated the institutionalization of tamburitza practice were also members of these ensembles (Antunović 2018: 58–61; Lajić Mihajlović 2019: 22). They composed various songs in accordance with the style of folk music or published manuals for playing the tamburitza (Dumnić 2019: 166, 174, 177). They had an important role as the forerunners of the professionalization of tamburitza playing in Serbia. This coincided with the creation of the Tamburitza Radio-Orchestra in 1936 by Radio Belgrade, under the lead-

6 *Kafana* is a traditional Serbian taverna.

7 Besides in Vojvodina, the tamburitza practice was also popular in Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Austria, Czech Republic, and even on other continents, thanks to the work of emigrants (Kovačević 1984: 452) during the 19th century. The creation of Paja Kolarić orchestra in Osijek in 1847 is of exceptional importance for the development of regional practice, of which there are also written testimonies (Forry 2011: 142).

8 *Prim* is the name for the leading tamburitza instrument of the smallest dimensions.

ership of Aleksandar Aranicki (Dumnić 2019: 157–158)[9]. At the same time the standard of the eight-member tamburitza ensemble was established (Ranisavljević 2011: 211).

Considering the practice of tamburitza until World War II, it can be observed that the roles of Kapellmeister (the ensemble leader), performers, and composers were dominated by men.[10] This fact is not at all surprising, given that the spaces in which music was performed tended to be public (usually coffee houses and private celebrations), and these were considered inappropriate for women as musicians. According to biographical data about Vasa Jovanović, being a musician was not a particularly valued profession in society, so it can be assumed that at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the position of women playing instruments was specific (Brzić 2012: 66). Female performance in the public sphere was socially marginalized, as opposed to private spaces, and since the 19th century also served as a mark of class position, where the choice of the instrument and the manner of the performance could indicate the social status of a female musician; whether a woman should perform in the public often depended on the support of male family members (Nenić 2019: 82 et passim). Photographs from that period show that some *kafana* ensembles included performances by the wives of musicians as well as by other women. One of them was Olga Kwitzau from Germany, with whom Vasa Jovanović, the founder of the "Beli orao" (White Eagle) orchestra, fell in love (Jerkov 2003: 2).[11] Vasa taught Olga to play the tamburitza, and she later joined the "Beli orao" orchestra. In 1904 and 1905 she was active in different roles as kapell-meister,[12] director and member of numerous ensembles.[13] Besides Olga, a special place is occupied by Mileva Radujkov, who, as the wife of musician Marko Nešić, played and sang with him in the same orchestra, "Beli orao" (Brzić 2012: 62). Olga and Mileva were not the only women who participated in the performances of *kafana* ensembles, as evidenced by numerous photographs from the beginning of the last century. This notwithstanding, there is not enough information to shed light on the biographies of these often anonymous female tamburitza players.[14]

The beginning of the 20th century represents a turning point for female musicians with the arrival of the *Damenkapellen* (all-female musical bands) to the Balkans. Their

9 According to Marija Dumnić (2019), Radio Belgrade Folk and Tamburitza Orchestra was founded for the purpose of accompanying the singers performing in radio broadcast. It is interesting that the tamburitza orchestra was more popular in Vojvodina than in other parts of Serbia and that in technical and arrangement terms it was better than the folk orchestra. The leader of the tamburitza orchestra, Aleksandar Aranicki, was a tamburitza player and a violinist who arranged about three thousand songs and about four hundred folk dance songs (Dumnić 2019: 157–158).

10 Pajo Kolarić, Mita Orešković, Stipan Mukić, Marko Nešić, Vasa Jovanović, Petar Ž. Ilić and Isidor Bajić were among the most important composers during the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century (Sabo 1998: 63–64).

11 The photograph with Olga Kwitzau was taken in 1905 in Leipzig (Germany)

12 She was a leader of a chapel "Carmen" (Brzić 2012: 53).

13 Olga Kwitzau was the conductor and director of the First Croatian tamburitza choir "Jelačić", and later a member of the Croatian tamburitza choir "Jeka", the Italian group "Risorgimento" and the Serbian-Hungarian group "Carmen" (Brzić 2012: 53).

14 In the book by Boško Brzić dedicated to the composer Vasa Jovanović, there is a photograph which supplies information about a certain Katarina Hrlić who was the conductor of the Croatian tamburitza chapel "Jeka" (Brzić 2012: 56).

emergence included German, Czech, and Austrian women's ensembles, hired to perform at venues such as hotels (Nenić 2019: 83). As an echo of this practice, female tamburitza musicians started appearing in amateur singing societies, which had already been established in churches in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. Such is the case of the Serbian Church Choral Society "Javor-gusle" from Šid which, according to a photograph dated 1903, included female tamburitza players (Figure 1). In addition to being played in the public sphere, tamburitza was additionally represented in private spaces, particularly as an instrument for ladies, which women used to make music in their own families, thereby expressing class of social affiliation. The practice of amateur salon performance was popular in the interwar period and relied on the use of printed musicals scores along with basic music literacy (Dumnić 2019: 141). The photographs taken before World War II showing women performing tamburitza music in a family context are rare. One of these precious photographs now belongs to the premises of the City tamburitza orchestra in Subotica and represents an anonymous family from Kanjiža in 1940.

Figure 1: Serbian church choir "Javor-gusle" from Šid. The photograph was taken in 1903 and is part of the photo archive of Bojan Trenkić, president of the Association of tamburitza societies of Vojvodina.

Women and Tamburitza Playing between the Second Half of the 20th and the Beginning of the 20st Century

The development of tamburitza music, which took off in the second half of the 20th century, completely separated rural from urban music making, because uneducated musicians played in rural areas, while the musicians in the cities relied on the skills of musical literacy (Ranisavljević 2011: 110). Professional orchestras were formed in the cities at regional radio stations, and amateur playing under the auspices of cultural-educational and cultural-artistic societies became especially popular (Vukosavljev 1990: 65). Informal institutions also worked on music literacy and popularization of tamburitza music, so that large orchestras were formed, numbering from twenty to as many as seventy members. The founding of the Great tamburitza orchestra of Radio Novi Sad (1957)[15] holds a special significance for tamburitza playing in Vojvodina. Their work introduced the symphonic concept of orchestral music making in tamburitza playing and thus led to further development of tamburitza music in the region (Ranisavljević 2011: 213).

A turning point in the development of tamburitza music in Vojvodina, as well as in Yugoslavia, was the year 1958, when a meeting of tamburitza experts was held in Novi Sad on the initiative of Sava Vukosavljev and Julije Njikoš (Vukosavljev 1990: 66). It was then that individual orchestral scores for each instrument of the tamburitza family were established and the names for the instruments adopted from folk terminology: the *bisernica* (*biser* meaning pearl) or *prim*, the *brač* or *basprim*, the *tambura* cello, the *bugarija* or *contra*, and the *begeš*/*tambura* bass (Sabo 1998: 60). In addition, an agreement was created to establish the Festival of tamburitza music of Yugoslavia in Osijek and the creation of original musical works for tamburitza orchestras started (Vukosavljev 1990: 66). This organization of the tamburitza playing laid the foundation for the contemporary performing practice, which is still relevant today in all contexts of tamburitza music making. Through the presence within the media space of Radio Television of Vojvodina and the creation of festivals initiated during the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, this practice gained its legitimacy and popularity in public discourse.

Since the communist government of post-World War II Yugoslavia supported the process of female emancipation, girls and women were, for the most part, able to participate in various kinds of formal and informal tamburitza education. In addition to playing in amateur orchestras, they also had the opportunity to study in elementary music schools, where tamburitza playing was introduced in 1950.[16] They thus gained enough

15 This orchestra started working in a small ensemble in 1949 as the Tamburitza orchestra of Radio Novi Sad. Over time, it changed its name several times. In 1957 it was renamed the Grand tamburitza orchestra of Radio Novi Sad, and during the period 1974–1992, it was the Grand tamburitza orchestra of Radio Television Novi Sad. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, in 1992, it was called the Grand Tamburitza Orchestra of the Radio Television of Serbia, and since 2008, the Grand tamburitza orchestra of the Radio Television of Vojvodina.

16 Isidor Hadnadjev introduced the tamburitza in the teaching subject at the music school in Becej in 1950, thus initiating the formal training on this instrument. In addition, in 1960, in collaboration with Sava Vukosavljev and Branko Čenejac, he published six books of the *School for tamburitza of the Vojvodina system* as basic literature for learning in music schools (Slavić and Petković 2020: 46).

skills to the point that, upon completion of their music education,[17] they were able to take on several leadership positions in the Vojvodina tamburitza tradition for the very first time.

As a great connoisseur of tamburitza music, Sava Vukosavljev popularized this instrument among the female students of the School for teachers in Novi Sad from 1953. to 1958., where he worked (Zečević 1998: 20). Since only girls were educated at this institution, their instrumental education included playing one of the offered instruments such as: violin, tamburitza (Figure 2) or accordion. Most of the girls opted for the tamburitza, so Sava Vukosavljev, in addition to two choirs and a group of singers, established a large and a small tamburitza orchestra (Mihalek 1998: 72–75). Later, as teachers, Vukosavljev's former students worked on popularizing the instrument within the primary school system, that is, in the work of music sections (musical groups in schools).

Figure 2: Sava Vukosavljev with the women's tamburitza orchestra of the Educational school in Novi Sad. The photograph was taken in 1951 and is part of the photo archive of Bojan Trenkić, the president of the Association of tamburitza societies of Vojvodina.

Women made a special contribution to the preservation and development of tamburitza practice during the 1970s and 1980s. They became the first tamburitza professors to take formal and informal leadership positions, thus establishing a triadic relationship within gender, teaching and tradition, as the one described by Wrazen (2010: 43) among the Polish Górale community in Canada. Considering the Polish tradition of playing in an ensemble and dancing in North America, Wrazen stated that in their home area in Poland, men played a major role as bearers of this practice. However, by moving to North America and changing their lifestyles, women have taken an important role in the initiatives for preservation of local traditions and the transfer of knowledge (Wrazen

17 Within music education in Serbia, tamburitza can be taught in primary and secondary music schools, while at the higher level there are no such opportunities. That is why students after high school for tamburitza enroll in another course at music faculties.

2010: 45–46). Indeed, women's leadership and knowledge transfer was distinctly emphasized between mothers-leaders and their daughters, where the learning process is personalized at a deeper emotional level and the girls' desire to be like their mothers was significant (2010: 45–46). In the tamburitza practice in Vojvodina, one can also speak of women who were role-models for younger generations of girls in finding adequate space for women's playing and teaching. Among them, Mira Temunović from Subotica stood out, and later Sonja Berta, Marijana Marki, Dušica Ševo, Smiljana Jančić, Zorica Opačić, Julijana Baštić, Milica Lerić and others.[18] The music careers of most of them were marked by the study of tamburitza in the formal system (music schools), as well as the acquisition of skills through orchestral performance in the informal sphere (municipal tamburitza orchestras and those belonging to cultural and artistic societies). Having acquired their academic education, and as a result of their performance skills and professional expertise, they obtained positions of professors and conductors. Mira Temunović (born in 1964) from Subotica played the most significant role among them, as she was the eldest in that generation, and the first to accept the position of conductor (Figure 3). At the time when she affirmed herself as a tamburitza player, this instrument, according to her, was marked as "male" and connected to the tavern context. However, as being educated in music at the primary and secondary music school, and later on obtaining a degree in music pedagogy from the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, Mira's approach was different. Within the tamburitza music scene, her performing career lasted for 30 years, mostly through performances with the City tamburitza orchestra from Subotica (since 1977). Professionally, she pushed the boundaries in several fields, the most important of which is proving her playing skills and virtuosity, which is why she matched her male colleagues (Nenić 2019: 124). In other words, it was not expected that a woman can play tamburitza as well as a man. Thus, at the invitation of Zoran Mulić, she collaborated part-time with the Tamburitza orchestra of Radio Television Novi Sad in the performance of Ravel's *Bolero*. In addition, she has been working as a tamburitza teacher in elementary music schools since 1987, and she turned her great playing and pedagogical experience into the first curriculum for tamburitza for music high schools. Indeed, from her position of pedagogue she formally contributed to the introduction of this instrument in high school music education in 1995 at the Music School in Subotica. She also formed a tamburitza orchestra in this school, and she conducted it for many years and having achieved significant results at competitions.[19] She is also involved in conducting and pedagogy in the informal system through her involvement in the Croatian Music Association, where she has been active since 2000. The confirmation of her notable pedagogical work lies within the award of the Association of music schools of Serbia for her life's work, which is awarded for outstanding professional achievements. Her dedication to tamburitza music and connection with the instrument is also expressed by her nickname – Mira Tambu-

18 In addition to the mentioned tamburitza players, we should point out the performers of the older generation who is not active now, such as Jelena Obad Šćiteroci, who conducted the orchestra in Futog.

19 Mira, in an effort to extend the boundaries of women's participation in tamburitza music, assembled her students into the women's tamburitza ensemble "Korona", which operated from 2007 to 2014.

ritza. Her entire career and activity have contributed to her being recognized as a leader in the world of tamburitza. She is aware of her leadership position, which, according to her own words, she gained thanks to the fact that she always had a clear vision of what she was doing with immense patience, persistence and perseverance (Mira Temunović, interview, Subotica, 6 Februar 2022). During her career, she often faced prejudices that accompanied her as a woman, until she proved her performing and pedagogical competencies. Because of all these qualities in particular, she managed to fight for her position in the tamburitza practice of Vojvodina and to be respected by her colleagues and the wider community.

Figure 3: Tamburiza professor Mira Temunović (photo from the archives of Mrs. Temunović).

In addition to Mira Temunović, positions of exceptional professors and conductors of city orchestras in Vojvodina are occupied by Sonja Berta (born Jaramazović in 1981) and Marijana Marki (born Crnković in 1980) from Subotica, as well as Smiljana Jančić (born Vejnović in 1980) from Ruma. Sonja Berta is the daughter of the outstanding tamburitza performer Stipan Jaramazović, from whom she learned to play. She then continued her training at the Music School in Subotica in the class of Mira Temunović. Since the tamburitza is not included in the official higher education system, Sonja continued her musical training by graduating at the Department of Music Pedagogy at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. For many years, she was the concertmaster of the City Tamburitza Orchestra from Subotica, and she passed her exeptional playing technique down to her students. She particularly contributed to the improvement of the playing technique by solving problems that she had to face when adapting compositions that were not originally written for the tamburitza but for some other instrument (most often the violin). Thus, with her gifted student Ivana Macković, she achieved extraordinary results by teaching

her to perform long series of *pizzicato* and flageolets in the composition "Czardas" by Vittorio Monti.

Marijana Marki, conductor of the City Tamburitza Orchestra in Subotica and tamburitza professor in Vrbas, is also the first and so far the only woman who was a full-time member of the Grand Tamburitza Orchestra of Radio Television Vojvodina (2005–2009). Before Marijana, women were engaged in this professional tamburitza ensemble in Serbia only as part-time associates within projects.

Among the young women conductors, Smiljana Jančić stands out. She is a tamburitza teacher at the music school in Ruma and the conductor of the local city orchestra "Branko Radičević". She combined work in these two institutions, by merging formal and informal practice through orchestral playing. Namely, all her students from the school are members of the city orchestra, which enables Smiljana to introduce new interpretations in her work with the musicians. She was able to improve the orchestral performances she conducts through working on the elements of interpretation, such as: good appropriate musical phrasing, clear dynamic shading, and the correct and simultaneous performance of tremolo by all members of the orchestra. This way of interpretation has greatly contributed to the improvement of the dynamic and expressive features for the wider practice of contemporary tamburitza orchestras. Since many of Smiljana's students play in the orchestra, gender and teaching intertwine within the framework of cross-generational knowledge transfer and performance itself, similarly to the conveyance described by Wrazen (2010: 41) between Polish Górale women of different generations in Canada.

In addition to the women in music schools who promote the local, Vojvodina repertoire and style of tamburitza playing techniques, an entirely new type of approach has developed. This comes from "Josip Slavenski" Music school in which Professor Galina Subotin, a domra player originally from Russia, works. She is employed as a tamburitza professor and though her work she changed the way of holding the instruments by insisting that tamburitza should be played with crossed legs, and leaning on the thigh, which was not part of the Vojvodina tradition. Besides this, Subotin has introduced a technique of playing which includes a firmly placed right wrist as opposed to a relaxed placing of the right wrist, and the usage of the plastic (guitar) pick rather than one made of cow horn which was more traditional. These elements are not a part of the folk musical expression and, as such, are often the target of criticism. Despite that, her students emphasize that the benefit of playing following Subotin's principles is reflected in the phrasing, sound technique, and mastery of the instrument, and the positioning of the right hand.

A special group of women leaders in tamburitza practice consists of those who play in taverns or within women's tamburitza bands. The only woman who currently leads a *kafana* orchestra is Dušica Ševo (born Rožić in 1972), who has been leading "Biseri" (The Pearls) orchestra for thirty years and works as a chapel master in the *kafana* "Osam tamburaša" (Eight tamburitza players) located at the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad. Along with her performer career, she has an academic education and has been working as a tamburitza professor in Becej for twenty years. Interestingly, her *kafana* orchestra consists of men with whom she grew up together in the orchestra of the folklore society in Temerin. The members of the orchestra chose her as the leader because she is the most musically educated and has excellent abilities in communication and negotiation with potential employers of the ensemble for concerts. The role of the chapel master for Dušica

is specific because it includes taking care of the quality of the musical performance, as well as the marketing of the ensemble. Her position as the leader of the orchestra is particularly delicate, because it not only involves sternuous playing and singing in the cafe that lasts throughout the night, but also specific communication with the guests. Dušica states that such a job requires intelligence and advanced social interaction skills in order for a woman who performs in front of an orchestra to be understood as a professional in her work and not through her gender-biased stereotypes.

According to Wrazen (2010: 42), one type of women's participation in tamburitza music making and gender performative practice is the establishment of orchestras whose members are women. Such attempts were made in Vojvodina at the beginning of the 21st century, with the orchestras "Korona" (active from 2007 to 2014) from Subotica and "Đurđinske devojke" (from 2012 to 2016) from the village of Đurđin near Subotica. However, the most popular ensemble is "La banda" from Novi Sad (Figure 4), which was founded in 2013 and performs at cultural events in the country and abroad, as well as at private celebrations such as weddings and birthdays. This orchestra is specific in that it also has percussions, and its repertoire relies on the arrangements of evergreens and popular music. The very fact that only young women play in the ensemble contributed to the media and the general public turning their attention to ensemble's performance, which, according to other colleagues, influenced the popularity of tamburitza practice. This was confirmed by a member of this orchestra, Milica Lerić, who pointed out that the ensemble "La banda" seems "exotic" and attractive to audiences outside Vojvodina (especially in Belgrade). According to her, the audience usually notices and comments on their appearance, and only then pays attention to playing. Most of their fellow tamburitza players suggested that they capitalize on the fact that they are the only female tamburitza band in Serbia. However, this ensemble is committed to quality performance, therefore the members of the group meet regularly and rehearse during the week, while on weekends they mostly perform. The professionalism of their work is reflected in the fact that there is a clear division of roles and duties within the ensemble. Thus, the member of the band Jelena Sabo has the role of manager, Milica Lerić and Milana Milanković are announcing arrangements, and Neda Radman takes care of the ensemble's visual identity. In addition, they specifically organize singing rehearsals in order to complete the musical performance and ensure the quality of the presentation. Through these activities, "La banda" manages to bring the instrument even closer to the audience through a gender-marked interpretation of "pieces unusually arranged by females".

Figure 4: La Banda Women's Orchestra in 2018. was obtained by the courtesy of Milica Lerić, a member of this ensemble.

Given that the field of tamburitza practice today includes women who are musically educated at the academic level, they are also arranging the musical scores they perform. However, their authorial work is not included much in their professional activity, except in the case of bass tamburitza player Stanka Ninkov Cana (1981–2019), who composed numerous songs and thus enriched the tamburitza repertoire. Her first authorial works were recorded in 1997 with the performance of the compositions "Zima u Bačkoj" (Winter in Bačka) and "Salaši" (Farms) at the festival "Zlatne vojvođanske žice" (Golden Strings of Vojvodina) in Novi Sad. At the same event in 2005, she presented the song "Tamburaši svirajte" (Tamburitza Players, Let's Play), thus continuing her engagement in composing tamburitza music. She further established her performing and composing skills during 2007, when she recorded five authorial pieces for dance with the Grand Tamburitza Orchestra of Radio Television Vojvodina, while a year later she published an audio edition for the record label "Vojvodina Music". During her short life, she founded the non-standard trio "Pannonian Pearls", which consisted of bass *prim*, *contra* and tamburitza bass, performing with it together at various events in Vojvodina. In her work with the tamburitza, Stanka combined performing and composing activities and pushed the boundaries of tamburitza music interpretation by experimenting with a chamber ensemble composed of three instruments.

Conclusions

The historical overview of the development of tamburitza practice in Vojvodina shows that along with the improvement of playing tamburitza instruments, there was a process of greater participation of women in this field of music, especially after the World War II. The greatest contribution of women to the maintenance and development of certain

aspects of tamburitza skills was expressed through various formal and informal leadership positions that they claimed at the end of the 20th and the first decades of 21st century. Through their dedication to tamburitza practice, they have been fundamental in its development and sustainability, as shown by their engagement in training young performers, popularizing playing tamburitza instruments, improving the music education system, expanding technical and interpretive abilities of musicians, and composing new works for tamburitza instruments. It is certainly not possible to talk about male and female teaching methods here, as is the case in some other practices in the world (Magowan 2007; Rice 1994; Wrazen 2010), but the significant role of women in cross-generational knowledge transfer is evident as well as gender-oriented collaboration within women's tamburitza orchestras.

