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Los Angeles

Music Making Space:

Musicians, Scenes, and Belonging in the Republic of Macedonia

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Ethnomusicology

by

David Richard Wilson

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Music Making Space:

Musicians, Scenes, and Belonging in the Republic of Macedonia

by

David Richard Wilson

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Timothy Rice, Chair

This dissertation argues that through music-making practices, social actors make space for the existence of senses of belonging that are alternative (but not oppositional) to conceptions of belonging advocated by the powerful. Drawing on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Republic of Macedonia between 2011 and 2014, I consider three musical scenes as social formations where what I term “alternative belonging” is made by and experienced through the sonic and social practices of the scenes’ participants. These senses of alternative belonging provide means for people to neither participate in nor overtly oppose the increasingly hegemonic nepotistic network of the ethnocentric nationalist political party that had come to dominate nearly every aspect of everyday life in Macedonia. Though the three scenes overlap with one another (and with other scenes), each one revolves around a central music-making practice: (1) socializing at a club featuring electronic music with roots in 1980s Detroit techno

music, (2) performing and recording music multifariously defined as “jazz,” and (3) developing a style known in Macedonia as “*etnomuzika*” (ethno music) that adapts features of traditional Macedonian music (repertoires, styles, instruments) in new configurations and combinations with contemporary styles. In my analysis of these scenes, I explore their transnational histories and the ways actors draw on those histories to employ and shape various notions of race, ethnicity, musicality, the future, and the past in the service of making spaces for alternative belonging. I introduce the concept of “sociovirtuosity” to describe the multi-layered and seemingly contradictory ways that multiply situated actors exercise agency on the margins of power. In so doing, they make space for alternatives and ensure that hegemony is never total. I also consider the ways that, in each scene, collaborative music making sonically transforms existing places into ephemeral and effervescent spaces for belonging in a process I call the “co-production of acoustemology.” By engaging in these sonic and social practices that make space for alternative belonging, participants in these scenes are able to negotiate and navigate the economic and political challenges of their everyday experience, embracing the many contradictions of life in Macedonia at the beginning of its third decade of independence.

The dissertation of David Richard Wilson is approved.

Sherry Ortner

Timothy Taylor

Anthony Seeger

Timothy Rice, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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Pronunciation Guide

Throughout the dissertation I use Standard Macedonian Transliteration for all Macedonian words. For words quoted from other languages (e.g., Bulgarian) I use their standard transliteration practices. The pronunciation of all Macedonian words follows the conventions below.

А, а	a		Н, н	n	
Б, б	b		Њ, њ	nj	(as in venue)
В, в	v		О, о	o	
Г, г	g		П, п	p	
Д, д	d		Р, р	r	
Ѓ, ѓ	gj	(gj as in argue)	С, с	s	
Е, е	e		Т, т	t	
Ж, ж	ž	(zh as in pleasure)	Ќ, ќ	kj	(as in cue)
З, з	z		У, у	u	
С, с	dz	(as in buds)	Ф, ф	f	
И, и	i		Х, х	h	(as in hero)
Ј, ј	j	(as in yard)	Џ, џ	c	(ts as in hats)
К, к	k		Ч, ч	č	(as in chat)
Л, л	l		Џ, џ	dž	(as in job)
Љ, љ	lj	(as in value)	Ш, ш	š	(sh as in shirt)
М, м	m				

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Vita

EDUCATION

- 2007 M.A., University of California, Los Angeles
- 2005 B.M.E, Indiana University, Bloomington

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- 2014–2015 Teaching Fellow, UCLA
- 2013–2014 Visiting Professor of Jazz Studies, “Goce Delčev” University, Štip, Macedonia
- 2012–2013 Teaching Associate, UCLA
- 2011–2012 Teaching Assistant, UCLA
- 2005–present Saxophone and Piano Performer and Instructor

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- 2015 “‘Never Trust Your Teachers’: A Collision of Transnational Jazz Narratives in Macedonia.” Presented at the 49th Annual Meeting of the Southern California and Hawai‘i Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, San Diego, CA.
- 2015 “Who Safeguards Which Heritage and Why?: State-Sponsored Ritual as Intangible Cultural Heritage.” 43rd International Council for Traditional Music World Conference, Astana, Kazakhstan.
- 2014 “Nepotism, Patronage, Nationalism, and Belonging in the Musical Practices of Macedonian Ethno-Bands.” 59th Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Pittsburgh, PA.
- 2014 “Collaboration, Power, and Belonging in the Production of Expressive Culture: A Case from Macedonia.” 113th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.
- 2014 “The Galičnik Wedding and State-Sponsored Ritual in the Republic of Macedonia.” 26th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, San Antonio.

