

Music of Minorities in Austria – A “National Heritage”?

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Introduction



The above piece is *Jutro rano*, a traditional love song of the Burgenland Croats, one of the minorities in Austria. In it, a young man sings in front of his beloved's window. When sung, the melody indeed sounds very Austrian, at least from the historical perspective, because its first part has been used in the Imperial Anthem composed by Joseph Haydn in 1797 for the Austrian Emperor Franz II: "Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser."

I use this song to underline the aspect of "national heritage," for if any music can be interpreted as national, which I generally doubt, it might be anthems. This anthem served until 1918, and the melody has been used since then in several occasions. It also definitely has a strong connection with an Austrian minority of today, the Burgenland Croats mentioned above. Joseph Haydn lived in that part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, today known as the Burgenland, where Croats, Hungarians, Gypsies, Slovaks, and Jews also lived. And of course he was inspired by those musical surroundings. Up to the present day this most eastern region of Austria remains very multicultural.

An obvious question in connection with the anthem's melody is: Who used the melody first, Joseph Haydn or the Croats; who borrowed from whom? This question is the subject of an ongoing debate, and arguments on both sides are convincing. But I do not think it is important at all. Joseph Haydn lived in truly multicultural surroundings, which of course inspired him, and he composed in the tradition of the *Wiener Klassik*, a style in which we find

many elements of traditional music. So this genius is just a product of that time and those surroundings, and in his compositions we find a wonderful handling of that multicultural potential.

This example was meant to point to the historical aspect of my topic. I will turn to the present now, because this is my actual field of research, the music of minorities in Austria today. But we would not be able to understand the really multicultural situation without understanding some of the history.

Defining Minority

Let us now address the following question: What is a minority? There are many answers, and the debate as to which is the correct one continues today. After long discussion, however, the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group, “Music and Minorities,” agreed upon the following definition at its first meeting in Hiroshima in 1999. It is a very broad one, including social and religious minorities, as well as indigenous people, and it describes minorities as “groups of people distinguished from the dominant group out of cultural, ethnic, social, religious or economic reasons.”

Preconditions, Minorities in Austria, Historical and Political Background

Austria is the result or remainder of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was a multinational country with many languages and cultures, including the Czech, Slovakian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Polish, Hungarian, Slovenian, and Jewish.

Austria did not have overseas colonies and was not confronted with overseas immigration as a result of colonialism, as was the case with other European countries, such as Great Britain, France, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Austria was formed by migration, but it was first of all an inland migration, within the Empire itself. Starting in the 1960s, however, there has been massive immigration from Yugoslavia and Turkey due to the need for migrant workers.

On account of its position as a Western country bordering several former communist states, there were also several waves of refugees from Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1981, and Bosnia in 1992.

The laws in Austria are rather restrictive concerning citizenship. Only nine percent of the population as a whole are foreigners, with the figure for Vienna, the capital, being eighteen percent.

The so-called autochthonous ethnic minorities, those who have been living on a certain territory for a hundred years or more, resulted from inland migration during the

monarchy and the reduction of territory after World War I. These are citizens of Austria and have been granted certain rights. They are also recognized as a *Volksgruppe*. The term *Volksgruppe* has only existed in Austria as a political category since 1976, due to the so-called *Volksgruppengesetz*, and it includes only ethnic minorities, with a distinct culture and language, who have lived in Austria for at least three generations. This law does not include recent immigrants, who therefore remain without these rights. It should be mentioned that neither autochthonous nor immigrant cultures have been a main subject of ethnomusicological research for very long, nor have they been visible as a facet of Austrian culture. Attitudes only started to change over the last fifteen years.

At the moment the political situation seems in favour of autochthonous minorities. An amendment to the constitution was agreed upon in August 2000 that declares the country's intention to protect its cultural diversity, and thus its autochthonous minorities. Migrant cultures have not been included.