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Performing Trauma in Privileged Spaces: Empowering Turkish Women's Voices of the Past

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Abstract: *'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', ('They Put Red Henna on My Hands') is a well-known twentieth century Turkish folk song, portraying the voice of a young girl forced to be married against her will. It is mainly performed at a women's henna night ritual that occurs at the home of a bride's parents before the wedding ceremony. This rite of passage is symbolic of the transition into womanhood, with the loss of virginity and the song acts as a warning to the trials and tribulations of marital woes that reside in the collective memory of Turkish women. As a Turkish female composer, choosing to perform this piece outside of the Turkish community, I bring the role of women as important tradition bearers to the forefront and also contribute to raising awareness of the global issue of child marriage. By performing this piece in the privileged spaces of academia, I give voice to underprivileged traditional folk singers of the past who were also survivors of childhood trauma. This chapter reflects upon my leadership role as a female performer/researcher, engaging with this challenging subject in an intercultural context. I discuss my position as leader of the collaborative and exploratory creative process with North American instrumentalists whereby the emotional and musical elements of the piece are intertwined, mirroring its sadness using the Hüseyni mode with descending glissandos and tremolos. I analyze the function of the piece within this new performance space from historical, musicological, and social perspectives. Finally, I also examine different participatory roles of women past and present as the creators of the music, based on multi-cultural contexts of the university and communities in Calgary (Alberta, Canada).*

Keywords: *child marriage, Turkish folk song, intercultural, music-making, improvisation.*

'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' ('They Put Red Henna on My Hands') is a well-known twentieth century Turkish folk song, portraying the voice of a young girl forced to be married against her will. The piece carries a message that plays a significant role within traditional Turkish culture. It tells the story of the little girl's disappointment with her own family and her helpless condition:

> They put red henna on my hands,
> My fate is doomed, they sold me to a place far from here

I was only twelve when they made me a bride
I cry, and I cry, and I wipe my tears away…

This piece was introduced to me by an instructor in Turkish Folk Music at Ege University in Izmir, Türkiye.[1] The melody of this song was skillfully structured: the changes in expressions and melodic contour reflect the narrator's desperation in a simple yet intriguing way.

The content of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' deals with the issue of child marriage. In this chapter I analyze the piece from musical and cultural aspects, using it to demonstrate intergenerational impacts of trauma through musical engagement – empowering women's voices of the past by connecting to them in the present in an intercultural medium.

Representations of Female Trauma in Early Marriages

I grew up with my grandmother, Zarife, who lived from 1933 until 2004. She told my brother and I many stories about what she witnessed during the Dersim massacre[2] and WWII, which brought hunger, poverty, and cruelty to her village. She was forcibly married around the age of twelve to a much older man. Zarife's strength was clear from her narrative:

> I was playing outside with my friends, then he took me away, I did not want him. He was old and he hurt me. Even after I had a baby, I did not realize that I was a mother and a wife. I never loved him. I would just try to sneak out and play with other kids while holding my own baby. Eventually, I escaped from him to another village. I refused to cry because of my abusive husband, but I did cry for the child who I left behind, and never saw again.

There are many similar stories within the Turkish media addressing the issue of domestic violence, trauma, and femicide caused by early marriages. In 2014, the independent online publication T24 (Yur 2014) interviewed five survivors of child marriage. During the interview, one woman said, "I slept with my mother-in-law for three to four years, because I was given to a much older man when I was only eleven".

Most of these stories share a similar background: a violent, unloving father, an uneducated and powerless mother, followed by shame, blame and further violence by the in-laws and spouse. However, there are many instances where child marriage survivors helped their daughters break the cycle of violence. Likewise, Zarife, as a survivor of child marriage, faced and overcame many difficulties in her life. Despite her humble beginnings, she became a midwife, a naturopath, and a mother again. Finally, she became a

1 I use the name Türkiye instead of Turkey because this is the Turkish name of the country and its official name, also approved by NATO. Turkey is its name in English, often confused with the fowl.

2 My grandmother told us about the horrors she witnessed at the Dersim massacre (1937–1938). She vividly remembered bombings and attacks to her village. For more on the Dersim Massacre please see Çelik 2019: 65–75.

role model for me – because she never gave up and strived to do her best, even in the worst circumstances.

The global humanitarian organization Plan International Canada (2019) stated on its website that "Child marriage is a global issue, and no country, religion or culture is immune".[3] Factually, nearly every two seconds, a girl under eighteen is getting married somewhere in the world. Research by Nawal Nour (2009) shows that 50% of married girls in Kenya are more likely to contract HIV than unmarried ones. This number is even higher in Zambia and Uganda. Furthermore, girls between the ages of ten and fourteen are five to seven times more likely to die during childbirth than those fifteen to nineteen. As data from UNICEF show, this issue occurs in every country, regardless of the GDP.[4]

Despite the rising average age of marriage, child marriage[5] remains an ongoing challenge in Türkiye. Children between sixteen and seventeen are allowed to legally get married under the supervision of a legal guardian's consent until the age of fifteen.[6] A common issue is the falsification of official birth certificates to legalize underage marriages. Statistically, women from less educated and low-income families are victimized through early marriages, arranged by their own families and are generally at increased risk of femicide. The Turkish National Police Academy Journal published a detailed report comparing Turkish and world femicide rates between 2016 and 2018. Their data revealed that in total, 928 femicides occured between 2016 and 2018; furthermore, of these, 8.6% of them were under 17 years of age.[7]

Although the issue of child marriage is well-known in Türkiye, there is minimal engagement with this subject in visual arts and music. An important song on this subject was released by one of the Turkish most popular musician and singer, Sezen Aksu, in 1986. The song 'Ünzile' [8] (A Turkish name for a woman) was written by Aysel Gürel and composed by Onno Tunç. It tells the story of a little girl being forcibly married and facing domestic violence. Sezen Aksu explains the story of how this song was written by Aysel Gürel in one of her concerts:

In 1962, Aysel Gürel was touring Anatolia with Münir Özkul. They visited all villages and cities. At some point, they came across a father and his eleven-year-old daughter in

3 For more information please visit, Plan International Canada, https://plancanada.ca/child-marriage (accessed 17 February 2022).

4 https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/fight-continues-end-child-marriage-us/38893 (accessed 27 February 2022).

5 Another term we could use instead of child marriage is juvenile marriage. Aktepe and Atay (2017: 410–411) suggest using the term juvenile marriage to avoid the confusion with the term child bride. However, in reality the girls should not be seen as brides, as they are victims of this tradition. Throughout this chapter, I will use mostly the term child marriage since there are more publications and information related to this term.

6 See http://www.eskisehirbarosu.org.tr/haber/basina-ve-kamuoyuna-28052021 (accessed 2 March 2022).

7 Taştan and Küçüker (2019). More information regarding recent femicides can be found on "We Will Stop Femicides Platform": http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/3008/we-will-stop-femicides-platform-january-2022-report (accessed 2 March 2022).

8 Sezen Aksu, 'Sezen Aksu – Ünzile' (Official Audio), published on *YouTube*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXpgWAZHVls (accessed 21 May 2022).

one of the villages of Denizli. When recounting the story of this song to me, Aysel portrayed this little girl as a character in a poem with the words, "She was like a blonde tear drop with corn braided hair, standing next to her father like a weak leaf (*saz*)". Then she went on to recall the words of the girl's father who said, "We will marry her off in a week". Deeply saddened after hearing these words, Aysel Gürel asked the father "But why, she is just a child?" The father answered happily, saying "we are marrying her, that's how". The name of the song is Ünzile because that was the girl's name.[9]

Both these songs are about child marriage and originated in the Denizli/Acıpayam region in Türkiye.[10] 'Ünzile' became so successful that other male and female musicians interpreted their own versions of this piece. The music video of this song was planned as a social awareness project and staged to portray the desperate condition of little girls who are victims of this tradition.

There is too little discussion of child marriage in the literature of musicology, likely because the subject is seen as too emotionally nuanced for the musical medium. Engagement with this topic is necessary, however, and one must approach the conversation from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. Most recently, researcher Ecem Köklükaya (2019) and Savaş Yavuz (2019) discussed the topic of child marriage and bride exchange in Türkiye, using the perspective of visual arts. Both researchers aimed to give social messages through documentary cinema and animated graphics. There were overlapping aspects in these three projects, as well as disparities in our respective approaches. Köklükaya undertook this discussion through individual creation, whereas Yavuz analyzed a documentary[11] about child marriage, largely using concepts of mass media. My method combined multiple musical approaches to create intercultural collaborative works, which did not solely rely on single composer/creator. During this study, I aimed to connect both privileged and underprivileged communities of all ages to raise awareness on the issue of child marriage. In addition to public concerts and conference presentations, our performances are available on online platforms with the goals of wider dissemination and audience engagement.[12]

9 Televizyon Arsivi, "Sezen Aksu Ünzile Şarkısının Hikayesini Anlatıyor (Aysel Gürel Içerir)" published on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZMl3JrfSzw, I translated this story from Turkish to English the following YouTube video of Sezen Aksu's account (accessed 20 May 2022).

10 I recently contacted musicians from the Denizli/Acıpayam region via social media to confirm my findings. They informed me that the piece is old-fashioned and used to be performed more frequently during henna nights. It is still being performed; however, today most brides prefer popular henna songs.

11 Savaş Yavuz (2019) analyzes a documentary by Muhammed Beyazdağ called *Zarok*.

12 Please see Gjuka 2019 for Sofra Ensemble music performances.

Exploring Trauma through Music

The term trauma[13] refers to physical and psychological responses to traumatic events such as sexual assault, natural disasters, violence, serious accidents, injuries, and illnesses. Child marriage is a traumatic experience causing personal, but also cultural and intergenerational inherited problems. Journalist and researcher Tori DeAngelis (2019) stresses that most trauma survivors and their children suffer from anxiety, depression, and PTSD. 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', thus becomes a collectively shared cultural memory. As portrayed in the song, the impact of this traumatic event was memorialized by Turkish women throughout several generations. Furthermore, this cultural memory became amplified when performed in an intercultural setting and is experienced second-hand by musicians and the audience. My role as a Turkish woman, researcher and musician in this study led me to connect to women of the past.

Understanding my unconscious choice of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' for this research project was an immense relief on a personal and intellectual level as it helped begin the process of personal/familial healing from intergenerational trauma. In addition to its specific musical features (which was the rationale for choosing this piece) I also imagined the narrator as a young version of my grandmother. My work is unique as it sensitively engages with the topic of child marriage, and uses analytical and musical research methods. The platform I created explores collaborative music-making process within its difficult content. Written songs focusing on the issue of child marriage do exist within Turkish culture.[14] One can also find analyses of representations of women in Turkish folk songs.[15] However, research on child marriage in Turkish music, its intergenerational impact, and psychosocial implications is still a young topic.[16]

Most folk songs carry real-life stories and memories, which could help future generations learn about their history and prevent traumatic events from repeating and healing from generational traumas. They can also exist as acts of rebellion against authority. Anthropologist Tok Thompson claims: "Our cultural and collective memory is shaped through folk stories like mythology and legends".[17]

Likewise, anthropologist David Berliner (2005: 200) mentions that the concept of memory mostly presents the "social remembering of precise historical and sometimes traumatic events and experiences". In terms of social and collective memory, 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', acts as a warning. It is performed at Turkish schools, concerts,

13 For more about the term and concept of intergenerational trauma please see Greenwalt 2005, and Weathers and Keane 2007. Although there is research focusing on intergenerational impacts of cultural traumas, or children of PTSD patients, I was not able to pinpoint a study focusing on the possible inherited effects of child marriage.

14 Genç (2006) classifies the song 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' as one of the folk songs that reflects on violence towards women, but she does not analyze the piece.

15 Please see Çaycı 2014 and Çelik 2020 for more on representations of women in Turkish folk songs.

16 Most recent research on the issue of child marriage in Türkiye and its psychosocial implications were written by Ekici 2018 and Mandacı 2002.

17 Quoted in: Meredith McGroarty and Susan Bell. "Why Is It Important to Remember What Came Before?" University of Southern California Dornsife, https://dornsife.usc.edu/news/stories/3360/remember-what-came-before/ (accessed 3 April 2022).

and special events, such as bridal showers and henna nights. The song's message raises awareness on the issue of early and forced marriages, while a young girl's voice (from the past) echoes to the present through folk songs and traditional rituals.

While singing and listening to this song, both the audience and performer experience the desperate conditions of a twelve-year-old girl's unwilling marriage, albeit second hand. They can predict and visualize the consequences of this marriage, such as possible domestic violence and vicious cycles of psychological and physical events. Therefore, the piece presents complex emotional content, possibly leading to the recent decline in its popularity.

'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' within Turkish Musical and Cultural Contexts

Turkish music researcher Nida Tüfekçi recorded and transcribed 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', which was first performed by the local musician Süleyman Uğur in 1968,[18] from the Denizli/Acıpayam region in Türkiye. The text is in the unique dialect of Acıpayam region and contains traditional symbols. Below is the original text containing words specific to the Acıpayam region and its literal translation:

Ağ elime mor kınalar yaktılar
They put red henna on my hands
Gaderim yok gurbet ele sattılar
My fate is doomed, they sold me to a place far from here
On iki yaşımdı gelin ettiler.
I was only twelve when they made me a bride
Ağlar *ağlar gözyaşımı silerim of of*
I cry, and I cry, I wipe my tears away
Merdimenden endim endim yıkıldım
I went down the stairs and collapsed
Her çiçekten aldım aldım takındım
I tried on all the flowers
Gırmızı gül sendi galdı tamahdım of of
I couldn't wear the red rose because you had it
Yüce dağ başında asmalı pınar
There is a spring and hanging branches at the top of a high mountain
Asması yıkılmış suları harlar
A branch is broken, as the water flares up
Galındı gal gal süpürgü çaldığım evler
I left the house I swept
Başım alıp gurbet ele giderim of of
I will leave and go abroad

18 As shown in (Figure 2), the first recorded version of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', was from the TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) Folk Music archive, number 7.

Turkish wedding traditions vary based on the region. However, the henna night and wedding night are almost always celebrated consecutively. Henna application is a traditional ritual during *kına gecesi* (known as henna night), an intimate event, particularly for the bride-to-be, where only women attend before the actual wedding ceremony (Demir 2017). Although this is a festive celebratory event, during the henna ritual, the women sing laments about girls leaving their family home, and about being separated from their families, or starting a new life. Such laments are known as *gelin ağlatma*, meaning bride's lament. They apply the henna to the bride's hands and their own. Brides are traditionally expected to show some sadness, and it is considered "well-mannered" for the bride to cry when leaving the family home. If the bride cries, it is interpreted as showing innocence, respect, and love for her family.

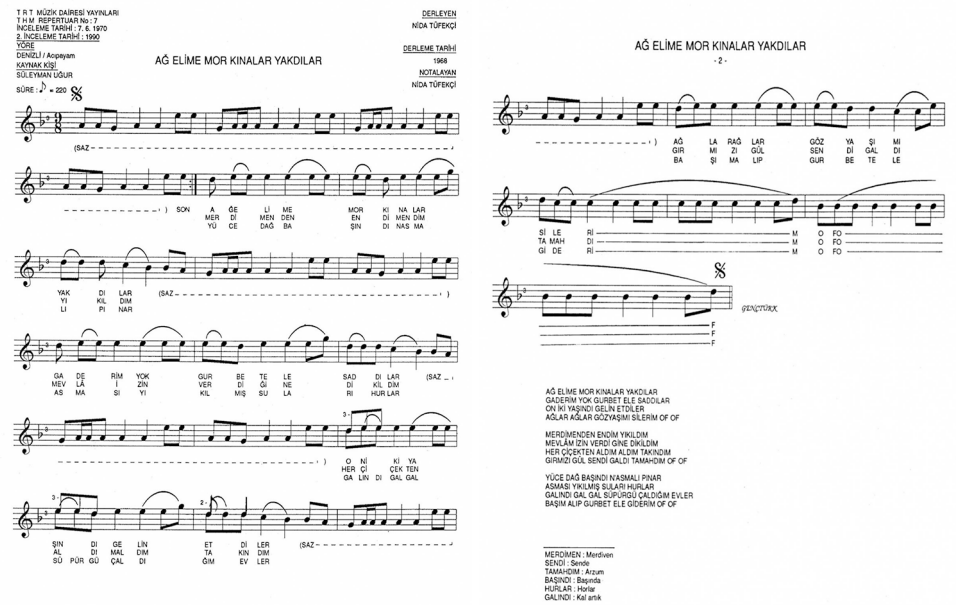
To understand and analyze this piece clearly, it is essential to introduce *makam*[19] as a Turkish term that refers to modal theory and practice. Theoretically, *makam* conveys sequences of rules and musical components: pitches, intervals, specific scales, progression, and structure. It is a unique shared music system, created and utilized by diverse cultures over several centuries. In Turkish *makam* music, theory and practice are inseparable – and mastery of these concepts encourages the musicians' artistry.

From the musical perspective, most traditional henna songs[20] utilize the *Hüseyni makam*, which is one of the most used *makams* (it is also called as tune/air in Turkish folk music), forming the base of "Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar". They also use 9/8 (3+2+2+2) or 4/4, 2/4 metric structure, mainly because henna rituals convey dance-like movements. During the performance, women walk/dance in a circle (without joining hands) around the bride and follow the rhythm. I chose this piece since it is written in *makam Hüseyni*, 9/8 meter (which is a pervasive Turkish rhythm) and allows space for personal interpretation. Unlike most cheerful *Hüseyni* pieces with a 9/8-time signature, dance-like compositions, this piece is unique in its sorrowful content. The melodic movement of the piece demonstrates a descending character consistent with the content and overall context. The first verse starts around the tonic (A) and dominant (E) as one of the most significant features of this *makam*. It utilizes longer legato notes and is performed with certain glissandos, trills, and vibratos. Figure 1 presents the notation of this piece, as well as information regarding the publisher, the year it was collected, the source and the transcriber:

19 The origin of the word *makam* is Arabic, meaning "division", "location", "position" and a "melody type", see Ederer 2011: xxx.

20 Acar (2014: 37–41) also briefly analyzes 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' as a henna song.

Figure 1a and 1b: Transcription of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar'. Source: http://www.asikveysel.com/turku-notalari/ag-elime-mor-kinalar-yaktilar.htm (accessed 13 September2022).



Research and Methodology

In 2019, I created the Sofra Ensemble with four collaborating musicians: a cellist, a clarinetist, a violinist, a percussionist, and myself as a vocalist and Turkish *klasik kemençe*[21] performer. 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' was the feature song for both concerts. The project's first phase started in January 2019 at the University of Calgary, Canada. All the performers were of different ages and had diverse cultural and musical backgrounds.[22] They all had basic Western classical music training at different levels and some experience with projects involving musical improvisation. Over twelve weeks, we explored the creative process of music-making through a method I derived from using specific Turkish *makam* music features. I was both a performer/instructor and a researcher throughout the process.

As researcher, I explained the research steps, the importance of their insights, written observations, questions, and recordings to the collaborating musicians. The musicians had minimal knowledge of the Turkish *makam* music system, language and culture. I provided broad explanations about Turkish music, the content of each song, and

21 Turkish four-string vertically held-bowed lute.

22 Baseline for all participating musicians was an advanced knowledge on any musical tradition either Western classical music, Jazz, or Turkish music., etc. All musicians were required to read scores and perform it.

information regarding the culture. As a performer/instructor, I demonstrated and clarified information regarding Turkish *makam* music, folk music and different performance styles. The collaborating musicians were never expected to perform like Turkish musicians. One of the goals was to create a platform nurtured by listening to and observing new music, while exploring and creating within this new system. They became more comfortable creating while using this platform. I fostered communication between the performers and focused on providing a positive and encouraging space. That meant, I focused on maintaining a neutral standpoint. Various ideas and suggestions were performed without judgment and were never imposed.

'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', was the first piece the Sofra Ensemble arranged, composed, and interpreted. Several weeks after the music rehearsals began, I shared my connection to this piece with the musicians. They were surprised, saddened, and deeply touched by my grandmother's story, which went on to affect their performance. Their personal and cultural connection to this music was important, not just from a theoretical/socio-historical point of view, but also during the creative process.

To start, we related the piece to the lifetime of a child from the song. The clarinetist began the song with a soothing lullaby-like melody accompanied by the percussionist emphasizing heartbeat-like figures.[23] Our composition was followed by a new cheerful melody composed by the violinist, imagining a toddler's happy antics. Then with the *klasik kemençe*, I connected these happy tunes to chaotic sounds, representing the child's confusion upon learning that she will be married at a young age. The heartbeat-like rhythms provided by the percussionist prepared the ensemble to perform the song as it exists in its original version, from the young narrator's perspective – preserving the young girl narrator's voice. We did not have a composer in this project, but the narrator's voice and story were at the center of everything we created. In the vocal performance section, I interpreted the song using ornaments and vibrato; however, I mainly performed it as it was transcribed by Nida Tüfekçi. After the first verse, the cellist started improvising somber sounds, reflecting a dark, hopeless situation. He used various Western contemporary performing techniques: artificial sounds, un-metered rhythms, extended technique, harmonics, and overtones. The ending of the piece was kept true to the original, to amplify the narrator's voice.

As vocalist and voice of the narrator, I empathized with this child throughout the performance. The narrator became a parent at an age when she was supposed to be nurtured by her parents. I imagined my grandmother's stories and thought of her crying while singing this piece. I felt weak, desperate, and torn. However, I also gained the strength from finding my connection and sharing this experience as a researcher. I started researching this issue from global, national, psychological, and musical perspectives. In this way, I gave voice to the women who had been silenced. Raising awareness on child marriage became one of this project's most important social aspects.

23 Please see minute (00.00-00.20) from the performance of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' from the Sofra Ensemble on YouTube (Gjuka 2019).

Performing 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' in an Intercultural Context

The implications of this research project reached beyond what I initially predicted. As a Turkish female musician, I found it challenging to express myself using Western terminology, especially while attempting to position myself with the Western notions of composer, performer and researcher. I suggested to collaborating musicians we avoid defining ourselves and our work as "composer" and "composition", even though much of our musical creation was fixed in conventional notation. Since our group's creative process was collaborative and involved musicians and musical techniques from different music cultures, it would be misleading to describe it using ideological concepts from one cultural perspective. This research project intertwines musical features from multiple cultural viewpoints.

When we began the study, each participant had a unique "musical library".[24] I prefer this term to background or memory, considering how people store and use all musical information they have come in contact within their minds. These libraries are personal and distinct, almost like human fingerprints. Yet, they carry some similarities and usually overlap with the libraries of other musicians, especially among those with the same cultural background. For example, a song could have an emotional impact related to personal childhood memories, although one may not remember the context of where/when they heard it for the first time. Meanwhile, the same song could be a dry, uninteresting analytical subject for someone else.

The musicians' progress with the piece and comfort level with each other gradually increased. At the beginning of the process, for example, the cellist mentioned collaborative musical creation being a new concept to him. He had lots of ideas to share but did not want to dominate the discourse.[25] His concerns regarding finding his voice and expressing his ideas were shared by others. However, over time we were able to communicate more effectively and create a supportive environment. After several rehearsals, the clarinetist shared her insights regarding building trust in the process and musicians in order to create a distinctive group sound:

> … The "Ayrılık"[26] creation was productive, and we produced a pretty good composition in a short amount of time. I think that is the biggest challenge composing with a group. You must be diplomatic however, in being that time gets wasted. I think we could spend hours and hours together creating some amazing things; however, time is not what any of us have. When the pressure is on, we get it done. I have some licks to iron out and write out – overall it works well… the compositions that the cellist and violinist created are beautiful. The Bach fugue-like piece the cellist

24 Our musical libraries were shaped by our surroundings, education, and comprehension of all the music that we heard up to that point in time.

25 Musicians entered their insights regarding the study on a confidential forum at the University of Calgary's online teaching platform.

26 The Sofra Ensemble interpreted and rearranged an Azerbaijani folk song called 'Ayrılık' while exploring *makam Nihavend*, see Gjuka 2019.

> arranged is wonderful to play… The violinist's piece was also quite good, somewhat challenging putting it all together, but we will get it.[27]

All the volunteer musicians were creators and performers; thus, we avoided creating a hierarchy. Though I was the lead researcher facilitating this project, I aimed not to influence the creative process as a performer. Each participant's musical background added something unique to the collaboration and design process. Everyone was irreplaceable and constituted the backbone of this version of musical creation.

My method for the study required the combination of new musical information with knowledge that the participants already held. To enable the process of creative music-making along with research methods, I used the research-creation approach,[28] literature reviews, semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic observations. Ethnographic observations were necessary to document details and challenges during rehearsals. After each rehearsal, musicians were required to write down their observations about their experience, musical engagement, and general ideas. They were free to share these opinions with the other collaborating musicians in the study. These observations helped them make creative choices on what elements to use and which to discard. Semi-structured interviews, qualitative and quantitative questions provided statistical information regarding musicians' musical motivations, musical background, expectations, and progress. These verified research tools generated practical results. Overall, I framed my study using the above multi-disciplinary approaches to collect and analyze my findings.

To enable the data collection process during our music rehearsals, I utilized an advanced music recording studio at the University of Calgary. Each week, I set up the equipment and prepared questions to ask musicians throughout the rehearsals. The Sofra ensemble interpreted, rearranged, and composed pieces related to three makam scales and rhythmic patterns. Each piece presented a different creative process and character.

The musicians used my method for faster and more fluent engagement with specific *makams*. Part of the reason for choosing the first song, 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar', was its *makam* features and simple melodic style, which provided many possibilities to rearrange the piece within the creative method. During rehearsals, I demonstrated *makam Hüseyni* on my instrument (*klasik kemençe*) and explained *taksim* as a traditional structured music-making tool.

Usually in the *meşk yöntemi* (master-apprentice learning technique), a student learns repertoire and performance techniques from their teacher. Turkish masters use this pedagogical method to teach their students the ways of musical creation. This method encourages the repetition of ornamentation, melodic patterns, modulations, and rhythmic cycles (*usuller*). Mind-body musical knowledge is transmitted along with the teacher's performing style. I used aspects of the same system to provide performers with a clear understanding of the rules and the ability to navigate within them. During my *taksim* performances, I quoted and emphasized motives and features of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar

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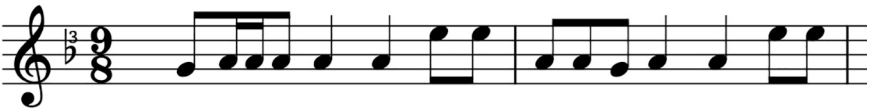
27 The clarinetist entered her observations about week 9 on the University of Calgary's d2L platform on 10 April 2019.

28 Fundamentally, "research-creation" offers a perspective that combines diverse range of epistemologies regarding the study of music and its performative aspects. See Stévance and Lacasse (2019) for more information regarding this approach.

Yaktılar', along with the *Hüseyni makam* characteristics such as tonic, dominant, ascending/descending character, accidentals, etc. After that, I performed the piece as written and mentioned additional performance techniques common to this *makam* and the Ege (Aegean) region of Türkiye.

To familiarize the musicians with the music and initiate improvisation, I suggested that musicians play along with me several times. Then I asked them to repeat a specific phrase that rhythmically and melodically embodied the main features of the song:

Figure 2: Transcription by Bahar Gjuka of a motive from 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar'.



Performing these two measures repetitively as a loop allowed the musicians to experiment with different ideas, improvisational space, and improving their *taksim* skills. At the start, members of the ensemble listened to and memorized the piece. They first read through the score while observing the *makam* rules. After that, they listened to and watched similar pieces that used the same *Hüseyni makam*, analyzing different versions of the same song and looking for theoretical and performative characteristics. I recorded the rehearsals continuously. At the end of each rehearsal, I shared the raw recorded data via e-mail with the collaborators. This was so they could revisit the ideas, performing techniques, and source material outside of group rehearsals.

The recordings also enabled the musicians to track their progress and generate new ideas during individual practice sessions. Rather than executing the music created by a composer, they took the initiative using their musical ideas in combination with the piece they had been given. They shared their compositions and arrangements with the group, then executed a selective process where some ideas stayed, and some were discarded. This methodology fostered spontaneous "causal interaction"[29] between the research method I chose and creative ideas, significantly impacting our creative process and outcomes.

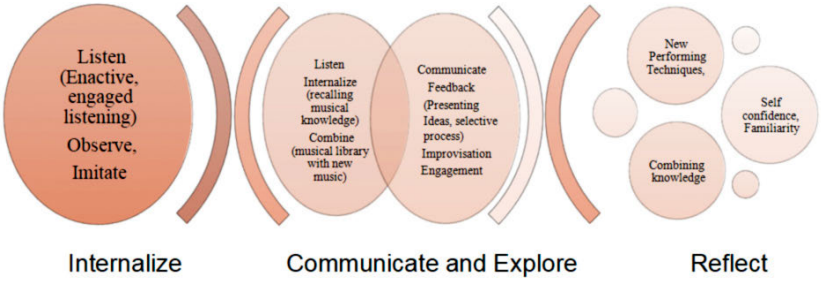
Challenges and Benefits

Our creative process involved a sequence of musical events that could be divided into three stages (see Figure 4): each performer listened, engaged, created, and arranged ideas during group rehearsals and individual explorations. The final product was always a written-out composition in which each part was fixed, as well as the beginning and end of the piece. However, the completed score always left room for improvisation in

29 The term "causal interaction" is used by Stévance and Lacasse (2019), as part of the research-creation approach, referring to research and creation having a direct influence on the other.

certain sections. It also kept the original song in the middle section in its unchanged form. The musicians' creative process began with engaged listening, watching, reading, and imitating, through which they internalized new knowledge. Then, they integrated this knowledge with their own musical library and explored ways of creating new music through improvisation, communication, listening and researching new ideas. In the end, this process allowed them to produce and present the newly created music at concerts and events.

Figure 3: The three phases of the creative process.



After twelve weeks, our fully arranged, partially composed version of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' was ready to perform.[30] Our version of this piece was almost ten minutes long. The problematic content of the piece led us to reflect on our thoughts through our music. We emphasized the narrator and kept her voice as it was written in the score. She was the lead voice and carried the central part through this musical piece.

In addition to my role as a researcher and performer, the socially sensitive content of this piece helped me to get involved in the role of activist. I experienced intergenerational trauma inherited from my grandmother.[31] When she bravely spoke about what happened to her, I witnessed her frustration, and sadness every time she remembered parts of what happened to her. Even as a child, I felt it was my responsibility to tell more people that child marriage had far-reaching catastrophic effects on individuals, families and as we see from folk songs, even on communities. Throughout my doctoral research study, I did extensive reading on the issue of child marriage and its cultural and intergenerational impact. I explored this issue also by interviewing my family members and making music related to this subject. In my case, trauma manifested itself via my subconscious choice of this specific folk song. While working on this piece, I wanted to give all child marriage victims a chance to be heard and seen throughout the musical creation. The Sofra Ensemble musicians learned and read stories about child marriage as part of the project. By combining this knowledge with our sadness, the group members and I internalized this issue and reflected on our feelings through our music.

30 Please see Gjuka 2019 for the performance of 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar'.

31 I experienced sadness and injustice when my grandmother shared her story.

Cultural Implications and Outcome

Traditionally 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' is performed by women at intimate henna nights and special gatherings. In our intercultural context, we performed this piece with a mix of male and female musicians in an academic context – a concert venue and a performing space in an institution of higher education. Our ensemble focused on shared universal experiences regardless of race and gender: happiness, fear, sadness, and trauma. In a large-scale view of the work, we presented a lifelong musical story built up to the narrator's authentic version of this piece. Enacting music about childhood was a good starting point; all the musicians had that experience. Our compositional design also created a story shaped by our musical libraries. Melodic sounds are commonly used to portray happier and more balanced life events, such as in childhood years. The performance is built up to highlight the original song in the middle. Certain motives were emphasized, while other parts were secondary. Our version of this piece consisted of a combination of minor (compositions) musical segments.

Although everyone composed their parts, each musician was accompanied by the other musicians. There were both elements of authenticities and, at times, deliberate contemporary elements. As a Turkish female musician, I brought and shared my expertise and knowledge with the North American musicians. The platform I created allowed me to explore Turkish *makam* music from a broader perspective. My combination of traditional and unconventional performing techniques became a starting point for other musicians to combine their musical libraries with the new information they received.

Here, it is critical to note that at various conferences, I received questions regarding cultural appropriation due to performing Turkish music with North American musicians – negating my Turkish musical background. The concept of cultural appropriation does not apply to my research, because as a Turkish musician I led the project based on certain aspects of makam methods, which I extensively studied in Türkiye. Furthermore, victims of rape or trauma cannot be pigeonholed into any specific culture. In fact, these issues transcend cultural boundaries in the same way my project uses music to provide a shared human experience. Discussions of these issues are not solely the survivor's responsibility. All people must discuss child marriage, speak up and educate our community about the risks.

Furthermore, this subject should not be targeted at or spoken only by females. All her children and grandchildren, including my brother and I, inherited my grandmother's trauma. By telling us her stories, in a way – it seems that our grandmother was urging us to share the subject with others. This became obvious; for instance, when I started working on this piece with the Sofra Ensemble, my brother told me he had started writing a book.[32] He was also inspired by my grandmother's story and severely affected by this intergenerational trauma – only this time, it was manifested in book form.

I believe limiting the subject of child marriage to a specific culture, gender or age group could be harmful. This issue is global and has intergenerational and cultural impacts. The fact that it is rarely explored in artistic contexts is food for thought. One of

32 His book *Hasret* (Longing) will be published in 2023.

the most chaotic, dark, and artistically challenging parts of our musical design was expressed by the cellist's (a male musician) highly skilled improvisational interpretations. He was not attempting to become the narrator's voice or appropriate her situation to any cultural events, simply creating the setting for her story. He volunteered for the project and wanted to help raise awareness about this subject. He used his advanced musical skills in a compassionate way to perform chaos, sadness, and desperation in his music. Our work on the issue of child marriage aimed to provide a platform for voices silenced by traditional and patriarchal social structures. Previously, anonymous songs circulated in Turkish culture were the only form of expression for these individuals. By integrating these songs into my project, I wanted these victims to be heard in a much broader context.

In terms of musical outcomes, the musicians deferred to my expertise in Turkish *makam* music. At this point, I would like to again oppose considerations of this study using Western ideals of "composer-performer-researcher" or attempting to define the musical outcome with any cultural form. Traditional Turkish folk and *makam* music encourage composers to become highly skilled performers and researchers. Tanburi Cemil Bey, Ali Ufki, Kantemiroğlu, Neşet Ertaş, Aşık Veysel were masters of their craft. However, within the Western classical music tradition, the roles of composers, performers, and researchers remain separate. The method I designed combined *meşk yöntemi* with the musical libraries that each performer brought to the ensemble. Rather than simply imitating the teacher, musicians created their own music in an interactive environment. By opening the practice of the ensemble to a diverse range of stylistic content, we transcended boundaries between traditional Turkish music and Western art music. Thus, we presented a framework for female leadership connected to women's voices of the past in an intercultural context.

Our creative process ended with two public concerts in 2019 at the University of Calgary Women's Resource Center. Performing our music to make a positive change for our community and to create equality for young girls became the priority aim of the concerts. Our performance focused on empowering the voice of young woman as a narrator in the song. This work had far-reaching impacts, using online streaming platforms to engage with a broader audience. Thus, it was an enriching experience for the musicians involved, and, to this day, I receive comments and emails from the public and academicians.

Healing from intergenerational trauma is a process. I believe my research was an essential first step. From a cultural and social point of view, performing this song in a privileged space was eye-opening for many who had not engaged with this subject/or experienced trauma on that scale. 'Ağ Elime Mor Kınalar Yaktılar' thus helped the musicians and the audience connect to women's voices in the past and brought diverse communities together.

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Women's Actions to Revitalize the Practice of Kaval Playing in Serbia[1]

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Abstract: *The kaval (end-blown flute) deserves particular attention in research as a traditional shepherd instrument associated with the Kosovo and Metohija region (the territory of southern Serbia), whose visibility survived with efforts of only a handful of performers from the second half of the 20th century. The kaval achieved greater visibility throughout the 1990s, as this instrument became recognized as one of several symbols of the collective and national identity, thereby becoming a component of many neo-traditional ensembles in Serbia. Its newly established popularity is accompanied by the interest of performers in the workmanship, behind making the kaval which, with the exception of potential uses of the new materials, continues to be based on traditional crafting principles. The female populations' interest in playing the kaval has risen noticeably since the beginning of the 21st century. They overwhelmingly belong to younger generations of performers, who were acquiring their skills mostly within the state music school system and/or during the organized professional workshops. Given the growing role of women in sustaining the practice of kaval in our region, this paper focuses on analyzing their repertoire, the performance-style characteristics of the female performers, with higher visibility in given geocultural framework, as well as interpreting their present-day positioning in the dissemination of the kaval.*

Keywords: *kaval, female performers, repertoire, visibility and dissemination, contemporary practice.*

The process of sustaining and revitalizing traditional folk instruments in Serbia, as well as a possibility to transform their constructive features and implement them in different and new musical genres is one of the key issues in contemporary ethno-organology. Such an issue pertains to those instruments that lost their primary function of a shepherd's instrument during the second half of the 20th century, and consequently, to the visibility of performers of this music practice locally, nationally and regionally. In that regard, the

1 This chapter is based on the research conducted through the project Female leadership in music (FLIM), grant no. 6066876, supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, PROMIS program.

kaval[2] as a traditional shepherd's instrument deserves special attention. Considering the endangerment of the kaval during the last decades in the folk music practice of Serbia, this paper focuses on the ways of its renewal observed through contemporary activity and the role of women in the process of revitalization of this instrument.

The kaval belongs to a group of semi-transversal, long, cylindrical, end-blown flutes, fully open at both ends, whose upper part ends in a sharp circle edge. It has eight playing holes (seven on the front and one on the backside for the thumb) and four holes (*glasnice*) on the lower part that have an acoustic function. (Figure 1) During playing, the kaval is held with both hands, at an angle of approximately 45° from the body. The chromatic scale is composed of a combination of whole tones and semitones and the range obtained by overblowing amounts to two octaves plus a sixth in total. The kaval is played solo or in a duo of two *kavals*: in unison or with the differentiation of a melodic and a supporting (drone) section.

Figure 1: Kaval from Štrpce. Photo by Miloš Nikolić, 2010.

2 The origin of the word *kaval* is generally interpreted in two ways: most often as a word of Turkish or Turkish-Turkmen origin (*kaval, qavâl, caval*), or as a word of Arabic origin whose meaning is *to say, talk* (see more in: Jovanović 2012:186; Zakić and Jovanović 2013:13).

Research on Kaval Music Practice and the Revivalist Initiatives

Written sources on the use of kaval among the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, as the originary space of kaval playing in Serbia, dating from the early decades of the 20th century, were left by folklorists and composers, geographers, ethnologists, ethnomusicologists and ethno-choreologists (see more in: Zakić and Jovanović 2013, 2014; Zakić 2014: 269–270).[3] The largest number of field recordings of Serbs playing the kaval was made in Štrpce, a settlement in the Sirinić parish in Šarplanina region at various time periods, starting from the mid-20th century. The continuity of live practice on the kaval in this locality was confirmed by the recent systematic research of Serbian musical folklore in Sirinić (2002–2005), conducted by members of the Serbian Ethnomusicological Society (SED) Mirjana Zakić, Jasminka Dokmanović and Svetlana Azanjac.[4] In the years that followed until 2010, a practice of kaval in Štrpce was confirmed by field observations and recordings made by clarinetist and kavalist Miloš Nikolić and the ethnomusicologist Mirjana Zakić (Miloš Nikolić and Borisav Miljković, interview, Belgrade, March-May 2021). The recently deceased performers Veselin Bošković (1931–2016) and Miladin Boškoćević (1935–2018) contributed the most to the sustainability of kaval practice in Štrpce. Both of them were recognized by the local community as representative performers of music from the Sirinić parish. According to their testimony, women did not play the kaval, because that was the practice of men and their pastoral activities. Their performances of shepherd's melodies, solo or in a duo – in unison or with accompanying drone – as well as folk songs, especially in combination with the excellent singing of Slavica Redžić from Štrpce (Zakić 2018: 161–162), became a model for the reinterpretation of many neo-traditional groups throughout Serbia.[5]

3 Please note that these studies contain references to the extensive literature on medieval painting, ethnographic, literary and ethnomusicological sources on the *kaval* in Serbia and Macedonia, as well as its position in the broader intercultural and multicultural context.

4 A part of the extensive collected field material (preserved at the archive of the Serbian Ethnomusicological Society) is documented with the film "Cross under Shara" ("Krst pod Šarom"), directed by Slobodan Simojlović (Belgrade, production: 2005–2008). The documentary is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHrPD9qZBIQ

5 The first public performances of *kaval* melodies from Štrpce, starting in 2000, took place in Belgrade at the concerts of the neo-traditional ensembles "Moba" and "Belo platno" (see more in: Jovanović 2012a).

Figure 2: Participants in the kaval playing workshop with Professor Miloš Nikolić in Štrpce. Photo by Mirjana Zakić, 2017.

Regarding the former wide presence of this instrument in the tradition of Sirinić parish, during the latest field research (conducted since the first decade of the 20th century by Mirjana Zakić and Miloš Nikolić) we have been witnessing an accelerated disappearance of kaval from folk practice in this region, which was the central area of the activity of Serbian kavalists.[6] Regarding this instrument's precarious status, kaval playing in Sirinićka župa has been registered into National List of Protection of the Endangered Element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia in 2012 (inventory number 20), due to the cooperation of the Serbian Ethnomusicological Society with the Centre for Preservation of Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija – Mnemosyne, together with local communities and cultural-artistic societies (KUD). The inscription of this element on the National list for the protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Serbia is certainly an important and long-term model for preserving the musical practice of Kosovo and Metohija (Zakić 2018a). As Marija Dumnić points out, in regard to the engagement of the Serbian Ethnomusicological Society in the protection of this and other intangible cultural elements, "ethnomusicological knowledge is recognized as extremely important for

6 In this regard, it should be noted that the new research in other areas of Kosovo and Metohija, the central part – from Vučitrn to Uroševac (Ranković and Zakić 2019:31), as well as the area of Kosovo Pomoravlje, conducted by ethnomusicologists Sanja Ranković and Mirjana Zakić in continuity since 2015, confirmed the absence of the practice of playing the kaval among the Serbian population, but at the same time pointed out the interest of the younger population to continue this practice.

the affirmation of Serbian cultural resources that are representative, extremely endangered or sustainable. Engagement involves investing not only knowledge and research, but also superior coordination with practitioners, whereby the ethnomusicologist becomes the representative of his contributors on the field, and later an advisor in the long-term process of heritage preservation and maintenance" (Dumnić 2012: 93–94).