Ethnic Minorities in Austria, An Overview

Autochthonous:

Slovenes in Carinthia

Croats in the Burgenland

Hungarians in the

Burgenland and Vienna

Czechs in Vienna

Slovakians in Vienna

Roma in Austria

In their territory since:

Ninth century

Sixteenth century

Tenth and twentieth century

Nineteenth century

Nineteenth century

Sixteenth century

Foreigners: Immigrants and

Refugees (largest groups)

From former Yugoslavia

From Turkey

From Czechoslovakia

From Poland

From Bosnia

In Austria since:

1960 onwards

1960 onwards

1968

1981

1992

According to the last census in Austria in 2001 the numbers of foreigners in Austria are as

follows:

Total Austrian population: 8,065,465

Foreigners:

Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro): 155,800

Turkey: 130,100

Bosnia and Hercegovina: 96,000

Germany: 74,400

Croatia: 57,600

Poland: 22,600

Romania: 18,400

Hungary: 13,000

Macedonia: 12,400

Italy: 10,700

Other groups have fewer than 10,000 individuals.

Not mentioned are religious minorities, as well as groups that are not defined by nationality in the sense of citizenship. Examples of these would be the Jewish community, the Alevi from Turkey, the Roma from the former Yugoslavia, and many other smaller groups. Indeed, in Vienna one can find evidence of nearly all the world's cultures. It is a wonderful situation for an ethnomusicologist, to be able to do fieldwork on one's doorstep, to visit other worlds while remaining close to home. I have only done research work on some of the various communities, and there remains much to do. I will present examples from several groups to point out certain mechanisms of transculturation and assimilation and also to highlight how the dominant society deals with this cultural potential.

The Role of Music in the Shaping of Ethnic Identity

Traditional music serves as a very important marker of identity for ethnic minorities. This has been stated and proven by ethnomusicologists all over the world. As Alica Elscheková and Oskár Elschek write: "Music, aside from other elements such as customs and national costumes, is the most stable ethnic element of a community. The reason being that music is an important means of socializing with functions in education and in the forming of identity" (Elscheková/Elschek 1996: 21). Although language is usually seen as the most important marker of ethnic identity, in my opinion music seems to be equally important. There are two reasons for this. One, as already mentioned, is stability. I know of examples where members

of ethnic minorities no longer speak the minority language but still sing the traditional songs. The other reason is that music can be perceived not only on an intellectual level but also on an emotional level. A melody that reminds a person of his/her childhood or of the old *domovina* (homeland) often evokes tears. Music is something that can be communicated much easier than language, because there are additional levels of understanding. Because of these qualities traditional music of minorities is very often used as a strategy of cultural survival in two directions: internal use within the group and public performance.

Burgenland Croats as an Autochthonous Minority

The Burgenland Croats have been living in the Burgenland territory since the sixteenth century. They were refugees and working immigrants at that time; today there are about 40,000 people that belong to this ethnic group. The integration and acculturation/transculturation process has been going on for over 450 years, and they have developed very interesting forms of musical expression. The songs of the Burgenland Croats have a “multinational quality” so to speak, a phenomenon that we often find with autochthonous minorities because of the different regional influences and the cultural exchanges that have been going on for a long time.

An interesting example of this is a recording I made of a song that took place at a wedding, at a rather late hour. I recorded it in Stinatz, a village in the south of Burgenland. Stinatz is famous for many things, among them its weddings. One characteristic feature of these weddings is that people sing a lot. The function of the song “Idem idem domom” is entertainment within the group; it has a very emotional quality, and the longing for home is expressed. Singers and listeners very often weep when they sing or hear this song.

It is of special interest that this melody is of Hungarian origin and was first written down in 1834 by Almasi. The text is Croatian, and there are several text versions sung to the one melody. In this first version the longing for home is expressed, and the impossibility of going there because the place has burnt down. There are actually two meanings implied in the expression “home.” On the one hand home means the singer’s home village in Burgenland. Because of unemployment the Croats, like most of the other Burgenlanders, had to find work in the big cities far away from home, which meant they were away from home for long periods during the year. The other implication might be “the old home”— the *stara domovina*, meaning Croatia.

Music Example 2

The image shows a musical score for a song. It is written on a single staff in treble clef. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The time signature is 3/4, with a first ending bracket over the first two measures. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a stylized font: "I-dem, i-dem domom a-li do-ma nimun, i-dem i-dem domom a-li do-ma nimun."