The kaval-playing and singing with its accompaniment workshops, held in Štrpce since 2017, and in Gračanica since 2020, are the result of the activities of Serbian Ethnomusicological Society.[7] The goals of the workshops have been the following: combining practical and theoretical educational activities related to the element of intangible cultural heritage – the kaval; transferring the knowledge by experts to young generations (Miloš Nikolić, Mirjana Zakić and Sanja Ranković); connecting with the local community; providing greater visibility of this endangered musical-cultural element; evaluating the immediate results of workshops and planning long-term results (as an incentive for the better sustainability of music practice).

This kind of applied engagement, based on networking of experts, local communities and carriers of practice, corresponds to the notion of the "epistemic community" (developed from Peter Haas), which "refers to a collective of people (…) who work together toward solving and analyzing a particular problem or issue-area whose terms are epistemologically defined" (Harrison 2012: 506). The immediate effects of the workshops could be seen through the public appearances of participants, their media promotion and involvement in various cultural contents, as well as through potential long-term results of interaction of motivated, involved subjects in historical and cultural circumstances, thus reflecting "how knowledge operates as a principle of social organization" (according to Steve Fuller; ibid.).

Previous workshops for playing the kaval and singing with the kaval, held at the gate of the church of St. Nicholas in in Štrpce and in the House of Culture in Gračanica, gathered more than 70 participants from the younger generation (Figure 2). Among the participants, the larger number were girls from primary schools, who expressed great interest in reviving this practice and a talent for producing the initial sound on the kaval, which can be very demanding in the early stages of learning. Although they didn't play on the instrument before, their desire and perseverance resulted, as professor of kaval Miloš Nikolić pointed out, in the surprisingly quick mastery of the kaval playing technique. We donated plastic kavals to a large number of participants, so that they could continue their practice after the workshops. Professional practical and theoretical training (which included mastering the technique of playing and basic elements of vocal style, popular lectures on the historical significance of kaval in folk life, its repertoire, and values of musical-cultural heritage) was coupled with the cooperation with members of cultural-artistic association "Cvetko Grbić" from Štrpce and the Ensemble of Folk Dances and Songs of Kosovo and Metohija "Venac" from Gračanica. The workshops ended with concerts where the participants presented their newly acquired skills to the audience, thus supporting their motivation for a continuous and more successful work in the field

7 Such projects, while also an important model of sustainability and revitalization of musical-cultural heritage from this area, are financially supported by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia

of sustainability of kaval practice. Such motivation was especially important for girls – kaval players, who, without previous examples of female players of this instrument in the tradition, could feel visible at public presentations.

The revival of kaval across Serbia, bearing in mind the reduction of the kavalists in Sirinić, started in the 1990s and has been related to the establishing of national consciousness during the crisis as a consequence of the wars in Serbia. That was primarily a result of initially individual endeavor of a group of artists in their practical approach to folk and ecclesiastical music (Jovanović 2012). The interest aimed towards kaval was based on the fascination with its specific sound, its sonority, "the manner in which the tone is produced and coincidence of the structural elements of Byzantine chanting and Macedonian kaval ezgijas" (Jovanović 2012: 197). According to the words of Jelena Jovanović, a member of this revivalist movement, such joint action was a part of a larger search for religious, national, collective and personal identity in Serbia, and also an artistic expression reflecting of one's own identity and creation of collective identities (ibid.).

For the media promotion of this instrument as a representative of the musical tradition of Serbia, the performance of Miloš Nikolić with a solo kaval as a part of the Serbian entry "Lane moje" (author Željko Joksimović) at the Eurovision Song Contest in Istanbul in 2004 is of the greatest importance. "The kaval symbolises pastoral sonority, which is paralleled in the styled shepherd clothing of the kavalist Miloš Nikolić. This song was envisioned by the artistic and production team of Serbian national broadcaster as a Serbian fairytale, a modern pastorale in which the kaval is perceived through its dominantly pastoral semantic and sound value. Thus, the sound of kaval is represented as something pastoral and primordial, both in traditional culture and within modern intercultural framing, thus serving as a bridge between the two" (Zakić 2014: 273).

Thanks to the growing popularity, in the same year (2004) the kaval was introduced as one of the main study subjects at the Department of Ethnomusicology at the Music School "Mokranjac" in Belgrade, whereby Miloš Nikolić became the first kaval professor in the Serbian education system. Later on, the kaval was also introduced at the Department in the school "Mokranjac" in Kraljevo, where the professor Borisav Miljković teaches it, among other instruments. The introduction of kaval in the education system has been of great importance for the further dissemination of this instrument in Serbia.

Activities of Women Musicians in the Revitalization of the Kaval

Such projects, while also an important model of sustainability and revitalization of musical-cultural heritage from this area, are financially supported by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, resulted in the number of students interested in playing the kaval constantly growing. Their basic motive and ambition to play the kaval is the love for this instrument, encouraged primarily by its specific sound color. It is particularly noteworthy that interest for kaval is expressed (almost) equally by young men and girls, who thereby continue a tradition that was previously culturally shaped by the activity of men. Professors point out that girls/young women master the skill of playing with (almost) the same success as boys. Noting that from their experience it could be somewhat generalized that girls produce a slightly finer, gentler tone on the kaval, due to

the specifics of female nature and their breathing apparatus, my interlocutors agree that the way of playing is not gender-determined, but that individual characteristics depend on talent, dedication and experience of performers of both genders. Nikolić underlines that his previous teaching experience has shown that girls are more persistent in finalizing their primary and secondary music education.[8] Appropriate methodical approaches which include combining learning by ear and by notation with insistence on adequate stylistic interpretation, ensure that students are capable of playing in different ensembles and perform various music genres, apart from the dominant repertoire of melodies from Kosovo and Metohija.

Among the most prominent female performers in the chronological course of education, my interlocutors point special attention to Dragana Tomić (born in 1985, from Belgrade), Neda Nikolić (born in 1998, from Kovin, near Smederevo), Saška Stefanović (born in 2001, from Lešak, northern part of Kosovo and Metohija), with whom I conducted interviews on several occasions during 2021 in Belgrade and in Kosovska Mitrovica (Figures 3, 4, 5).[9]

According to the interviewed female musicians, their choice of kaval is inspired by the sound of this instrument, which they qualify as gentle, warm, pastoral, melancholic (also reminiscent of female voice), and at the same time seductive, rustling, mysterious. In addition to the specific and seductive sound of the kaval, my female interlocutors also state the personal need to master the extremely demanding technique of playing this instrument. They also highlight the following motivations: establishing contact with other musicians; weaker representation of this instrument in Serbia; organizing traditional playing workshops; introduction of kaval playing in primary and secondary music schools.

In terms of repertoire, the interlocutors primarily choose to listen to and interpret pastoral original kaval melodies from Kosovo and Metohija, as well as "ezgija" –improvisation on the kaval, where the naturalness and beauty of this instrument are mostly heard. Neda Nikolić is expanding her repertoire of playing the kaval, publicly performing new works composed for kaval and orchestra.[10] Her interpretations of wider musical genres on the kaval are certainly related to her wider repertoire performances (traditional, popular and authorial melodies) on other instruments, primarily the *frula* (folk flute).

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8 This seems to be a global reality; for example, the data of the National Center for Education Statistics in the USA (from 2003) indicate that a higher percentage of women complete undergraduate studies, and that almost the same percentage of women and men obtain degrees in most vocational schools. (Northouse 2008:187).

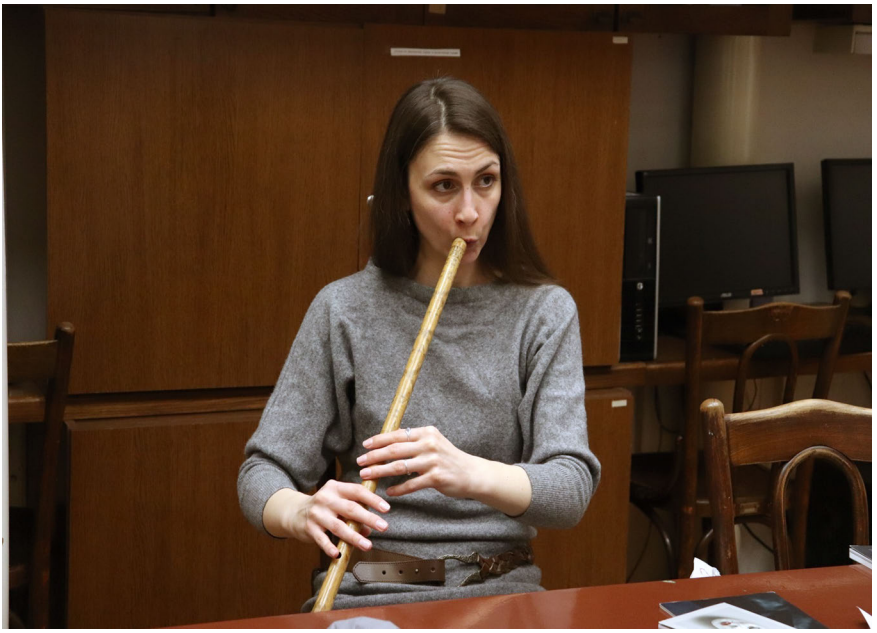
9 Dragana Tomić, interview, Belgrade, 17 March 2021; Neda Nikolić, interview, Belgrade, 13, 14 March and 30 May; Saška Stefanović, interview, Belgrade; 13 March 2021, and Kosovska Mitrovica, 7 May 2021.

10 It is a composition by Slobodan Trkulja, Serbian prominent musician, composer and multi-instrumentalist, titled "Eleven for My Father". Neda Nikolić performed this piece with the pianist and composer Veljko Nenadić, *kahon* player Igor Petrović, and percussionist Denis Mahmutović, at the concert in Grocka, in 2017 (the recording is in her personal archive). This composition exemplifies how the *kaval* becomes an inspiration for new artistic music endeavors in Serbia. According to Neda's statement, the melody is based on musical motifs from Southeastern Serbia and Northern Macedonia.

Interlocutors also agree that, based on their knowledge, generally there are no differences in female or male kaval playing, because the essence of performing is in technique and proper practicing. In other words, each individual brings sound on kaval in a different way and expresses the emotion in his/her own way. Neda Nikolić also points out that although the musical and technical performances of both genders do not have to differ, this comparison is more difficult to report, because there are not many women who play the kaval in Serbia.

Speaking of possible role models, the respondents opt for their teachers, older colleagues from schools who have already made themselves famous for kaval playing, or for the most prominent media multi-instrumentalists, like Slobodan Trkulja.

Figure 3: Dragana Tomić. Photo by Marta Janković, 2021.



In the sense of female leaders transferring the know-how of kaval playing who exemplify the model of informal leadership (Northouse 2008: 4–10), Katarina (Filipov) Lukman, with whom I also conducted an online interview, singles out Dragana Tomić, as the first female performer on the kaval with a formal music education (Katarina (Filipov) Lukman, interview, online, May 15 2021). As an excellent singer and kavalist, Dragana Tomić has had public performances with *Pjevačka družina* (Singers' Group) of Svetlana Spajić in the country and abroad, participated in projects with world artists and actors, performed at foreign festivals, and was active as a lecturer and moderator of workshops for Serbian traditional singing and kaval playing – she also made plastic kavals for the

workshop during 2016.[11] When asked to identify female kaval players being seen as leaders, the younger kavalist Saška Stefanović chose Neda Nikolić, a multi-instrumentalist (a performer of *frula* /folk flute/, kaval, bagpipes, flute, saxophone), who has been very active in the media in recent years and gained popularity in the Serbian music scene, in the region and around the world, by performing different musical genres.[12] For the interlocutors, a leader is a person who has great talent, many years of experience, strong character, integrity, self-confidence, desire for innovation, willingness to cooperate, who is communicative, authoritative and publicly visible, and who, due to his/her technical and musical qualities, is a role model for younger generations. Unlike Dragana Tomić, who does not talk about herself as 'a female kaval player' although she is being called "a lady kavalist" / "kavaldžinika", "kavaldžinica" in her performances, Neda Nikolić gave the following answer on seeing herself in the role of the leader:

> Ever since primary school, I have liked to 'manage' various things, projects and groups. So it remained the same in secondary school, as well as at the college now. With my attitude and public appearance (probably without even being aware of it) I demonstrate my dominance and a wish for 'control'. So, many people openly call me lady-boss, lady-professor in the context of managing certain projects [...] As a *frula* soloist, I have been organizing my own performances for several years now, i.e. participating in the organization, delivery and performance itself. I facilitate *frula* workshops, spread the sound of the *frula* and words about this instrument, as ways to preserve it. I pass on knowledge to younger generations and improve my work, and thus the name of the *frula* in our area. I have realized that in addition to love, desire, effort and work, all the opportunities that the environment provides are needed. These things are crucial, but if you do not find the necessary support and some kind of help from other people and institutions, this job is difficult [...] I personally schedule all my public appearances, because I am most confident in myself. My expectations from the performance are reduced to the implemented agreement, but there are also situations when it is not respected. In these cases, any inconvenience is avoided, but the course of the situation and problem solving is discussed with the organizer (transcript of the interview with Neda Nikolić, Belgrade, 14 March 2021).

Neda's words point to the important role of women's entrepreneurship, as one of the most significant changes and features of today's general framework in which women initiate work, manage it tactically and independently, guided by intuition, perception and skill in interpersonal relationships that greatly contribute to their professional achievements.[13]

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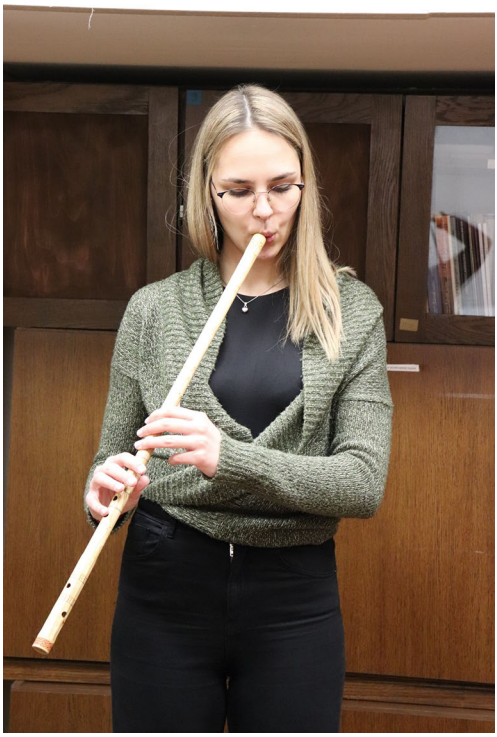
11 The following links document Tomić's music activities: https://dortjolfestival.com/dragana-tomic/ and http://www.nymbusagencija.co.rs/ser_vesti_2016.html (accessed 8 August 2022).

12 https://nedanikolic.rs/#biography (accessed 8 August 2022).

13 Regarding the development of women's entrepreneurship globally, the theoretical approach to it in various business domains, with a special focus on the characteristics of successful women in the creative and cultural industry in the Republic of Croatia, see: Martić Kuran and Mečev 2018.

Figure 4: Neda Nikolić. Photo by Marta Janković, 2021.



Being asked whether and to what extent their families and local communities accept them as performers on the traditional "male" instrument, all interlocutors answered that their families supported them from the very beginning, and that local communities are very proud of their public appearances. Such a positive and supportive attitude is especially pronounced in connection to their media presence. Achieving ever-increasing results over time implies an increase in their expectations. They become new personalities on the scene, their name becomes a "brand" and thus it gains importance. The path to success of female musicians on traditional instruments is accompanied by various sacrifices and concessions that change the usual functioning and presentation of the instrument itself. However, just understanding that they are representing a certain genre, instrument, direction, grows into a wonderful feeling that prevails over all possible "difficult" moments in the process of maturing of a musical personality. In addition, as they jointly point out, people also cherish female kaval performers as they see them actively supporting the traditional culture, instead of taking part in the kitschy mainstream music that "rules" within the contemporary popular music scene.

Neda Nikolić explains about the former and current social path of women who play traditional instruments in the following way:

> There were situations in which being a woman as a player on traditional instruments was poorly accepted or belittled. There are differences due to the influence of society, economy and many other things that have changed over time. The music scene has always been, in a way, 'a sponge' that is actually a reflection of everything that is happening around us. That is how the performers used to perform differently on the stage than today. What is noticeable today is that the performers have more media attention and visual advantages with the audience. (Neda Nikolić, interview, Belgrade, 14 March 2021)

In this sense, I also refer to the words of Karin Klenke and Peter Northouse, that since each context has its own recognizable characteristics, they are often in interaction with assumptions related to female competences and stereotypes about gender roles (Klenke 2018: 6–34[14]; Northouse 2008: 188–196). Or, to quote Ellen Koskoff, "Recent suspicions of female folklore and culture suggest that in many societies women and men seem to occupy separate and independent musical cultures, rather than two differentiated but complementary and overlapping halves of culture" (Koskoff 2014: 32). In that context, it should be pointed out that the respondents are fully aware of the facts about the former poor visibility or (almost) invisibility of women performers on traditional folk instruments in our area. Iva Nenić's extensive scientific study is dedicated to this problem, as well as to other issues discussed in a wide range of topics, from the status of female performance in cultural and scientific discourses, through the genealogy of female instrumental performance in Serbia (and the Balkans), to contemporary music practices of female players (Nenić 2019). In this first and long-awaited study in Serbian ethnomusicology, which deals with the issue of gender and music in regard to traditional folk instruments, specifically historical and contemporary women's playing activities, Iva Nenić analyses two social practices: singing with the bowed lute (*gusle*) and tradition of playing the folk flute (*frula*), in which the participation of female musicians has managed to remain relatively visible in various scientific and ideological discourses, arguing that the participation of women is also important for the sustainability of these practices both in history and modern times. Consideration of this issue involved a well elaborated apparatus of analysis and critique, raised in order to deconstruct the dichotomous models of gender-specific behaviors in traditional instrumental music – the latter until recently understood and presented as part of almost exclusively male performance (ibid.). It can be argued that the same model could be applied to the role of women in kaval practice as well – although there weren't many historical cases, the contemporary female participation in kaval playing challenges the discourses of male supremacy in the representational discourses of this music culture, by actively taking part in learning, carrying the tradition further, introducing the instrument to new contexts and forging the new model of female musical entrepreneurship.

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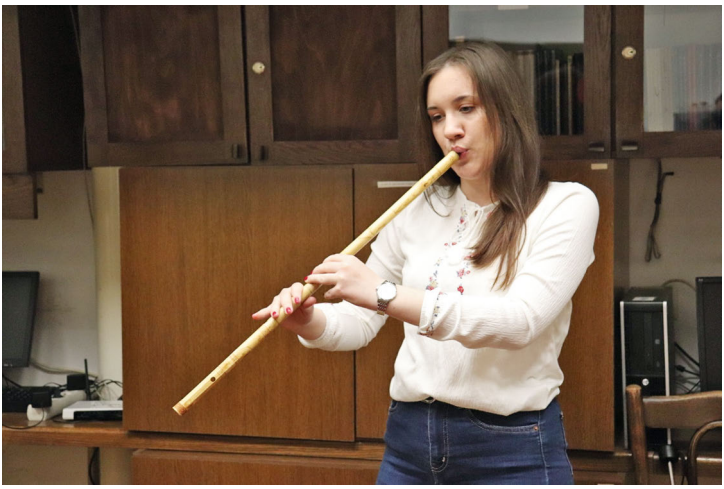
14 Karin Klenke paid special attention to the issue of criticality of different contexts in women's leadership (at the level of nation, religion, political systems, corporations and business organizations, information technology, media, sports, army, education, art and science and global scene). "Each context has its distinguishing characteristics and features which interact with assumptions regarding women's leadership competencies and sex role stereotypes which, in turn, are subject to temporal and cultural fluctuations" (Klenke 2018: 20).

Figure 5: Saška Stefanović. Photo by Marta Janković, 2021.



Conclusion

Based on written sources, recorded material and narratives of insiders in Kosovo and Metohija, dating from the early decades of the 20th century, it is clear that the kaval in folk practice, with its predominant role of shepherd's instrument, belonged exclusively to the population of male musicians. However, it should be noted that the performance of the melodies of the songs on one (or more often on two kavals) was accompanied by female singing (which is still the case in Štrpce / Sirinićka župa). The reduction and subsequent almost complete disappearance of Serbian performers on the kaval in this territory resulted in the need for its revitalization, that had started in the 1990s, first by neotraditional music ensembles in Belgrade, and then later on by soloists and groups from other parts of Serbia. The popularity of kaval among the girls and women during the last decade has been contributed to by their participation in organized workshops in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the introduction of this instrument in the school education system. According to the female respondents, their motivation to play the kaval is crucial in relation to the specific sound of the kaval (timbre), as an iconic sign, presentation of the traditional Kosovo-Metohija repertoire as indexical sign relations, and preservation of cultural and national identity through symbolic signification of this instrumental practice.[15] By acting primarily within the field of culture, women's kaval players also act in the social sphere, raising awareness of the importance of social engagement in nurturing traditional music and in introducing the instrument in new music settings and scene.

15 The concepts – *icon*, *index*, and symbol – originate from the semiotic trichotomous setting of the American philosopher and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), and refer to the different manner by which a sign is related to its object (see more in: Turino 2008: 5–12). The complete triad conception of the sign of Charles S. Peirce was first applied to Serbian ethnomusicology in the study of Mirjana Zakić (2009).

Given the possibilities and ways of preserving the kaval playing, through its revitalization by a small, but significant number of female performers visible on public stages in this historical moment, both at the informal (through workshops) and formal (institutional and professional music-making) level, it is clear that education and presentation, coupled with the gender awareness, are an integral part of sustainability of this practice, as an important segment of the intangible cultural heritage of Serbia.

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Female Leadership in Serbian Metal Music. Frontwomen at the Crossroads of Visibility, Genre and Voice[1]

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Abstract: *Metal music is known for being, in the words of sociologist Deena Weinstein (2000: 134), a genre primarily designed "(…) of, by, and for males". Although its foundational postulates, sound and behavior are traditionally seen as masculine, this genre has been also a place for subversion of the masculine and transgression into androgyny and femininity. Since its inception in the 1970s, metal offered a myriad of possibilities for male performers. It is, thus, not surprising that during the first several decades of the genre's development, women were mainly part of the audience or male musicians' muses. This trend is more noticeably being challenged in the last two decades. Women are taking on not only the role of band vocalists (which is traditionally expected), but also the symbolic leadership as guitar players and other instrumentalists. This chapter sheds light on the historical circumstances and characteristics of female leadership in Serbian metal, focusing on the development of metal subgenres and their relationship to women in the local and international context. Since female roles in metal bands are still, by and large, the ones of vocalists, this chapter also gives insights into the development of female voice in metal – from mainstream clean and operatic singing in symphonic metal to the technically extended vocals of extreme metal.*

Keywords: *Serbian metal music, metal frontwomen, women in metal, voice, extreme metal, symphonic metal.*

To introduce the topic of this chapter, I refer the reader's attention to one typical example of metal music "best of" top lists, namely, Loudwire's "Top 50 Metal Bands of all Time" from 2016, which, like many similar ones, praises the world-renowned and now mainstream bands such as Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Metallica, Judas Priest, Slayer, Pantera, Motorhead, Dio, as well as pleiad of more extreme metal acts such as Death, Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Carcass, Behemoth, and so on. Within these bands, it is

1 This study is the result of research done at the Institute of Musicology SASA, funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (RS-200176), as well as part of the project *Applied Musicology and Ethnomusicology in Serbia: Making a Difference in Contemporary Society* (APPMES; No. 7750287), funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia.

not very difficult to notice the lack of gender diversity. This list gives an idea of the position of women in various subgenres of metal music: from heavy, thrash, to death and black metal, not one woman made it to the list. However, although this sample is not entirely exaggerated, the history and contemporaneity of metal are colored with a number of women, not only in the audience, but also as influential figures and leaders, both globally and in the Serbian context. In this chapter, I examine the presence and position of women as front-figures in metal in two ways: through the historical and factual view of the frequency of appearance and features of women in metal, and then through the prism of vocal techniques they use, viewed through the lens of philosophy of voice and the implications of vocal pedagogy. My goal is to demonstrate how female vocal leaders in metal gradually "conquered" the realm of vocal frontmanship within the dominantly masculine genre, as well as the area of "aggressive", extreme vocals over the decades. The overview of the development of female frontmanship in Serbian metal also points out how this local, small-scale scene reflects the tendencies of the international scene.

Women in Metal Music

Although its origins can be traced to psychedelic and acid rock and the African-American blues music of the 1960s, as well as in the musicianship of figures such as Jimmy Hendrix and James Brown, it is common to locate the beginning of heavy metal in the 1970s, in the musical works of white (usually British) musicians copying and building on the urban blues styles (Walser 2014: 9). Heavy metal almost immediately gained popularity amongst the blue-collar, male audience. It is practically impossible to trace the first appearance of the name of this genre that had its mainstream success in the 1980s. However, the term "heavy metal" can be found in the 19th-century vocabulary, having both a technical meaning (in military affairs) and a figurative/social one referring to power, influence, mental or bodily abilities.

Numerous studies were written about masculinity in the metal subculture (Khan-Harris 2007; Walser 2014; Weinstein 2000;). As Deena Weinstein (2000: 134) puts it, this is a genre primarily designed "(…) of, by, and for males". The issues that ensued from the dominance of masculinity do not connote the metal genre alone. Indeed, these issues are recognizable in metal's immediate predecessors, rock and hard rock music, where sexism is evident in lyrics, music videos, and behavior towards women.[2]

While discussing masculinity and gender in heavy metal music, in his seminal study of metal *Running with the Devil* (1993), Robert Walser writes that, since around 1987, a gender balance throughout metal concert audiences can be noted. However, "metal is overwhelmingly concerned with presenting images and confronting anxieties that have been traditionally understood as peculiar to men, through musical means that have been conventionally coded as masculine" (Walser 2014: 110). The aggression emerging from metal's

2 It should also be noted here that sexism in rock became the subject of academic scrutiny ever since Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie's study in 1978.

"big wall of sound", high volume, and distortion is conventionally coded as masculine in music.[3]

As argued by Keith Kahn-Harris (2007: 160), the marginality of women and non-binary people within the extreme metal scene is "not necessarily any more severe than in other contemporary music scenes". However, that is not always the case. Some subgenres, such as death metal, actively foster imagery of violence, mutilations, sexual assaults, and so on, in many cases directed explicitly towards women (Vasan 2011: 333–334). Given that women nevertheless listen to this genre, Sonia Vasan explored the possible reasons for "women's *knowing* participation" in this subculture, with conclusions that this environment in a way empowers women and frees them from mainstream society expectations. This freedom, however, comes at the cost of "submitting to the masculinist codes of the subculture" (Vasan 2011: 334). As fans and musicians, women treat their femininity and compliance to essentialist gender stances as capital for participation in the scene. Rosemary Lucy Hill (2018: 266) emphasizes the discrepancy between academic discourse claiming that metal is sexist and the fans who insist that it is not. Nevertheless, Hill (2018: 269–270) points to the aspects in which said stance towards women is most visible: the objectification of women and "personal shortcomings" (the experience of sexism is sometimes seen as justified, connected mostly to the biological gender differences, see more in Powell and Sang 2015) in mosh pit or concert-going in general. It is also not uncommon for male fans to subject their female counterparts to a more rigorous examination about their knowledge of the history of metal, facts about metal albums and songs, etc. as a way of gatekeeping. However, many female metal fans do not see the problem in the chivalry or the essentialist approach to gender roles in the context of the metal scene (Hill 2018: 272). Similarly, female fans underline the feeling of safety from sexual harassment or unwanted advances, which ensues not only from the general idea of equality or chivalry, but also from the fact that male metal fans are primarily "there for the music" (Hill 2018: 272).[4]

Commenting on Walser's note that "(h)eavy metal is, inevitably, a discourse shaped by patriarchy" (2014: 109), Heather Savigny and Sam Sleight (2015: 344) point out that "there is nothing inevitable about this" and that this is more a case of, speaking in Judith Butler's terms, the performance of gender and not something inherent or natural. In metal – as in other music genres – masculinity is constructed through performance on the scene and in media in numerous and complex ways (Savigny and Sleight 2015: 244). Having that in mind, the metal subculture can also be a place where the concept of masculinity is challenged and subverted through performing androgyny and femininity, albeit these performances are almost always reserved for men. Androgyny, femininity, or, more generally, any type of transgression is performed in metal through various channels – visual, discursive, or sonic. One of the most prominent forms of transgression, especially regarding 1980s heavy and glam metal, is vocal transgression: clean male singing voices in the higher range, asserting dominance over the sonic picture of the rest of the band in what can be seen as female vocal range and space.

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3 See more about the specificities in metal music sound production: Wallmark 2018.

4 It is also possible that some women who participated in the interviews did not want to name sexist behavior "due to the risk of alienating other hard rock and metal fans" (Hill 2018: 273).

The conquering of the feminine or, in other respects, *othering* traits in some metal subgenres did not, however, diminish the initial and cornerstone, dominantly masculine ideal of the genre. When it comes to women musicians in metal, one of the more extreme examples of the two-faced male subculture behavior and male aggression towards women in the scene/on the stage of recent years is seen in the case of Danish experimental black/folk metal band Myrkur, led by singer and multi-instrumentalist Amalie Bruun. On one side, her one-woman project released in 2014 was critically acclaimed, while a certain part of the black metal community, mostly American, white, and male, proceeded to send her death threats on accounts of her being a woman in a male-dominated community.

The models of behavior and relationships to women metal fans transfer to female performers – instrumentalists as well as vocalists. With the genre representing a masculine, rugged, and potent symbol of meaning and music production, women performers – and most notably instrumentalists – can still be evaluated based on the criteria of upholding the perceived standard of the majority, i.e., their male colleagues. Phrases like, for example, "playing like a man" are consistently considered the highest compliments to one's performing skills. Admittedly, metal culture is not isolated or exceptional in this mode of thinking. Speaking of the alternative and underground culture and certain areas of traditional music, one can see that similar discursive figures are not uncommon. Female instrumentalists are often viewed through the prism of the deep-rooted idea that ties women to intimacy, home, private, chamber music – and most notably, usually vocal spheres of musicking. It is noticeable that the overall picture of popular music, be it commercial, alternative, or underground, is slowly changing in terms of gender representation and participation in music production. However, having in mind the initial preposition in the metal genre of required masculinity, strength, power, and aggression, it is perhaps even more interesting to investigate the ways in which women are conquering spaces in domains of participation and even leadership.

In most cases, the point of intersection of leadership and front(wo)manship in metal (as in other related genres) refers to the position of vocalists. Considering the already mentioned insistent general historical connection between women and voice in performance, this point is also made more complex by including specific vocal techniques required for the performance of (extreme) metal music.

Setting aside the visual and verbal discourse for the moment, the singer's voice is one of the main channels and mediums for performing masculinity, femininity, power, normalcy, or monstrosity in metal music. Transgression into the *other* is achieved by using the high male voices with bountiful vibrato in heavy metal, screams and screeches, more elaborate growl and scream techniques in extreme metal genres, or female sopranos singing in the bel canto technique. Women have been singing and growling since the 1980s – take for example Sabina Classen from Holy Moses, who is credited with some of the first growls in metal, and Doro from Warlock (later, Doro). The expansion of female vocals in terms of the number of women on the scene and the performing style, however, has come later.

Since the appearance of heavy metal in former Yugoslavia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and up until the early 2000s, women performers in metal in this region were extremely rare. Namely, some of the greatest and most popular Yugoslav heavy metal

bands in the 1990s such as Divlje jagode, Gordi, Pomaranča, Osmi putnik, and later – with the development of speed, thrash, and early death metal – Heller (thrash/speed, Belgrade, 1984–1993, 2013–2019), Bloodbath (death/thrash, Belgrade, 1988–1995), Bombarder (speed/thrash, Sarajevo/Belgrade, 1986–1992, 1996–), Sanatorium (thrash/speed, Skopje, 1987–2004, 2011–), Mortuary (old school death, Kragujevac, 1990–1995), all had exclusively male members. The development of the metal scene in Yugoslavia reflected the state and potential of the genre on a global level. The dominance of masculinity was evident in metal and more broadly encompassed guitar-based genres such as Yugoslav rock'n'roll, alternative rock and new wave during the 1980s and 1990s (Nenić 2015: 137). The occurrence of women instrumentalists in alternative bands was mostly considered transgressive of gender norms and expectations in music, which was also recognized in the discourse of music journalism (Nenić 2015: 137).

During the 1990s, the scene grew and developed in diverse genre strains. Nevertheless, the ideas of all-female metal bands (such as, for example, Serbian hardcore band P.M.S.), or more numerous female band members were still foreign.

Frontwomanship and Voice

Unpacking the female voice in metal in more detail can benefit from insights made by philosophy, history, theoretical psychoanalysis, and vocal pedagogy. Furthermore, it requires deepening our understanding of the relationships between voice and body, voice and language, voice and subjectivity. In these knowledge networks, we discover the tendencies that philosophy and other disciplines in humanities harbored over millennia: to silence the "female domains" of voice, body and music in favor of "male domains" of written language, *logos* and thinking. The phrase "woman sings, man thinks", written by Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero (2005: 6), sums it up quite nicely. Just as the tides have started turning with the *vocal turn* in humanities – which can be described as the result of the intensification of interest in voice in theoretical psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and later on, performance studies in the 20th century, when voice became a valid research subject and a window to scrutinization of various issues in humanities (see Kane 2015) – the voice in metal, almost paradoxically, became the place of asserting dominance.

Two types of vocalization in metal music can be discerned. The first type, a more common and mainstream one, includes clean singing and "raspy", somewhat distorted, vocals. The second type of vocalization encompasses a wide variety of extreme metal vocals that rely on extended vocal techniques. Although the first type is, by all means, not exclusive to metal, the other one is proudly presented as the sonic genre identifier for many extreme metal strains such as death, black and doom metal, grindcore, and numerous subgenres. Given the emanated and perceived aggression of vocal techniques typical of extreme metal subgenres, it was expected by general metal fandom – given the deeply ingrained notion of female (physical) fragility – that more female vocalists perform with a clean singing voice. However, the rising number of female vocalists in extreme metal has been evident in the last couple of decades.

Extreme vocalizations, however, pose before listeners the riddle of who is performing because the gender of the performer is not evident in the sonic picture of the extreme voice. The distorted sound experience, which leaves behind the clear singing melody and resides on the vocal techniques and behavior usually considered unpleasant, monstrous, and unregulated by the social conventions, thus hides not only the performer's gender identity, but also "plays the card" of introducing a non-human, animalistic element, so proudly embraced by the extreme metal community. Therefore, this can easily become the point in which female vocalists transgress the expectations imposed on them of clean, pleasant and likeable vocalizations and reach the point of sonic equality with their male colleagues. While this is the case for the most extreme of the subgenres, in other areas of metal, female vocal leaders have also been broadening the range of desirable vocal behavior.

It can be said that, although during the 1990s more women were getting involved in metal as performers – and especially in the position of the vocalist – two figures influenced female-led metal bands at the turn of the century for the decades to come. Those were, in order of appearance on the scene, Finnish opera singer Tarja Turunen, one of the co-founders of the band Nightwish, where she was active from 1996 to 2005, and German death growl vocalist Angela Gossow, the second vocalist of the USband Arch Enemy (2000–2014). Both these vocals were unconventional in the context of metal music nearing the end of the 20th century. On the one hand, classically trained bel canto singer Tarja transgressed the usual vocal practices and techniques used by women in metal and other genres such as belting and distorted singing. On the other hand, Gossow managed to produce the death growl, a *monstrous voice*, a voice that sounds like it does not belong to that (human, and more specifically, female) body.

The appearance of Nightwish and Tarja as a novelty in the domain of (female) metal vocals propelled the development of a specific symphonic/power subgenre of metal that leaned on operatic voices, classical instrumentation additions to the standard band structure, and epic stories and fantasies. In the early 2000s, the metal scene in Serbia started to diversify and include more female vocalists (see Table 1), especially those influenced by Nightwish's worldwide success. Bands like Abonos and Moondive, which resorted to multiple, female and male vocals, were among the more prominent acts, working within the globally popular symphonic metal genre. Besides the obvious and open references to the trends of female operatic vocal lead, these acts have also shown the traits of elitism, connections with high art and art music, and an interest in (Slavic) mythology and the medieval past. Aside from them, there were numerous tribute bands and some groups who never released their own material.

Following the development path of extreme metal, it is worth mentioning that Kramp, an old-school death metal band from Belgrade formed in 1999, had the extreme metal vocalist Ivana Savić, who continued her career in several other bands after the band's dismissal. During the following decade, although much shyer than in symphonic metal, metal bands with women singing harsher and fry, death vocals, started to emerge in larger numbers (Rain Delay, Odium Inc., Awaiting Fear, etc.).

Entering the second decade of the 21st century, a certain level of diversification and "progress" is noticeable in regard to frontwomen and women in metal in general. In 2013 two all-female metal bands were formed, which are still active today – speed/thrash

band Jenner and melodic death metal band Nemesis. The vocalists of these groups practice singing with distortion and extreme vocal techniques, respectively. Furthermore, in the 2010s, trained vocalists such as Bojana Milosavljević (Rain Delay) and Aleksandra Đelmaš (Destiny Potato) started combining clean, pop-like voices with harsher, belting techniques and controlled screams. This – almost scholarly – attentive and careful approach to extreme metal techniques is likewise noticeable in contemporary extreme metal. Namely, Nemesis vocalist Sanja Drča attended masterclasses by Melissa Cross and Angela Gossow and learned to shape her false cord vocals and (fry) screams according to their pedagogical approach.

By shaping their voices in line with international trends and their role-models, these vocalists demonstrate the need for taking over the agency of their own sonic presence and leadership on stage. Moreover, the integration of extreme vocals in the repertoire of possible female vocal behaviors is a sign of embracing and incarnating transgressive femininities – the one that recognizes the manifold reality of being a woman in metal music. Aside from the voice and sound itself, some of the bands, such as Nemesis, are also outspoken about the feminist values and social issues in their song themes and concepts, as well as other public appearances. This adds a much-needed female perspective to, for example, death metal music, which is already marked as being explicit about and engaged in socio-political themes.

Conclusion

The lack of women in extreme metal during the 1990s and the early 2000s, even in the position of vocalists is interestingly illustrated in the famous instructional DVD releases *The Zen of Screaming I and II*. These publications were intended and designed as introductory material for extreme vocalists with video explanations of the performing technique, guests – famous metal vocalists – who attended the vocal lectures and gave interviews for this release, and additional audio material with vocal exercises. Namely, in 2007 vocal coach, instructor and the writer of *The Zen of Screaming*, Melissa Cross defined the division between fry screaming and false cords as more suitable for tenors and baritones, respectively, showing that – even though she had Angela Gossow as a guest and a student in the video – the state of the scene did not call for more significant representation of women vocalists in one such project and Cross' classification.

As shown in this condensed overview, compared to the 1980s global scene, as well as in Yugoslavia and, from the 1990s onwards, in Serbia, female vocalists started to gain a more notable position. In addition, the diversification of female vocal output has also become pronounced. As the concept of voice remains one pluralistic knot of identities and knowledge, it is also suitable for (re)negotiations of power and leadership in metal music. Although the voice was already a polygon for transgression in the male metal vocalists' practices of heavy, glam, and, later on, extreme metal, the task for frontwomen vocalists was not only to reclaim their feminine, bodily, ephemeral position of a singer but to transform it from within. The transformation has been twofold: on the one hand, by way of introducing the female bel canto in metal, on the other hand, by mastering the extreme voice. Compared to the previous understanding of what female voice and

vocal leadership in metal and other music genres can perform (usually associated with the characteristics found also in bel canto), the inclusion or, better yet, mastery of the extreme vocalization works towards the understanding of diverse – and not always conventionally feminine, private and "proper"– modes of womanhood. In that context, the tendency for growth and development in both directions and the request and necessity for diversification of metal voice is notably seen in the international framework as well as in the Serbian metal scene which is humbler in terms of logistics and number of active participants. As a result of "catching up to" or even determining the direction of that trend, female Serbian metal leaders and vocalists are deserving of the audience's and scholarly attention, to which this text hopefully will contribute.

Table 1: Serbian bands with female vocalists.

Band	Active years	Genre	Vocalist(s)	Type of vocals	Additional remarks
Claymore / Claymorean	1994–2003, 2012–2014, 2014–	epic power / symphonic	Dejana Betsa Garčević (since 2012)	clean, bel canto/operatic	added a female vocal in 2012
Kramp	1999–?	Death Metal/ Grindcore	Ivana Savić	fry scream	another male vocal, growl technique
Abonos	1999- (on hold)	Gothic/ Symphonic/ Thrash	Marija Dokmanović and Marta Vlahović	clean, bel canto/operatic	Dokmanović also played the keyboards
Moondive	2001–?	power/progressive	Smiljka Milosavljević (2001–2005), Marija Hadži-Ilić (backing), Maja Gajić (backing), Anita Gvozdić (2006–?)	clean/operatic/bel canto	/
Rain Delay	?2003–	fusion metal	Ana Pešić, Aleksandra Sana Rasulić, Bojana Milosavljević (2009–12)	clean; clean; cleanandscream	guitarist/vocalist Pešić presents herself as frontman
Odium Inc.	2005–?	melodic death	Romana Dević	growl, false cords	/
Awaiting Fear	2007–2014	death metal	Alisa Cerić	Growl	female vocal only

Destiny Potato/ Sordid Pink	?2011–	pop / progressive / djent	Aleksandra Đelmaš	clean, scream	female vocal only
Sakramentum	2011–2015	symphonic black/death	Ivana Savić	fry scream	/
Nemesis	2013–	melodic death metal	Sanja Drča	false cord, fry scream	all-female band
Jenner	2013–	Speed/ Thrash Metal	Anđelina Mitić (2013–19), Aleksandra Stamenković (2019–)	clean, clean with distortion	all-female band

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Female Agency, Genres and Aesthetics of Sorrow in Persian Classical Music

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Abstract: *In today's Iran, the prohibition of female musicians from public performance of dance, solo voice, and occasionally, instrumental music under the rules by the Islamic regime extremely challenges women to maintain active professional status in music. Starting my all-women Persian classical music ensemble in 2011, my colleagues and I agreed upon defining ourselves within the "artistic" scope without falling into the "flashy" tagline of marginalized "all-women group" (gorūh-e bānuvān). In Shi'a Iran (since the 14th century), a long-standing urge to legitimize music by differentiating classical art from the "undervalued" light-hearted music of lower-class entertainers (motrebs), followed by Iranian modernization and influence motivated by Western aesthetic schools led to emphasized divisions in the philosophy, ethics and aesthetics of genres. The ethos of sorrow, a dominant aesthetic expression in Persian classical music, has long defined the repertoire, genre and performing artistry through affiliation with maktab (artistic school) heritage and Persian mystic philosophy. The reinforcement of this ethos under Islamism through Shi'a emotional culture and socio-political boundaries for musical performance was more intensified in the post-Republic (1979) Iran. The aesthetics has contextualized a social fabric for defining professional female agency in a competitively male-dominated tradition and an escape from the stereotypical past image of female courtesan entertainers and overall marginalization of art music. In this chapter, through several examples, including my autoethnography as an Iranian female musician, I explore the quality of social aesthetics of sorrow as a distinction of genre, agency, class and their implications in the case of female music in Iran.*

Keywords: *Iranian music, gender, music education, Islam, social aesthetics of music.*

As I founded my all-women music ensemble in 2011 under Iranian state's restrictions on female musicians, my colleagues and I agreed upon defining ourselves within the "artistic" scope without falling into the "flashy" tagline of marginalized "all-women group" (*gorūh-e bānuvān*). This choice was based on the awareness of at least two controversial connotations regarding the concept of "women's music" in the professional domain of the early 21st century Iran: first, women as the inferior and less advanced performers, excluded from the serious musical scene, who occupy a place somewhere on the margins

as a vulnerable musical "visibility"; and second, the exceptional women daring to stand independently to perform their own music, yet often overshadowed or devoured by a social message or political atmosphere in resistance to the norms of a segregated society. Disregarding both, my focus was "the art by women as artists", but not a marginalized gender.