Idem, idem domom

Guests singing, Stinatz, 1979

Recording: Ursula Hemetek, transcription: Bezié / Hemetek

Text:

1. Idem, idem domom
ali doma nimun.

2. Moja domovina
puhom pogorila

3. Puhom pogorila
s vodom otcurlia

4. Lipi moj rodni kraj
i to rodno polje

5. Ke ja sun se rodil
onde j'mi najboljše

6. A kot tuđji ljudi
krvave suzice

7. Kot oca matere
pe. ene golube

8. Tuđjina, tuđjina
řuklja od pelina

9. Sad mi moraš biti
moja domovina.

Free translation:

1. I am going home, but my home does not exist any more.
2. My home has burnt down.
3. Burnt down and extinguished with water.
4. My wonderful place of birth, the fields of home.
5. Where I was born, there I feel best.
6. With strangers there are bloody tears.
7. With father and mother roasted pigeons.
8. Away from home, away from home, tastes bitter like vermouth.
9. Now this must be my home.

The same melody, with a different text, is sung by Willi Resetarits, a famous Austrian musical entertainer. He has Burgenland-Croatian roots and performs the song together with his mother in quite a traditional way but of course for a public audience. Here the song is used as a marker of identity in a public performance. He has performed the song several times, and it also can be found on CD, published by the ORF (CD *Hausgemacht*, 1995).

Text:

1. Lipo ti je .uti
ote Be.ke zvone.

2. Još je lipše .uti
staru majku javkat.

3. Jednog sinka mala
toga su joj řeli.

4. Sinak moj, sinak moj

kad feš domom biti?

5. Kad na vašoj pravki
rože cvale budu?

6. Rože su procvale
sinka još nij bilo.

7. Kad na vašoj pravki
vino vrilo bude?

8. To je jur sve bilo
sinka još nij bilo.

9. Ti .rna zemljica
ne budi mu teško.

Free translation

1. It is beautiful to hear the bells of Vienna.
2. But it is more beautiful to hear the *jafkat* of the old mother.
3. She had a son, they took him from her.
4. Son, my son, when will you come home?
5. If in your garden will blossom the roses.
6. The roses have withered, but the son was not there.
7. If in your garden will spring up wine.
8. That all happened, but the son has not returned.
9. Oh you black soil, be light for him.

Both aspects are important, the internal use as well as the public presentation. And in the latter we find a rather positive public reception of the minority's music. Two million Austrians watched the television program and the event was actually a very political one. It was called *Fest der Freiheit*, or Celebration of Freedom, in 1995, which, fifty years after the end of World War II, contained a strong political message. The entire government attended

the event at that time. Unfortunately, political conditions have changed very much in Austria since then, as you might have heard.

Both of the Burgenland-Croatian songs presented above are the expression of local identity, and they combine elements of different ethnic groups—the Hungarian melody, the two-part singing in thirds characteristic of Burgenland-German singing, and the Burgenland-Croatian text. This marks a typical Burgenland-Croatian style as the result of transculturation.

These processes can be found among many of the autochthonous minorities in Austria. However, the case of immigrant communities of the last decades is quite different.

Bosnian Community

Around seventy-five thousand Bosnian refugees have been integrated in Austria since 1992. Their image at the beginning was characterized by what we could call “blood and tears.” Among these refugees there were a lot of traditional singers. Their music, especially the *Sevdalinke*—traditional Bosnian urban love songs—meant a lot to them in their new surroundings. The *Sevdalinke* actually became the bridge between Austria and their former home. There was a need to be accepted not so much as poor refugees having found shelter but rather as people with certain kinds of cultural expressions that they had brought with them. They wanted to offer these cultural values to the Austrian public also. That is why we—my Bosnian colleague Sofija Bajrektarević and I at the Institute for Folk Music Research at the University for Music and the Performing Arts Vienna—created a cultural program during our research work on the traditional music of Bosnian refugees that was presented to the public in 1995. It consists mainly of *Sevdalinke*, several types sung by different performers, none of them having performed in public in Bosnia. There had been no need to do so, because *Sevdalinke* were an everyday means of communication, sung at informal gatherings. What has happened in Austria is that these *Sevdalinke* have become a symbol of identity. That is why they are presented in public now. The style itself has not changed, but the songs are performed in a new surrounding and have been imbued with new meaning.

The following example is one of these *Svedalinke*, sung by Sevko Pekmezović, one of our most active performers, a man who refused to sing in public in Bosnia, but for whom songs and singing are an integral part of his life. He says, “When I sing my thoughts fly to Bosnia.”