In this chapter, I discuss the socio-historical dimensions of genre, class and aesthetics in Iranian classical music and their impact on the emergence of female agency and female musicianship in Iran. I explore how the historical and present choices and limitations in the socio-political, religious and cultural context of Iran have shaped aesthetics of sorrow as a distinctive element of a musical genre and social class. By presenting historical cases of female musicians' agency and sharing my autoethnographic experiences as a female ensemble leader, performer and educator, I analyze how women navigate the music system, particularly in the art music of Iran and how they develop their agency inside that system.

The Phenomenon of All-Women Ensembles in Iran

Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, the female voice and dance have been eliminated from the public stage. Today, while women are allowed to learn music, they are under official restrictions regarding performance and their visible activity in the public space – especially for the mixed audience. These barriers are even more intense in some provinces, due to their local rules. Regardless of its dominance as one of the most historical and artistic cities in Iran, my hometown Isfahan has been long bearing the scar of prohibition on women's stage-performance. The political rules centralized around religious authority have marginalized women's performance even further, limiting instrumental music playing as well. My last public performances as a santūr player in Isfahan went back to more than a decade before opening my ensemble. They referred back to my conservatory graduation concert and a music festival held annually in commemoration of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. However, at the birth time of my ensemble, the oppression and conservatism in the post Green-movement[1] era of President Ahmadinejad had already terminated many musical events and normalized tight restrictions. In Tehran, the rules against women's performance were slightly milder, although extremely unstable, depending on daily policies, propagandas, and legalities by both political and religious authorities.

While the category of "all-women ensemble" was hardly a preferred opportunity, my colleagues and I considered the initial proposition from my old-time conservatory master and the manager of an institution where I was teaching at the time. He was aware of our educational background in Isfahan Music Conservatory[2], a university bachelor's degree in Iranian classical music, and recent professional career as performers and teachers

1 This movement happened nationwide in protest to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency in 2009.

2 Official music academies in secondary and high school levels that exist only in a few major cities of Iran.

– albeit with the regular limitations for women – in the conservatory and private institutions. As a supporter and mentor, my teacher was optimistic that the idea of an all-women group performing for all-women audience would at least open a window for representing women's artistry, not to be wasted, while simultaneously adding more publicity and artistic resolutions to his institution and its inspiring leadership in the city. We found the potentials of this limiting, yet optimistic concept of "all-women ensemble" as an only – though narrow – possibility for our musical fulfilment. My years of teaching and leading Persian music ensemble courses in girls' conservatory[3] and my young students' substantial achievements in school concerts optimized my urge to collaborate with colleagues, motivate our students for the future roles, contribute to the city's gender[4] diversity, and pursuit farther horizons in professional performance. Women needed to experience and to be heard more independently – even if only by the female audience – in the male-dominated art music scene. Based on their competency, a selected number of young performers among my conservatory cohorts and other educated musicians were solicited to join the ensemble. I arranged a solid classical repertoire based on the *maktab* (artistic school) in which I was trained, with the aim of presenting a classical art performance, distinct from the common simplified or commercialized repertoire of many other groups. This was the beginning of my all-women *Nasim* Ensemble[5] (*gorūh-e bānuvān-e Nasim*) in Isfahan, Iran, that remained active and won several recognitions and awards from the most competitive Iranian international festivals until I left the country in 2016.

The recognition of my group as the only accepted ensemble from the province and the only female one admitted for competition among twelve selected classical ensembles nation-wide in the prominent annual *Fajr International Festival of Music* (Tehran) in 2013, brought some publicity. I received an interview from *Sharq Newspaper* to elaborate more on the status of female music in Isfahan. The interviewer quoted Mohammad Qotbi, a clergy member and then the head of Isfahan Culture and Guidance Administration, who (surprisingly) compared music bands to the national soccer team – where female performers must have (male) substitutes as of players in a soccer team. Qotbi stated, "this ban is an unwritten law that has been observed in the city for more than 10 years. Musical groups that perform in Isfahan must comply with the unwritten laws of his department and have a contingency plan to replace their female members" (Eng. Trans. *Radio Zamaneh* 2014). Insisting on the importance of Isfahan as a religious city, Qotbi's disapproval ruled

3 The post-revolutionary Iran (since 1979) obligates the gender-segregated education prior to the university level. This rule applies to music conservatories which are divided to boys' and girls' schools. The issue of teacher's same gender for each is still a point of conflict in provincial legislative systems as women are disallowed to teach in boys' school, however the lack of female teachers for some music courses makes the male employment in girls' schools unquestionable. This is a recurring matter of dispute – with less intensity in Tehran compared to other cities – between religious authorities and music directors.

4 The concept of "gender" in Iran stills remains in the male and female categories as formally recognized frames.

5 The state's official restriction on video-recording female music made the recording impossible. However, unofficial video samples and rehearsals can be found on "Nasim Ahmadian" YouTube channel.

locally, despite the official authorization from the Central Ministry of Culture in Tehran. *Sharq Newspaper* reflected, although briefly, my response to Qotbi as I emphasized the more fundamental issue of holding women, the equally professional and active talents, from the art scene by quoting me, "the omission of female players [performers] in Isfahan has led to the deterioration of the music scene in the province. Women make up half of the active and creative population and they have been paralyzed" (Eng. Trans. *Iran Times International* 2014).

In such an imposing socio-political and prohibitive frame, the idea of beginning an independent female ensemble of educated young musicians distant from Tehran, not only in a marginalized social life, but also a male-dominated art was a question of critical aims and attitudes. A female ensemble was unparalleled in non-egalitarian musical arena, yet unavoidably, a form of social resistance and professional solidarity that could simultaneously overshadow its own artistic value. For this reason, my focus was on presenting the music *per se*, the aesthetics and authenticity of the classical genre, rather than the prevailing gendered, political, or religious label that had long imposed definitions to Iranian music and its morality.

Duality in Genre, Elitism and Social Class for Iranian Music

The aesthetic education of Iranian classical (art) music with inclination to the ethos of sorrow was established through various historical dimensions. Here, I focus on the important aspects coinciding with two dynamic changes during the Iranian modernization in early 20th century: first, the rise of musical elitism with an urge to draw a distinction between musicians as masters of the art music and the general *motreb* (entertainers) known as the lower class of the illiterate society; and second, the formalization of *maktab* to be an inclusive system of art education and ethics through dissemination of music as a "respectable" craft and crystalized national heritage.

Both these interdependent factors were outcomes of several socio-cultural changes in Iran regarding modernity, nationalism and Westernization. The new experiences included a general advancement in the educational system, increasing awareness toward national identity and the collective past, foreign relations and influence, and radical cultural directions such as *kashf-e hijāb* (unveiling women) in 1936 under Pahlavi regime. This period was also the beginning for music schools and publications, public concerts, new music bands, national radio and television, recording industry, and the emergence of bourgeoisie, especially in the Iranian urban life. The pinnacle of these changes settled new contexts for defining the arts, aesthetics, identity, class, educational tradition and performing stage. The result drew hard borderlines between the music of *motrebi* – as a light joyful music of the uneducated – and classical music – as the sophisticated art for the educated who are aware of Persian national heritage.

Although various regions and ethnicities in Iran have constantly added to the content and artistry of Iranian music repertoire, the bloom of modernized urban life and nationalism by the 20th century enhanced new cultural levels. An example is the social polarization of urban Iran, most notably in the spatial division of Tehran into the north and the south city. As Breyley and Fatemi (2015: 1) emphasize, this distinction marked

the north city or uptown (*bālā-shahr*) as the "modern" and the south city or downtown (*pāyīn-e shahr)* as the "traditional" caste of musicians. The social status of *motrebs* was as the following,

> The motreb [festive musicians] organized themselves under the direction of theatrical troupes with which they had previously been sporadically associated… In the eyes of many Tehran residents, the *motreb* is an illiterate, downtown [*pāyīn-e shahr*] musician. His manners are uncouth and he lacks respectability (ibid.).

Considering its historical and contextual layers of meaning, the term "traditional" in this division refers to illiteracy, lower values, and cultural and moral backwardness. It is noteworthy that the word "*motreb*" has been redefined in a fundamentally changed context throughout the history, as Breyley and Fatemi (ibid.) explain:

> If the word *motreb* (derived from Arabic, literally "one who creates joy or generates pleasure") once referred to all categories of musicians without differentiation, today – more precisely, since the beginning of the twentieth century – it has become a derogatory term that is applied only to musicians who perform at weddings, parties and other festive events, to distinguish them from those who practice Iranian art music.

The modified definition of *motreb* and its attached subculture agrees with the historical references to the term – especially after the Safavids' officialization of Shīism in Iran during 16th-18th centuries. According to William Beeman (2007: 47–50), the secular music in Shi'a Iran was marginalized socially and morally, attributed mostly to the non-Muslim, ethnic or minority groups (e.g., Jewish, Iranian-Armenian) who could perform it in public without religious shame. This status contradicts with theosophical use of the term praised in numerous Medieval treatises and Persian Sufi poetry. As Azadehfar (2014: 3–7) classifies the diversity of these views, many philosophers, scholars and Sufi poets (i.e., Rumi, Hafez, Sa'di, Roudaki) who were also accomplished musicians, praised music to the level of mystic practice, wisdom, and a connecting source between the dual celestial (heavenly) and terrestrial (earthly) worlds that built the core of Persian cosmology.

Although there is no clear evidence on when and how the meaning of *motreb* was precisely recontextualized in reference to the light music of entertainment and festivity by the outcast, this frame seems to emerge with the formal establishment of musical education and dissemination of *maktab* pedagogy in Iran under Qajar dynasty (1789–1925). This was also the time of stricter boundaries for the male musical domains (Fatemi 2005: 400). While many distinguished musicians were still at the royal court's service, during this period the classical music began to embrace a deliberate and resentful separation from *motrebi*, entertainment and trivial pleasure. The reluctance or escape of some royal-sponsored educated musicians such as Darvishkhan and Vaziri from the royal or patronage's obligations on performing demands are the instances of art musicians' resistance to joyful musical service for the royalty and the tasteless crowd.

The class and educational gap between the art and entertaining genres and classified societies, for both men and women, becomes even more dominant during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979). This era was also the epitome of artistic revival and institutionalization, modernization, intellectual awareness, and genre division in the musical scene

of Iran. With the Pahlavi's support of the ancient Persian identity and cultural affluency, many classical musicians constructed the basis of newly state-respected music. They aspired reflecting the artistic and cultural values to the highest levels of educational and aesthetic canons as they had encountered in Europe. Persian classical music was to flourish into its philosophical and technical grandeur as of the Persian poetry; this vision typically refused the light pop genres. The new elite's efforts, therefore, materialized in practice and scholarship as compensation for many centuries of scarcity and dismal in serious publicization of art music under the political and ethical authority of the Islamic state.

In his recent critiques on the overlooked case of *motrebi* culture in Iran and the popular entertaining music of the Middle East in general, Anthony Shay (2018: 11) argues that the contemporary scholarly attempts by Iranian and international intellectuals have despised the importance of this tradition by consigning them to the "historical trash bin" and condemning them as "imitative, repetitive, diluted and sensual". Classical music, on the other hand, is "creative, original, sober, and [above all], spiritual". Shay attributes a part of current public embarrassment of Iranian artistic society regarding the *motrebi* music to the dissemination of art music discourse as a high culture, emphasized through the international scholarly works by Dariush Safvat and Jean During and their influence on music studies over the past decades. In her historic analysis of the cultural and political degradation of the heavily featured *shesh-o-hasht* (6/8) groove in Iranian pop music, Farzaneh Hemmasi (2020: 39–40) also mentions the "unmodern, debauched, and vulgar" associations with the *motrebi* music that was restricted from pre-revolutionary state radio and television. The music of this genre, as Nahid Siamdoust (2017: 42–45) explains, refers to café music and *kucheh-bāzāri* (songs of the streets and bazaar), with their distinct style and performing space or a part of *ruhowzi*, which was a social theatre performed in house courtyards, offering a comical commentary on daily life (ivi: 21).

Nevertheless, it is impossible to overlook the formation of art musical aesthetics as a doctrine based on its content, structure, interpretation, affect, and performing space compared to other genres, including *motrebi*. Not only the repertoire and musical skills by the master, but also the audience and emotional setting were among the signifiers of the art genre in contrast to the *motrebi* tradition. With its affiliation to the educated, mystic poetry, music schools and concert halls, the classical genre was an invitation for the audience to sit silently in a formal venue, listen deeply, concentrate on the weighty content of the poetry and even have some knowledge of the noble Persian art history. It was "the music by the elite and educated, for the elite and educated". The *motrebi* genre, on the other hand, was known as the music of weddings and happy ceremonies, street events and lighter moods played by "performing troops" who were often from the lower society and working-class. Although their music had various levels of sophistication from which occasionally great musicians arose, the occupation was still appointed to their low rank[6] or in service to the upper class. In her categorization of the relationship between musical performance and social values, Ellen Koskoff also mentions the social-sexual role and marginality of women in the "class-stratified socioeconomic system" in the court music

6 There was a variety in the social rank, position, and performing stages of these minorities and public entertainers, however, they were often divided from the art music class.

context, especially in the Middle East and Asia (Koskoff 2014: 124). In Iran, the femininity and social inferiority were certain characteristics of the *motrebi* entertainment and at points, symbols of erotic pleasure and visibility as dancing and physical attraction were often left to women.[7]

Female Music and the Social Aesthetics

In his ethnographic history[8] of Iranian contemporary music, Rouhollah Khaleqi, the music historian, composer and educator (Khaleqi Vol. I. 2002: 360), emphasizes the lack of published evidence on the female's role in the art music. Except for a few female musicians' names mentioned in the court memoire of *Tarikh-e Azodi* in early Qajar era, women either decided, or it was decided for them to be excluded from the public attention. This absence, either through self-isolation or imposed marginality in the art genre interlinked with the moral criticism by the Islamic society and the attached image to the past courtesan performance. It increased the stereotyped stratification of female agency in *motrebi,* even though among them were high talents as singers, dancers and percussionists. Khaleqi mentions Mohtaram Kalimi and Ghodsi, to name a few.

Emphasizing this professional fracture in female's learning process of classical music, Khaleqi (Vol. I. 2002: 363–7) highlights a gendered, yet delicate aesthetic evaluation of female vocalists in Iran by which their training was deviated, especially when receiving admiration from their male counterparts or dedicated fans. The non-functional critical system and competitive stage for women, due to their position as alienated practitioners of the classical genre, as well as their physical and vocal charm, prevented them from the serious stage of aesthetic refinement and artistry.

What Khaleqi uncovers is an existing fact in today's Iranian vocal art, especially since the ban on female voice in post-revolutionary Iran. Women's vocal – and more broadly, instrumental – artistry is generally evaluated as lower levels of competency. In vocal music, this is notable in women's lesser tendency toward the risk of learning and applying sophisticated *tahrīrs* (melisma), advanced techniques, and as I discuss later in this chapter, moving beyond the structure of light *tasnīf* and *tarāneh* (metric love songs) pieces. Likewise, the situation stands in the instrumental music for the representation of advanced techniques, arrangements, improvisation and depth of interpretation. This dichotomy has affected the aesthetic arena of female music in a way that they are either over-encouraged by the non-expert feedback or dismissed for lack of substantial artistry by the experts' criticism. The extremes are lower for the formally educated women, especially the instrumentalists, due to their subtle self-projecting image, compared to the vocalist's central role.

7 See for instance the fresco painting depicting court dancers from Hasht-Behesht Palace, Isfahan, Iran, Safavid era, circa 1669. https://musiclifeword.org/material-culture/mehmoonifinal2/ (accessed 4 October 2022).

8 Originally published in 1954.

We should note that the gender-stratification of music education roots in a deeper texture of Iranian society in the 19th and 20th centuries. Khaleqi describes the social participation of Iranian women during the Qajar era as the following:

> In the streets[9], men and women had to follow separate pedways, even if they were a couple! Women were excluded from attending theatrical plays. The only two movie theaters in Tehran accepted men only. There were a small number of girls' schools and only few families were able to send their daughters to public education. In general, the facilities for woman's education were scarce. (Khaleqi Vol. II. 2002: 195)

However, in early 20th century, several fundamental and ideological changes occurred in the educational environment of music through the new attitudes by Ali-Naqi Vaziri (1887–1979), who is also known as the father of musical modernity in Iran. Vaziri was a former military colonel and a composer, virtuoso tār player, teacher and musical theorist who started the first formal music school of Iran, *madrasa-ye ʿāli-e musiqi* (Superior School of Music) in 1924, after completing his musical studies in Europe. He made enthusiastic efforts to include women in the educational environment (Farhat 2003). In the light of his moral and musical competency, Vaziri gained the state officials' permission to lead women-only art sessions for educated women of respected ethical reputation. Known to be the female's first formal art education, the music and painting courses were offered to a limited number of women during restricted hours with the least male attendance. The training resulted in the formation of a musical club and movie theater for women, and a number of concerts by these educated female performers under Vaziri. However, according to Khaleqi (2002, 196–7), the music program was soon terminated, due to the conflicts caused by unsupportive authorities and social hostility toward Vaziri's modern views.

The Legacy of Female Musicians

This awakening, yet turbulent era of music activism for women under the socio-cultural and religious struggles aimed at new aesthetic and moral divisions. A small number of young musicians, who set up the artistic and ethical models for the contemporary and future generations, blossomed. One of the eminent legends is Qamar[10] ol-Molouk Vaziri (1905–1959), a highly respected classical female vocalist with a distinguished mezzo soprano voice, who began learning at an early age through attending female *rowzeh* sessions with her renowned *rowzeh-khān* (*rowzeh* singer) grandmother, Kheir al-Nessa. *Rowzeh-khani* is a form of narrative and melodic recitation in a lamenting voice for the tragedy of Shi'a martyrs of Karbalā, which is performed at the religious gatherings. Similar to many well-known Iranian vocalists, Qamar began learning and performing *āvāz* (Persian vocal art) through the religious ritual and mournful Shi'a gatherings, with a focus on the musical interpretation of sorrow.

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9 Translated from Persian to English by the author.

10 Evidently, she changed her last name to "Vaziri" in homage to Vaziri's efforts. Her iconicity in Iranian music and social values of charity is often compared to that of Umm Kulthum in Egypt.

In her remarks, Qamar emphasizes the role of these early trainings through accompanying her vocalist grandmother, ear training on the modal and tonal qualities of the Shi'a religious elegies and the chance of performing in front of the *rowzeh* audience as her first aural music schooling and effective way to become an esteemed Persian vocalist (Khaleqi Vol. III. 2002: 139; Nakjavani 2008). Qamar is also known for the first public appearance of an Iranian female vocalist without the obligatory Islamic veil (*hijāb*) in 1924 in Tehran's Grand Hotel. She began her professional music lessons with the great master of tār, Morteza Neidavoud, who first accompanied her voice on tār in a private gathering and advised flourishing her unique voice with a proper knowledge and skills of the *radīf* repertoire. The incident resulted in Qamar's completion of training with Neidavoud and upcoming fame and concerts. She soon performed *āvāz* and technically elevated *tasnīfs* on national radio and new recordings with many distinguished musicians including Abol-Hassan Saba (violin), Habib Sama'ee (santūr), Hossein Yahaqi (violin), and Neidavoud himself. Her refined interpretation of melancholy, deep lyrics and the vocal artistry not only made her a primary icon of female musicianship, but also established genuine models for acclaimed musicians and male vocalists of the following generations, including Mohammad Reza Shajarian, the great vocalist master of *āvāz* in Iran.