Music Example 3

The image shows a musical score for a song in a minor key (one flat). The score is written on a grand staff with four staves. The lyrics are in Cyrillic script. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in triplets. There are several trills and slurs throughout the piece. The lyrics are: NI BAJ-RA-M VI-ŠE NI-SU KA-O ŠTO SU NE KAD BI A-ŠI-(I)K-LU-CI GĐJESTESA-DA KŃ NE-KA-DA MA-HA LI HA SEU-DA P)H GĐJE DA (A) PA-'NE NA MA-HA-LE PO RU-ŠE NE

Ni Bajrami višni su

Sung by Ševko Pekmezović, 1994

Recording: Ursula Hemetek, transcription: Sofija Bajrektarević

Roma

One minority that has been and still is very much discriminated against in Austria, and elsewhere in Europe, are the Roma. The Roma fit into both categories of minorities in Austria, the autochthonous and immigrant communities, as there are several groups of them in Austria that have immigrated at different times.

Roma in Austria: Major communities

<i>Name</i>	<i>in Austria since</i>	<i>Coming from</i>
Burgenland Roma	fifteenth century	Hungary
Lovari	1900/1956	Slovakia, Hungary
Sinti	nineteenth century	Bohemia, Germany
Kalderara	1965	Serbia
Gurbet	1965	Serbia
Arlije	1965	Macedonia, Kosovo

Migration is a very important aspect of the living conditions of the people of Gypsies (Roma). They have been wandering for about a thousand years, many of them practising music as professionals or amateurs. Music plays an especially important role in Gypsy society. There is no musical link with their actual Indian homeland (which in a political sense of course is not a homeland), but there can be found many musical links to the different countries in which they have lived. Gypsies have always succeeded in adapting themselves to the musical traditions of the majority. There is one song, the officially declared anthem of the Roma: *Gelem, gelem, lungone dromesa*, which is sung by many groups and is found in Austria also.

In spite of the lack of common national symbols, the political process of uniting the Roma of the world has begun through the international organization, Romani Union, founded in 1971 in London. And as symbols of identity are always needed in such a process, one song was officially declared the national anthem of the Roma. It is interesting that within Romani culture it was possible to find a song meeting the demands of an anthem. But compared to others it is rather an unusual one.

Text:

Gelem, gelem lungone dromenca
maladjilem baxtale romenca.

Ref: Aj, aj, romalen

aj, aj, šavalen.

Refrain: Romalen, Šavalen

Translation:

I went a long way

I met happy (or beautiful) Roma.

Refrain: Oh you Roma, oh you guys.

In the first stanza, there are actually only two important motifs: the travelling, expressed by “going a long way,” and the meeting of other Roma. Both of these motifs are essential for the Romani culture in general. Travelling is the characteristic form of life in Roma-history, and the meeting of others points to the great importance of solidarity in Roma society. The family, the clan, is of the highest value in Roma-society. Being together means happiness, *baxt* in the Romani language. In the past, different parts of the clans travelled apart from each other, and they were happy to be together once or twice a year. These meetings had a most important social function.

So the text— in using essential motives of the Romani culture— might seem unusual at first glance, but if we consider that the Roma have not had a country or territory of their own in the last one thousand years, it might not be so astonishing that they sing about travelling and about meeting other Roma.

Music Example 4

The musical score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It features three staves: Violine (Violin), Frauenstimme (Women's Voice), and Akkordeon (Accordion). The lyrics are in German and Romani. The score includes first and second endings for the vocal line. The violin part has various ornaments and trills. The accordion part provides harmonic support with chords and a rhythmic accompaniment.

Violine

Frauenstimme

1. Gelem, ge-lem lun-gone dro-me-ja
ma-la-di-lem su-ka-re ro-meja.
ro-ma-len, aj - , cha-va - len
aj - , ro-ma-len, aj - , cha-va-len.

2. Gruppe

Akkordeon

"*elem, •elem lungone dromesa*

Ensemble Milan Jovanović: Voc, VI, Acc., Keyboard, Git., Vienna 1990

Recording: Helmut Frank, transcription: Albena Pantcheva, Source: Hemetek et.al. 1992

Although the recording comes from Austria, this song is one of the most musically political statements of the Roma on the international level.

My last example is even more Austrian.

As you might have heard, in February 1995 there was a bomb-attack against Austrian Roma, and four young men were killed in Oberwart, Austria. It was an act of racism performed by an Austrian right-wing radical; a bomb attack against people that have been living in Austria for four hundred years, and are still denied as being part of the Austrian nation.