Among the following generation of female vocalists, several acclaimed artists such as Roohangiz, Delkash, Marzieh, Moluk Zarrabi, Khatereh Parvaneh, Sima Bina, Afsaneh, and Parisa arose, who were also educated musicians[11] and high-calibre performers of the art genre. They contributed to the establishment of female agency, not only through their specialized competency in Persian classical music, but also their publicity with distinguished orchestras and ensembles through then highly-valued music programs of Iranian national radio and television. These valued recordings are continuously referential as training models by contemporary musicians, including my ensemble.

The Impact of *Maktab* Aesthetics and the Ethos of Sorrow on Female Music

The ethos of sorrow (*huzn*) and its aesthetics form a predominant aspect of artistry and affect in Persian classical music, which have been appreciated and addressed by Iranian and Western scholars (Azadehfar 2017; Caton 2008; During 1991; Zonis 1973). A subtle, yet enriched emotional and technical interpretation of the classical repertoire, with its philosophical and mystic content through the ethos of sorrow relate the performance to the authenticity of this genre, which is the focus in *maktab* training. Accordingly, a deep classical performance is integrated with the understanding of Persian classical poetry, its themes and the rhetoric of mystic love and melancholy. By contrast, a performance based on light lyrics, festive moods, and less complexity reminds the music of entertainment and the less educated from the past.

Historically, the praised aesthetic frame focusing on the depth of melancholy and sorrow roots not only in the turbulent emotional life and cultural memory of Iranians' battles and misfortunes over the centuries, but more deeply, in the philosophy and poetics of love and *'irfan* (mysticism) in Persian thought and literature. However, in the mu-

11 Mostly under trainings of Vaziri and his musical descendants' *maktabs.*

sical culture, this aesthetic quality dominates the structure, performance, and authenticity, due to the historical exploitation of music as an illegitimate craft or a disgraceful occupation, unapproved by religion and moral values of the society. Thus, the *maktab* education and its framework not only provided a method of transmitting music as a secular art to the selected deserving pupils, but also created a respected cultural identity for independent musicians. Through this shared awareness, the art musicians in modern Iran focused their efforts on the establishment of *maktab* – and its aesthetic values – as a division or sanctuary for the art genre. In her survey of the integration between musical genres and current socio-political issues of post-revolutionary Iran, Ann Lucas (2006: 84) also highlights a more secure position in terms of the state's persecutions for Iranian classical music due to its "erudite reputation" that was "housed in conservatory-style facilities and integrated into governmental bureaucracy before the revolution". It resulted in a more "lenient regulation" of classical music compared to other genres. Ameneh Youssefzadeh (2000: 38–41) also brings examples of the new cultural policies by the Islamic Republic to legitimize traditional Iranian music under directives of "development of spiritual culture".

Nevertheless, it is also considerable that a long-term marginalization of women in public musical arena, firstly within the context of Islamic restrictions on music performance, then intensified by the elite male-dominated class of the Shi'a society, and finally through the extreme prohibitions by the Islamic Republic have faded out women's image of artistry and activism on the aesthetic arch of musicking. This paucity has increased the educated female musicians' preference to pursue the aesthetic values of melancholic expression and ethos of sorrow as the "erudite" authenticity in the classical *maktab* repertoire and interpretation.

An example for the aesthetic division in the artistry of the genres through *maktab* is the interpretation of classical *āvāzī*[12] repertoire, which requires years of intensive training and dedicated master-apprentice relationship. It is a collection of modal vocal and instrumental pieces with metric flexibility, interpretative elements, and abundant ornamentations in the *radīf* repertoire. Performing *āvāz* is sophisticated, interpretive, expressive, and it requires not only a demanding understanding of Persian poetics and symbolic emotional components, but also an advanced level of musical techniques, dynamic expression and improvisation integrated with the memorized *radīf* material. Additionally, the musician is required to represent the mood of the *dastgāh* (mode), its *gūsheh* (modal sections), and the phrasing dynamics as well as learning how to create, direct, and fulfil the mood of performance. This is merely a brief example of the aesthetic framework of *āvāzī* that differentiates its artistry and affect from the simple *tasnīf* and *tarāneh* music in the more popular (*mardomī*) and entertaining genres.

This is a potential reason for the artistic modern evolution of *tasnīf* in terms of the content, message and artistry toward themes of freedom, justice, patriotism and social improvement, especially by the new wave of poets and songwriters such as Malek o-Shoara Bahar and Aref Qazvini. This change occurred in light of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) and categorized the new high-calibre works under the title

12 Lit. vocal in Persian. A lot of its artistry derives from the vocal centrality of Persian music.

of "revolutionary *tasnīf*". Yet, the traditional *tasnīf* was attached mostly to the entertaining mood, lyrical content and easy-reaching to the audience crowd.

Within the context of these boundaries, the framework of aesthetic interpretation is more identifiable for the female musicians who follow *maktab* training. Their level of artistry is a deliberate decision and effort to exclude themselves from the preconception and the past public image of an "entertainer" and find their place as respectable performer musicians and teachers in a male-dominated and historically marginalized art. Thus, the musical elements such as virtuosity, improvisation, interpretive complexities, emotional expression, and professional display, along with the choice of repertoire, poetry, body movements and sexual visibility form the evaluative approach for the authenticity of *maktab* aesthetics, including the ethos of sorrow.

In this perspective, the aim of my ensemble was to present classical music within the *maktab* aesthetics and emotional scopes, though beyond the gender stratifications of artistry. While I was firm in maintaining the female identity, there was no intention for false boundaries on the content and quality. My classical repertoire and *maktab*-calibre performance was maintained equally throughout our concerts with a female vocalist for female-only audience, as well as when performing in *Fajr Festival* with a male vocalist – due to its restrictions on performing for the mixed audience. The performers' outfit and visual appearances were carefully chosen to be subtle and traditionally formal. The setting and arrangements for the audience demanded extensive attention to the artistry, silent listening, interpretive poetry and ethos of melancholy. Our focus on collective emotional cultivation and dynamic interpretation was frequently appreciated by the audience. The program contained a classical repertoire of successful works with reference to both male and female vocalists from the pre-revolutionary era of Iran, which had not been performed often after 1979.

Coda: New Paradigms for Female Music and the Public Image

After a strict shut down, the gradual resume of musical education for women in the post-revolutionary Iran and fundamental changes under the new regime has made women aware of their qualified voice through promoting themselves as professional art musicians. They have developed enthusiastic efforts toward the classical aesthetics and credibility found in Qamar and other distinguished female musicians who took *maktab* and/or formal music school education. They have entered the competitive male-dominated ground and when restricted by law, they take the women-only opportunities. In a close study of the female-only musical events in Iran, Wendy DeBano (2005: 455) highlights the symbiotic relationship between music and gender roles in Iran:

> Arguments about the permissibility of music in Islam, the general social status of musicians, the important distinction between professional and amateur musicians, and the hierarchy of musical genres in a given context cannot be divorced from issues of gender.

In a broader context, the matter of gendered musical phenomena such as "women-only ensemble", "women-only concerts/festivals" have been debated as the alternative meth-

ods by the political regime to "foster gender segregation" in Lucas's terms (Lucas 2006: 81) and open a (controlled) space for female activity through giving semi-free yet Islamic identity to women empowerment in Iran. This semi-open space is subject to multiple dimensions of criticism and controversies among both female and male musicians and audiences.

Projecting on the case of female music in contemporary Iran, my observations and personal engagement as a musician and ethnomusicologist confirm the existence of multi-layered perspectives and priorities by women ensembles: The resistance to the primary concept of "women's music as a division" is reflected in firm avoidance of some groups to perform in non-negotiated female-only events, while others, such as *Nasim* Ensemble, stand to perform autonomously within the aesthetics of the art genre. For several reasons, including publicity, other groups (e.g. *Mahbanoo*) moderate the aesthetic challenge and female autonomy in favour of the entertainment. These are among the facts contributing to the rearrangement of the socio-cultural fabric for Iranian classical music and its emotional aesthetics not only for women musicians, but also for the gender-free domain of artistry at large.

Today, in the first half of 21st century, aesthetic paradigms of classical music are going through a major change under the dominance of social media. Women dress up and flash out their visuality, as well as their music and picture. Their caution for self-portrayal with head-covering is still maintained while presenting solo vocal performance – illegal in the Islamic Republic law. Many female ensembles (e.g., *Gillariss, Bahar-narenj*) now release their works exclusively on social media or perform on foreign satellite channels. Regardless of the length and level of their studies in *maktabs,* women publicize their education via sharing photos and selfies from the classroom settings by renowned masters such as Shajarian and Lotfi. While the authenticity of genre, repertoire and live performance stand on the margin, the new visual accessibility and competitive virtual publicity (e.g., number of followers, comments and music video clip circulations) rearrange the aesthetic criteria for female performers. In addition, women's access to music education and their arrival in various fields of music have encouraged male musicians and composers to work with women, especially in terms of vocalists, or all-women groups with a male leader. The goal is often to satisfy the prompt visual and sonic needs of the forever judging audience who quickly roll down their social media pages to the next post, leaving prompt comments in attack or favor of women performers. The expression of female agency is shifting from aesthetics of sorrow and musical techniques toward the visibility of performance, space and self-portrayal. Whether or not these changes lead to the formation of new aesthetic structures and performing ethos in female musicianship will be a question for future research and observation.

Figure 1: Poster of Nasim ensemble's concert (designed by artist Najmeh Moradi Chadegani) depicting symbolic elements of Isfahan's historical architecture, calligraphy and Persian colorful birds. The announcement reads "For Women only". The venue was a private music institution in Isfahan, 2012. Image used by permission.

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"What Moves the World, Moves My Ass as Well": Mimi Mercedez as an Anti-heroine of Postsocialist Serbia

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Abstract: *Milena Janković, better known as Mimi Mercedez, is a Serbian rapper, who achieved great popularity during the past decade. Working in the domain of trap/hip hop music, and adapting various key features of the genre – keeping it real, promoting a "badass" attitude, dealing with issues of street life, sex, crime, violence, drugs – she constructs Mimi Mercedez as figure of an empowered, strong, "say-it-like-it-is" woman. This chapter focuses on how such an empowered femininity is performed within the context of contemporary Serbia's music market, and how it intersects with various positions that resonate with the idea of leadership. Namely, in her interviews and public appearances, as well as her music, she emphasizes her role as the "leader of her generation", someone teenagers and young adults (should) look up to, and has, particularly in the past two years, been active in "educating" her fans about various social issues, attitudes they should adopt, very often sharing her life views and attempting to help people "find their way through life". She adopts/adapts the roles of a "hero" and/or "anti-hero", "idol", a representative of both good and bad aspects of contemporary Serbian youth etc., and in doing so, continuously de/re/constructs the trope of female empowerment, which currently dominates the music industry.*

Keywords: *Mimi Mercedez, trap, leadership, empowerment, postsocialism.*

My goal in this chapter is to analyze the ways in which the notion of female leadership is (re/de)constructed and intertwined with various other strategies of the contemporary music industry in Serbia, focusing on certain aspects of the music and public persona of a famous hip hop/trap artist, Mimi Mercedez. I place emphasis on the notion of female empowerment, as a token of feminism which became omnipresent in the popular culture and media over the past three decades. Seeing how the construction of a figure of an empowered woman is today a commonplace within the music industry, my goal is to understand how such a persona is imagined through different leadership roles in the case of Mimi Mercedez and within the context of postsocialist Serbian music market. Given that she works predominantly within the genre of trap/hip hop, Mimi Mercedez readily uses different tropes of the global hip hop culture, attempting to voice the experience of women working in a predominantly male genre, as well as women living in "disaster cap-

italism" (Atanasoski and McElroy 2018: 273)[1] that flourishes in ex-Yugoslav and Eastern European countries. The work of this particular trap artist was chosen primarily because she has been drawing the attention of the public for the past decade as the "controversial (female) rapper" who doesn't shy away from discussing, in songs as well as public appearances, gender roles, sex, female sexuality, politics, etc., and who built her reputation as someone to whom younger generations look up to. As a woman who speaks her mind and does her own thing, Mimi Mercedez openly insists on the fact that she should be something of a role model for young people of the region. My goal is to analyze different strategies that she employs in the process of constructing herself as such a role model and to understand how she constructed her persona to be an (anti)heroine of contemporary society. In the case of Mimi Mercedez, I speak about leadership in a variety of ways, given that her public persona is constructed through tropes of being the best among rappers (mostly through dissing other rappers in her songs), an idol who can teach younger generations how to think for themselves and be strong, and even a kind of life coach, filming videos about her chosen lifestyle. With that in mind, my focus in this chapter is on her constructions of the figure of an antiheroine of our time, which in a way underpins, or rounds up her various leadership agendas.

Mimi Mercedez

"That artistic 'last name' sounds to me like an extravagant Black or Latin female name and also [...] the porn star Nina Mercedez is my 'mother' and because the German quality is the Serbian mentality" (Svet&Scandal 2015). This is how Milena Janković (1992),[2] one of the prominent hip hop artists from Serbia, described the choice of her stage name, mapping some of the most important features of her music and work: the relationship

1 The quoted authors use the term to refer to truly disastrous consequences that the introduction of capitalism into socialist systems had on the countries' economies, as well as on lives of ordinary people, some of which I analyze in this chapter. Disaster capitalism is used to refer to various contradictions of the Euro-American liberalism, as well as to denote a situation specific for post-socialist countries, in which the disastrous features of capitalism are clearly revealed through the process of transition away from socialism (Atanasoski and McElroy 2018: 273). In addition, Naomi Klein uses the expression as well, when writing about "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities". (Klein 2007: 4). In other words, I employ the term to denote capitalism's tendency to make a profit out of everything, which has become something of a motto of corporations and political elites in postsocialist countries over the last three decades.

2 According to another interview, she chose this nickname because a Mercedes hit her when she was a little girl, which is an information that could easily be made up. The Mercedes nevertheless has an important symbolic place, as it references the love for the German car brands among Serbian citizens and especially the members of the large Balkan diaspora in Germany and Austria, among whom the Mercedes is considered something of a status symbol, a token of success and wealth. In the early stages of her career, she used other aliases as well, like Guda iz Huda (a free translation to English could be Pig from the hood), Sestra Drugarica (sister-female friend), Kabasti Koblenc and Jovanka Oroz (a wordplay alluding to Jovanka Broz, wife of the Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito, and the Serbian word for a trigger on a gun). In a Facebook status from 2015, she mentioned that the other aliases help her "artificially boost Serbia's quota of female rappers".

with the music of the people of color in the US via hip hop, exploration of women's sexuality and life experiences in her texts and music videos and wish be the voice of the young generations living in postsocialist Serbia.

She belongs to the younger generation of rappers who primarily perform trap music and whose popularity and influence substantially grew during the last decade. One of the main features of the work of these trappers is the wish to differentiate themselves from older generations of rappers, who saw the genre mainly as an alternative to the dominant culture. Over the course of around forty years, local hip hop scenes developed through multiple processes of renegotiation of elements of global hip hop culture, with their most important feature being the belonging to the underground music scene. Artists mostly performed reality rap (Nenić 2006: 160), speaking about various social issues and the reality of living in postsocialist Serbia, adapting/adopting signifiers of hip hop like rapping about the ghetto (Ajduk and Pišev 2018; Nenić 2006; Šentevska 2017), sampling various signifiers of the local culture (Cvetanović 2019; Nenić 2019) and so on. Such a scene was changed with the generation of rappers following role-models such as Ivan Ivanović Đus (Juice),[3] a rapper who was among the first ones to promote the idea that hip hop should be mainstream and a means for obtaining wealth and luxury.[4] Of course, despite the immense popularity of trap in the Balkans, there are still musicians, as well as local music scenes, that nurture the underground character of hip hop.

Within such a context, Mimi carefully built a reputation for being fond of controversies and drawing attention with videos or lyrics often labeled as explicit, which is very important for my analysis, as it is the result of her well-thought-out play with expectations and labels, and a careful navigation through the various matrixes of the music industry. In an interview from 2020, Milena Janković explained who is Mimi: "she is a personality that was created in relation to my life and the lives of people who surround me. Everything [about her] is overstated, and only those things that are supposed to represent something are pulled out".[5]

In the last few years (roughly speaking, since her last album, issued in 2019), the fans of Mimi Mercedez have witnessed a kind of maturing or growing up of Mimi Mercedez, which is a change that she herself often emphasizes (differentiating between the old and new Mimi), as most of her public appearances and interviews from the past couple of years have been a kind of reflection on the past, as well as an explanation of the changes she went through.[6] The trapper started her career around 2010 in Belgrade, as a member

3 Đus began his hip hop career during the 1990s and is mainly famous for his inclination towards mixing genres of hip hop, dance and pop-folk in his songs. He was among the first rappers whose music obtained great commercial success and who began affirming the subjects and attitude that was adopted later by Bombs of the nineties and other (t)rappers – emphasizing the love of money and luxury, rapping about getting easy money quickly, often producing controversies etc.

4 One possible outlook on this development is offered in Musić and Vukčević 2017.

5 Netkulturno 2020. "Mimi Mercedez: Folk i Rep su Muzika Naroda!" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTOvO3QQQFY (accessed 9 June 2022).

6 See, for example: Nešto Drugačije 2020: "Nešto Drugačije 111: Mimi Mercedez" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pHAtFhySZA (accessed 15 February 2022) and Realna Priča 2021: "Mimi Mercedez: Iza Mog Garda se Kriju Ekstremne Emocije!" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqExRN5OnkM&t=2s (accessed 15 February 2022).

of the hip hop group Bombs of the nineties (Bombe devedesetih), who have been strongly influenced by the work and attitude of Đus.[7] So far, she published four albums: *The Only Thing I Know* (*Jedino Što Znam*, Universal Music Group, 2013), *I Put on Makeup and Wreak Chaos* (*Našminkam Se i Pravim Haos*, Bombe Devedesetih, 2015), *Godmother* (*Kuma*, Universal Music Group, 2018), *Hatred* (*Mržnja*, Geto Gerila, 2019). Additionally, her discography is rich with compilations, EPs, singles and collaborations with other prominent rappers, like Juice, as well as stars of the locally immensely popular pop folk music, like Mile Kitić or Stoja.

A number of Mimi's songs were realized in collaboration with Zartical (Žarko Krstić) and JanZoo (Jan Magdevski), in charge of production, mixing, etc., while most of her latest songs and albums/EPs were published through her own label, *Ghetto Guerilla* (Geto Gerila). With the exception of the latest singles, which introduce various Latin, reggaeton and dance beats as well as various collaborations with local stars of pop/pop folk music, Mimi's songs mainly stay in the domain of trap, with her latest album (*Hatred*) often defined as belonging to "hard" rap (Dašić 2020), with elements of gangsta rap. The matrix for most of Mimi's songs is comprised of different layers of repeating samples – a low bass, a few melodic samples, the unavoidable high-hat, the trademark of trap music – and envisioned so that the vocals are always dominant. Performing songs that musically pertain to what could be labeled as "classic" trap/hip hop, especially in the early stages of her career, was most likely meant as a strategy employed so that she could establish herself as an equal within the local trap/hip hop scene, as a woman who could rap equally well as any man.

In addition, as is the case with other members of the Bomb of the Nineties group, Mimi uses various elements and signifiers of pop-folk in order to "mark" her belonging to a particular generation of rappers, and to provoke reactions from the public by making positive references to a decade that is considered "dark" by many citizens of Serbia. The elements of the genre are also used by Mimi Mercedez, as well as other rappers, as a signal of their wishes to move hip hop into the mainstream music scene, and be seen as making music "for the people", for wide audiences, the working class, people in rural areas, etc.

As one of the few women in Serbian hip hop/trap,[8] she chose to emphasize her difference in the music scene, not wanting to hide her gender, but rather stressing that being a woman is what makes her unique and better than others. Despite the fact that certain subjects, like sex, sex work, gender roles, crime, drugs, guns, love of luxury, etc., persist in her music since she began appearing publicly, it is noticeable that her strategy for achieving popularity, which initially relied on shocking the audiences, was somewhat toned

7 Their relationship with Đus is explored in more detail, for example, by Dragan Đorđević (Ђорђевић 2019: 198–223). The members of the group also openly discuss the impact Đus had on their music and aesthetics, for instance, in an interview for the web portal Before After (Beforeafter 2015).

8 During the past two decades, there were only a handful of women who managed to build careers within this scene. Sajsi MC (Ivana Rašić) has been active since the early 2000s; in the period 2003–2006, an all-female rap group called Bitcharke na travi (Bitches on Grass) was active, although never as popular as Sajsi MC or Mimi Mercedez; in recent years, with the commercialization of the trap scene, more and more women are gaining popularity – like Milica Miladinović, Indodjija, Zoi, etc.

down as time went by.[9] Most of the examples I chose to present in this paper are from the earlier stages of her career, given that this is the period in which most of the trademarks of her music were formulated and that the basic premise behind them was never abandoned. During 2019 and 2020, she created a number of YouTube videos in which she explained her earlier songs and the agenda behind them,[10] videos in which she answers her fans' questions by talking about a wide variety of topics (spanning from issues of dating, sex, self-esteem and discrimination, to marriage and family, to 5G network). Then, mostly during the Covid lockdown, she hosted a number of live Instagram videos consisting of tips on how to change your lifestyle, and get yourself on a daily schedule, which books to read, makeup tutorials, how to deal with overeating (with cooking tips),[11] and so on. In other words, she focused more on developing her position as a kind of role model for her fans, wanting to empower them to grow, change and do better.