Much could be said about the reactions of the public, which can be divided into those who suddenly felt a new solidarity with the Roma and those who believed it served them right.

Austrian politicians tried to prove their political correctness in public, by attending the funeral, beneficial events, and so on. Nobody actually asked how the Roma felt. There was one musical reaction to this event that seemed the most touching to me. Ruĝa Nikolić Lakatos, a Lovari traditional singer, made a song incorporating her vocal tradition. As Romani culture was and remains on the whole an oral tradition, one means to remember and transmit important events is to make songs about them. That is what Ruĝa did with the bomb attack from Oberwart. It was her way to react to the unbelievable violence and to deal with her sorrow and fear. She used a traditional melody and made up a new text. She sings in Romani language, and there is a German translation. In her song she tells us about the bomb attack, the four young men, their children, and their families, and she asks God how he could let this happen.

Music Example 5

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a song. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with the instruction "rubbato" and contains the lyrics: "Phurde baj val phurde jaj de paj ko-pa - čale) va - trva nej". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a bass clef, featuring a series of chords and a melodic line. The lyrics for the piano part are: "te šaj sa-ra-djon de te-Le ko - doj la še ša - (a)-ve". The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

Phurde, bajval, phurde

Sung by Ruňa Nikolif-Lakatos, Vienna 9.2.1995

Melody: Traditional Lovari, text: Ruňa Nikolif-Lakatos

Recording and transcription: Ursula Hemetek

Text:

1. Phurde, bajval, phurde
paj kopa. a e patra, hej
te šaj šaradjon de tele
kodoj laše šave.

2. Kurke de teharin
jaj de kodo hiro šundam, hej
kaj bombenca mudarde, mamó
štar romane šaven.

3. Ašile korkora
e but cigne šave, hej
.ore taj korkora, mamó
taj vi lengo nipo.

4. Devlam, Devlam, bara,
sostar kodo muklan, hej
te mudaren e gaře, aba
kodoj terne šaven.

5. Bara raja Devlam,
šukares mangav tu, hej
řutin e bute Romenge
taj ker amenge pa. a.

řutin e romenge Devlam
sa pe kadi luma.

German Translation:

1. Wehe, Wind, wehe,
die Blätter von den Bäumen,
daß die vier Romaburschen
zugedeckt werden.

2. Am Sonntag früh
erhielten wir die Nachricht,
daß vier Romaburschen
durch eine Bombe getötet worden sind.

3. Viele kleine Kinder
sind zurückgeblieben,
arm und allein
die Kinder und die Familien.

4. Gott, großer Gott,
warum hast du zugelassen,
daß gaře (Nichtroma) die jungen Burschen
umgebracht haben.

5. Großer Gott,
ich bitte dich von ganzem Herzen,
hilf den vielen Roma
und gib uns Frieden.

Hilf, Gott, allen Roma
auf der ganzen Welt.

English Translation

Blow wind, blow,
the leaves from the trees
that cover the four
young Roma men.

Early on Sunday
We received the news
That four young Roma men
Had been killed by a bomb.

Many small children
Are left behind,
poor and alone
the children and the families.

God, mighty God
Why have you allowed
The non-Roma
To murder these young men.

Mighty God,
I plead with my entire heart
Help the many Roma
And give us peace.

Help, God, all the Roma
All over the world.

Conclusion

This paper is very short and by no means final. I could only show you a very small part of the music of Austria's minorities. There is much more to be shown and heard.

If I can come back to the question in the title of my paper—whether the music of minorities is considered a national heritage in Austria—my answer is that it depends, of course, on the point of view. For ethnomusicologists, activists of the minority scene, those who are interested in this topic—those who have enough information—the answer would definitely be yes. But this group of people is a very small one. For the Austrian public in general it holds true that there is a limited perception of minority music. There might be a growing awareness, as you really cannot ignore minorities' music if you walk the streets of Vienna, if

you watch certain television programs, and if you have a look at the music-productions. But neither Ruĝa's song nor the anthem of the Roma have been placed within the context of Austria's music history so far. Neither has the contribution of migrant communities to Austria's cultural scene been noticed in an adequate way. So the answer would be still no, if we ask if the music of Austria's minorities is considered to be part of the national heritage by the general public.

And so it is and will be the task of applied ethnomusicology to point out the important role of minorities in creating the myth of Austria as a nation of culture and Vienna as the "Capital of Music."

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