Since the very beginning of her career, Mimi Mercedez stressed that she wanted to make people think with her lyrics, because rap can enable a person to grow and learn: "I always said that everyone should work in rap", she stated in an interview from 2018, "because this is a great way for people to concretely define themselves as persons, get to know themselves better, and love themselves through what rap represents" (Vijesti 2018). She also didn't shy away from openly saying that girls should be more like her. In the song 'Porno', for example, she coined the line that was then often quoted on the internet and in the media: "Chicks, copy me, and the world will be a better place" ("Ribe kopirajte me, i svet će biti bolje mesto"). Picking up on such an attitude, the online portal Mondo filmed a video with the trapper, titled *Mimi Mercedez's school for girls: Pay for your own drinks* (*Škola za devojke Mimi Mercedez: Plaćajte svoje piće*, Mondo 2016), in which she gives tips to girls about how to act around boys, how to be independent and suggests that girls should adopt her strong attitude towards important life issues. When she was, on a different occasion, asked if she thought that she is a good role model for younger women (which is something "many say"), she replied:

> Of course. I wish I had such a role model when I was a kid. Even though many will say that I'm ruining the youth, I represent the strata of girls who are more ready to boldly step out and show their true colors. They are not burdened by moral barriers and the judgement of others, they just do their own thing. On the other hand, a

9 One example of the mentioned change is visible in her approach towards women's subjects. Earlier songs on the subject, like 'Cleopatra' ('Kleopatra'), 'True Lady' ('Prava dama'), 'Tips' ('Bakšiš') from the first album, or 'Money, Money, Money' ('Parice, parice, pare') from the *Godmother* album, speak about female pleasure, sex, striptease, using crude language, a lot of swear words, with accompanying videos showing close-ups of women's breasts and bottoms, strippers and various forms of nudity. A more recent song that deals with the matter, 'Evil Chick' ('Zla riba', 2020) is directed at women's experiences in relationships and women learning to say no, choosing themselves over a man. The video is much more "polished", with no explicit nudity, or open attempts at similar provocations. In other words, topics persist, her music remains in the domain of trap/hip hop, with the same producers creating the matrixes, but the need to provoke and offend her audience, as well as the general public is much less explicit.

10 The videos are a part of the "Auto portrait" series.

11 All videos are available on her Instagram profile: https://www.instagram.com/mimimercedez/channel/?hl=en

> girl who listens to my music relates to my songs with good reason, I don't impose my lifestyle on anyone. (Svet&Skandal 2015)

Throughout her career, thus, Milena Janković carefully constructed the figure of Mimi Mercedez to perform a kind of "power femininity" (Lazar 2006)[12] which she carefully constructs in order to emphasize her personal strengths as a successful, creative and emancipated woman, but also because she aims to help others achieve the same. I further elaborate this aspect of the trapper's career – which can be viewed through the prism of leadership – in the coming sections, but before diving deeper into that aspect, I briefly address the notion of empowerment in the context of capitalism, given that it is important for understanding how the figure of a leader (or idol, a hero, etc.) is constructed and renegotiated in the specific case of Mimi Mercedez.

Empowerment

Since the 1990s, within the popular culture and the media, empowerment became one of the main frameworks within which femininities are imagined and constructed. It has, at that time, taken on numerous faces – as a trait that adorns contemporary women, or a goal that we should strive to as a feminist ideal par excellence, or a kind of proxy for feminism (as many women will acknowledge their power, but will refuse to be labeled as feminists), a legacy left to younger generations of women, or a political strategy that focuses on women as well as nations "to be empowered" (Dosekun 2015; McLaughlin 2016; Sardenberg 2008). Wanting to paint a picture of how important empowerment is, Rosalind Gill (2008: 36) quoted an article published in 2003 by the satirical program *The Onion*, titled "Women Now Empowered by Everything a Woman Does" (The Onion 2003). In an attempt to emphasize how much the entertainment and advertising industries, as well as public discourses, rely on the notion of empowerment, the authors at *The Onion* decided to publish the findings of an imaginary study, which found that "women – once empowered primarily via the assertion of reproductive rights or workplace equality with men – are now empowered by virtually everything the typical woman does". (The Onion 2003). Such a state of affairs also prompted Jennifer Keishin Armstrong[13] to (not satirically) note that feminism (and its different tokens, like empowerment), has become something of a "job requirement for female pop stars" (Billboard 2017). In other words, we could say that "empowerment" – as a word, token of feminism, hashtag, political stance, etc. – means many different things to many different subjects, and as such, it can, but does not need

12 The term is borrowed from Michelle Lazar who defines it "in terms of women's exercise of self-determination and agency, which constitute an important goal for feminists and postfeminists alike, albeit envisaged differently. Whereas for feminists, women's ability to take charge and act upon life choices is construed as a collective struggle, for postfeminists this is conceived more in individualistic terms". (Lazar 2008: 510). It is used here to refer to various ways in which women's strength is (re)presented, but also to shed light on the fact that it is mainly equated with individual power and success and should be understood as being an important aspect of how femininities are constructed within the music market.

13 https://jenniferkarmstrong.com/ (accessed 15 February 2022).

to be, related to any particular feminist movement in any particular time or geographical area. It has become a central term of various neoliberal agendas and as such, it circulates in the pop cultural and media space of postsocialist Serbia as well.

A body of articles and publications produced in the domain of media and popular studies over the past three decades looks precisely at how, and with what consequences, has empowerment (understood primarily as a signifier of the feminist movement in liberal contexts) been employed and renegotiated/reconstructed in advertising, television shows, movies, magazines and other artifacts of popular and media cultures.[14] Several authors (see fn. 11) mainly agree that constructions and representations of empowered femininity have an important place within the current market economy and that they are employed in a plethora of ways in order to produce, promote and offer various products for consumption to women across the globe. They mainly examine how femininities are constructed within the climate of what Rosalind Gill (2007) called "postfeminist sensibility", in order to explain the current state of affairs, where certain signifiers of (second-wave liberal) feminism, like sexual liberation, empowerment, freedom of choice, etc., entered the mainstream discourses of popular culture and the media, and have become a kind of common sense when it comes to how (desirable) femininities are envisioned (Gill 2017: 609–610). Tisha Dejmanee noted that we are witnessing a "reduction of post feminism to empowerment *as an empty signifier* applicable to whatever issue, product or behaviors need to be sold to women, as dictated by social, cultural and economic conditions" (Dejmanee 2016: 120; emphasis by the author). By placing empowerment in the center of the processes of construction of femininities today, as well as seeing it as a kind of proxy for achievements of the second-wave feminist movement in the liberal West, the author also drew attention to the definition of empowerment through highly individualistic terms. And, given the fact that empowerment has been saturated with numerous meanings during the past fifty years, especially in relation to the fight for women's liberation, any of these meanings can be called upon, re-envisioned, renegotiated or removed, depending on the context and the goal towards which it is employed.

The empowered figure that Mimi Mercedez constructs is primarily based on her individual qualities and strengths, emphasizing the importance of having an *attitude* rather than an opinion. As she proclaims in one of her more "explicit" songs 'Cleopatra', she is like the Egyptian queen, "half woman, half fire", who "manipulates her pussy" in order to "tighten her power" ("da učvrstim moć, manipulišem pičkom"). Most of her lyrics are written in the first person and she rarely misses an opportunity to express her uniqueness and an uncompromising attitude, which she usually describes using the slang word

14 Kasey Windels and the group of authors (Windels et al. 2019) have, for example, explored different instances of "femvertizing" (female empowerment advertising), which gained momentum as "marketers have recognized that femvertising sells, as it improves a brand's reputation and promotes a positive message for women" (Windels et al. 2019: 1). Michelle Lazar explores different aspects of what she calls "power femininity" (Lazar 2006), while other authors focus on magazines (Majstorović 2016), films and television shows (Dejmanee 2016; McRobbie 2009), reality TV programs (Harvey and Gill 2011), etc.

"kurčenje".[15] In the song 'What (kurčenje again)',[16] she raps: "I don't want an opinion, but rather an attitude, enough dithering, I'm sick of weighing, sick of whining" (Neću mišljenje već STAV, dosta je dvoumljenja/ Dosta mi je vaganja, dosta prenemaganja); the song 'Kurčenje is a must' ('Kurčiti se mora'), nails down such an attitude by proclaiming that the "First rule of hardcore is that kurčenje is a must, why be a good girl, when that's boring as hell" (Prvo pravilo hardkora je da kurčiti se mora/ šta ti vredi što si dobra kada nema većeg smora).[17] The empowered woman that we see is someone who possesses certain traditionally masculine traits, refusing to adapt to gender stereotypes, but who uses social expectations of women to advance her own agenda and obtain material wealth. In a number of songs from the early stages of her career, she addresses the perceived stupidity of men who are ready to pay for sex or to watch a woman undress. As she raps, "A true woman isn't happy with the minimum wage/ This is why we suck money out of mama's boys/ They think they are buying us, but they are treating our friends/ It's a tested tactic, from Serbia to Arctic/ We fuck the rich boys, we take what's ours" (Prava žena nije zadovoljena minimalnom platom/ Zato maminim sinovima izvlačimo pare/ Oni misle da nas kupuju, al' časte nam drugare/ To je oprobana taktika od Srbije do Arktika/ Jebemo bogataše, uzimamo što je naše). The construction of such an empowered figure enables Mimi to turn the conceptions of femininity which have traditionally been seen as objectifying towards female bodies (and thus hurting their social image) into a source of strength and pride. In other words, she embraces the negative stereotypes about women, and turns them into positive traits and signs of empowerment.[18] This persona is, additionally, built up into a leader (or a representative) of a generation of young people and an idol for girls (and boys) trying to find their way through the disaster capitalism that took its roots in postsocialist Serbia.

15 The word is a vulgar term for an attitude of showing off and boasting about one's power, money, intellect or other desirable traits. The root of the word is a swear-word for penis, turned into a verb, so it can also be understood as referring to men boasting their sexual prowess. However, it is used to describe the behavior of both men and women. Mimi Mercedez refers to it explicitly in two of her songs: 'Šta (opet neko kurčenje)' and 'Kurčiti se mora', but also her other songs and public appearances resonate with the attitude described in these songs.

16 This is a loose translation of the original, 'Šta (opet neko kurčenje)'.

17 "Hardcore" is a term often used by Mimi Mercedez, as well as other artists from this circle. It mainly refers to a lifestyle in which everything one does is pushed to the extreme: constant partying, doing a lot of drugs and having a lot of sex, being rude and obnoxious, not letting anyone dictate your life, etc.

18 This mechanism is not something typical only for Mimi Mercedez, but a strategy often used by different subcultures or identity groups, where a word, label or a concept with negative connotation is appropriated and renegotiated, infused with different meaning. It is a strategy analyzed in great detail by many authors, including Judith Butler and José Esteban Muñoz, who used the term disidentification to explain it. Given its complexity, I chose not to dive deeper into the analysis of the phenomenon.

(Anti) Heroine

In this chapter, I use the terms like "leader" or "leadership" to refer to various different things and attitudes. However, they are all related to the figure of an empowered woman who is, as it is common in neoliberal contexts, working towards empowering others through "leading by example", to use a common idiom. In the case of Mimi Mercedez's songs, her position of strength within the hip hop/trap scene depends on the fact that she is a woman among men. In the song 'True Lady' ('Prava dama', 2016), she mentions "a bunch of rappers in diapers", noting that she is "a young mother", who has no issues in "raising them all by myself" [Brda repera u pelenama ja sam mlada mama/ Cimam se bez blama da ih sve odgajim sama]. In "Porno", she raps that everyone is hot for the girl, because the girl kicks ass ("Sad svi lože se na klinku jer klinka kida"), and continues remarking that everyone thinks that she works in the "oldest trade" (referring to prostitution) when she says that she isn't happy with minimum wage, alluding to various waves of moral panic from the public that followed her appearances, deemed as being sexually explicit, and therefore problematic.[19]

What makes such an empowered attitude specific, is the local, postsocialist context in which it is formulated, with the woman presenting herself as the leader/representative of a generation, also representing an antiheroine, a symptom of a failed society ruined by postsocialist transition. Specificities of that context have been discussed by a large number of authors since the fall of the Berlin wall, with most of them focusing on "the disastrous consequences of the introduction of neoliberal capitalism and the deep socioeconomic transformation this entailed, resulting in drastic inequalities between a tiny layer of the newly rich, diminishing middle class and the increasingly populous poor strata" (Horvat and Štiks 2015: 23). In other words, the generation that Mimi Mercedez represents (as she said in the interview quoted earlier), is a generation that grew up in a society which saw the steady privatization of all public resources, healthcare and education, a generation that witnessed their parents losing their jobs because the once state-owned companies were ruined and sold to foreign investors, and whose future lies (generally speaking) in finding a way to earn a lot of money quickly, in being a source of cheap, yet well-educated labor, or emigrating. In addition, in such postsocialist societies, success – equated mainly with material prosperity – is attributed solely to one's individual strengths and qualities, or as Mimi raps in the song 'I Have No Strength' ('Nemam Snage', 2016): "I want to be in control, I want to be the boss, and this is why I want to be rich and famous". Postsocialism is, thus, the context that is criticized by Mimi Mercedez, by constructing herself as a representative of its failures, a young woman living in the capitalist semi-periphery faced with terrible working conditions and the lack of any kind of opportunity. The public persona of Mimi Mercedez is largely dependent on different approaches towards and uses of negative stereotypes and roles – crime, prostitution, etc. – attempting to infuse them with positive meaning and give them a kind of legitimacy,

19 The original lyrics are: "Ja samo kažem nisam zadovoljna minimalnom platom. Oni zaključe da bavim se najstarijim zanatom". Or, in English: "I only say that I'm unhappy with minimum wage. They conclude that I'm working in the oldest trade".

not because they are by themselves positive, but because they represent a reality of living in contemporary Serbia, at least the way she, and many of her fans, see it.

One example of such a strategy is her frequent dealing with striptease and prostitution in the songs she writes, and later expanding on those topics in the interviews. She frequently emphasizes that she worked as a stripper, which is an experience she also describes in her songs (as in, for example, 'Bakšiš' ('Tips') and 'Parice, parice, pare' ('Money, money, money'). In an interview she gave in 2016, titled "Rap enabled me to not bust my ass as a stripper", she summed up the path she took from striptease to rap: "Neither love, nor hunger pushed me towards striptease, it was a rational calculation. I was sick of not having money to buy certain things I wanted, I thought long and hard about which job I could do without having connections, that paid more than 20.000 [a bit less than 200 euros today, at the time of the interview, it was considered the minimum wage], so I went to Mulin Rouge [a strip club in Belgrade] and asked about conditions of employment. I left it [striptease], because I don't want to work like a slave, and this is what rap enables me" (Ekspress.net 2016). A few aspects of the quote are especially important: the affirmation of a profession understood usually as morally problematic, with the emphasis that this was a *rational calculation*; the mention of the perpetual struggle of most people in Serbia and the Balkan region to obtain money and a further push towards affirming an opinion of younger generations which is often considered wrong or even dangerous by the older generations and (intellectual) elites – getting a lot of money with as little work as possible; finally, the importance of having connections in order to fulfill some basic needs, like getting adequate healthcare or finding a job.[20] In Mimi's perspective, hence, one's achievements, or any form of success in life, are attributed mainly to personal skills and qualities, as any form of systemic support has been destroyed during the transition to neoliberalism, with individuals needing to develop what is commonly known as an entrepreneurial mindset in order to achieve any life goal.[21] By putting striptease in focus in her songs and public appearances, she attempts to testify to the perceived reality of life in Serbia, and conditions in which young generations – mostly high school and university students – grew up and matured. Given that she speaks/raps about striptease as an empowering form of labor, ridiculing the men who spend a lot of money just to watch a (semi-)naked woman dance, she infuses it with meanings intended to be opposite to those adopted by the public, which would be inclined to take the moral high ground.

The song 'MMM' can be viewed as another manifest song, this time relating to a kind of "play" with labels – being a role model for some, and simultaneously a symbol of (moral) deterioration for others, a heroine and an antiheroine. The song begins with a statement, "times are hard, but I'm a tough woman", a woman who "sleeps all day and works all night", makes her own money so that she can live the way she wants. Mimi puts money in the center of everything in the refrain by saying "what moves the world, moves my ass as well" ("šta pokreće svet, pokreće i moje dupe"). Lyrics construct Mimi as

20 This final feature of the contemporary societies of the region is understood as an epigone of post-socialism by Čarna Brković (2017) in her book *Managing Ambiguity. How Clientelism, Citizenship, and Power Shape Personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

21 For more details on this mindset and its place within the music industry, see Ahl and Marlow 2021.

someone who uses the terrible living and working conditions to her advantage, because of an individual strength to persevere against the odds. In 'MMM', she also coined a kind of "chicken-or-egg" phrase that is often quoted in the media as well: "Is our country ruined because of people like me, or does a ruined country create people like me" ("Da l zbog takvih kao ja naša zemlja propada, ili zemlja propala stvara takve kao ja"). The line is often quoted in online interviews with Mimi (for instance: Vijesti 2018), and was even used by Nenad Čanak, a local politician to describe the lack of accountability for the devastation of contemporary Serbian society (LSV 2015).

Final Remarks

The role of Mimi Mercedez as an antiheroine and a representative of a generation was carefully constructed throughout her career as a woman working within the male-dominated genre of hip hop/trap. As the genre and its surrounding culture offer ample strategies for formulating social criticism and speaking about different policies/politics and ideologies, she used a number of them – like the practice of dissing other rappers, or presenting sexually explicit content – to formulate a public figure that is loved by those who can relate to her music, but that can simultaneously be understood as a representative of a society in deep crisis, devastated by disaster capitalism. Through constructions of empowered femininity, understood primarily through an individualistic lens, the trapper built her leadership position by navigating the intricate matrixes of the music industry, expectations, failed expectations and labels. By addressing subjects like female sexuality and pleasure, striptease or making money quickly, she speaks to other members of her generation that grew up in a transitional society, offering them a kind of role model, but also a way to become empowered and successful as well. In that sense, the notion of leadership, understood often in a positive light, is deconstructed and used to construct a figure that represents opinions, attitudes and behaviors not necessarily desirable in a society. Employing both the figure of an empowered woman and of a role model, Mimi Mercedez in fact embodies a kind of antiheroine that also provokes critical thinking about concepts like empowerment and leadership.

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Laura Hamer is a Senior Lecturer in Music and Associate Director of Student Support (Arts and Humanities) at The Open University. Her research specialism lies in Women in Music. Her books include *Female Composers, Conductors, Performers: Musiciennes of Interwar France, 1919–1939* (Routledge, 2018) and *The Cambridge Companion to Women in Music since 1900* (ed. Cambridge University Press, 2021). She is currently co-editing, with Helen Julia Minors, *The Routledge Companion to Women's Musical Leadership: The Nineteenth Century and Beyond* and PI of the AHRC-funded Women's Musical Leadership Online Network.

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Sanja Ranković is Associate Professor of Traditional singing at the Department of Ethnomusicology, Faculty of Music, of the University of Arts in Belgrade. Her ethnomusicological interests are in the field of applied ethnomusicology as well as in vocal practices. She has delivered numerous lectures, seminars, concerts and workshops in Serbia, as well as abroad. For almost two decades, she has been working as a lecturer in traditional singing at the Serbian Folk Dance and Song Study Centre of the National Ensemble "Kolo". She is the author of three books and two full-length musical stage plays, which were performed at the National Theatre in Belgrade.

Adriana Sabo is a Ph.D. candidate at the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She was a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music, of the University of Arts in Belgrade (2013–2020), and was employed as a Junior Researcher and a Research Assistant at the same institution. She holds master degrees in musicology (2012) and gender studies (2015). She was a recipient of the scholarship given by the Ministry of Education, Science and Cultural Development of the Republic of Serbia (2014–2018). She is a member of the Serbian Musicological Society, International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM, international branch) and a contributor for the Center for Popular Music Research (Belgrade).

Carol Silverman, Professor Emerita of Cultural Anthropology and Folklore/Public Culture at the University of Oregon, has done research with Roma for over 40 years in the Balkans, Western Europe and the US, on politics, music, human rights, gender, and migration, with a focus on representation. Her 2012 book *Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora* (Oxford), won the book prize from the Society for Ethnomusicology, and her 2021 book *Ivo Papazov's Balkanology* (Bloomsbury) analyzes the politics of Bulgarian wedding music. She has published recent articles in the edited volumes *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Ethnomusicology*, *The Roma and their Struggle for Identity in Contemporary Europe*, and *The Romani Women's Movement: Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe*, and the journals *Critical Romani Studies*, *Western Folklore*, and *Ethnomusicology Forum*. She works with the USNGO Voice of Roma, is curator for Balkan music for the digital RomArchive, and is a professional vocalist and teacher of Balkan music.

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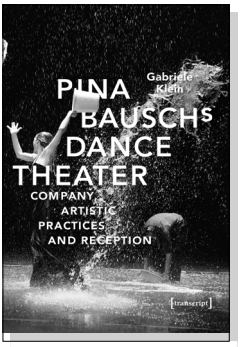

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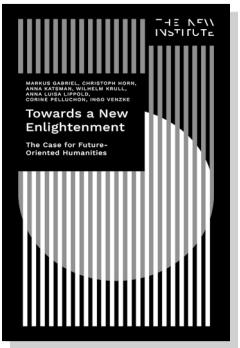

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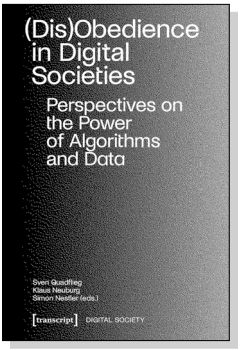

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