- 2013 “Music in Ohrid, Macedonia: Tourism, Auditory Regimes, and the Representation of a Nation.” Presented at the 29th European Seminar in Ethnomusicology, Bern, Switzerland.
- 2013 “Whose Cultural Memory Is It, Anyway?: Jazz and Nostalgia in Contemporary Macedonia.” Presented at the Centre for Culture and Cultural Studies Annual International Conference, Skopje, Macedonia.
- 2013 “Singing for Macedonia: Glocalization and National Identity Construction in Macedonian Idol.” Presented at 47th Annual Meeting of the Southern California and Hawai‘i Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Riverside, CA.
- 2012 “Shaping the Past and Creating the Future: Music at Macedonia’s Celebration of Twenty Years of Independence.” Presented at the 28th European Seminar in Ethnomusicology, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- 2012 “Razberajkji go ‘Etnoto’ vo ‘Etno-bendovi’: Narodna Muzika i Muzičko Značenje.” (Understanding the “Ethno” in “Ethno-bands”: Folk Music and Musical Meaning). Presented (in Macedonian) at the 8th Macedonian-North American Conference on Macedonian Studies, Ohrid, Macedonia.
- 2011 “Making Macedonian-ness: Imagining the Past, Enduring the Present, and Idealizing the Future in the Popular and Traditional Music of Toše Proeski.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Philadelphia.

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2013–14 American Council of Learned Societies Eastern European Dissertation Research Fellowship
- 2013–14 American Councils for International Education Title VIII Advanced Research Scholar Fellowship
- 2013 Ki Mantle Hood Prize for Most Outstanding Student Paper at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Southern California and Hawai‘i Chapter
- 2011, 2012 Foreign Language and Area Studies Grant for Macedonian language study in Macedonia
- 2011, 2012 Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA, for research in Macedonia
- 2010–11 University of California Regents Fellowship
- 1998 National Merit Scholar

INTRODUCTION

Ethnomusicologists have made many claims about what music does in or for society. In most cases, music is represented as for or against a type of dominant ideology. Some studies examine the use of music by the powerful in support of their domination; others illuminate how music serves as a means for the oppressed and marginalized to challenge and fight back against the powerful. In this dissertation, I make the claim that music making is often employed not in strategies of dominance or resistance, but in strategies for the sustenance of some middle ground between the two. My primary argument is that through music-making practices, social actors make space for the existence of senses of belonging that diverge from—but are not oppositional to—conceptions of belonging advocated by the powerful. In making spaces for belonging, music making encompasses a spectrum of meaningful practices, all of which seem to be doing some work in between the dominant and the oppositional. Of course there are myriad practices beyond music making that do similar work. But as music making is an often non-verbal but highly meaningful and multivalent practice, I find it to be a particularly salient practice in the making of this not-dominant-but-not-oppositional space for belonging, a making that occurs as actors deploy sounds into social spaces.

This middle ground was prevalent among several scenes of musicians in the Republic of Macedonia, where I conducted a combined total of 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork over three major periods of field research during the period between June 2011 and September 2014.¹ At the start of my research Macedonia had been an independent nation-state for 20 years, having

¹ The first field research period took place June-September 2011, the second June-September 2012, and the third August 2013-September 2014. Other shorter periods included one week in December 2011-January 2012, and two weeks in May 2012.

separated from Yugoslavia in 1991. The particular nation-building and other dynamic socio-political processes occurring in Macedonia since its independence and throughout my period of research constituted, in part, a context where social continuities and transformations were constantly being negotiated and contested.² Rather than focus on the ways that the increasingly dominant state employed music for its ends or the ways people opposing the powerful used music to resist, I found it more fascinating to explore the nuanced and subtle ways that musicians participated in the negotiations of continuities and transformations from positions that were aligned with neither the dominant nor the oppositional.

My analysis encompasses the practices of three music scenes engaged in these processes: a techno DJ scene, a jazz scene, and a scene surrounding “ethno music” (*etnomuzika*), which involves musicians engaging aspects of Macedonian traditional music in new configurations and combinations with contemporary styles.³ As a musical ethnographer embedded as a collaborative participant in each of these scenes, I encountered a plethora of musical texts, contexts, meanings, and practices as individuals employed various modes of music making towards myriad ends. Musical traditions marked as African, American, African American, Latin American, European, and Turkish (and/or Ottoman) converged in the spaces of these scenes, as did the traditional music of ethnic Macedonians and, prominently, Romani musicians in Macedonia. The ways the actors of these scenes selectively engaged with (or avoided) these musics in their music making

² As I describe later in this chapter, processes of Macedonian nation building began much earlier. The first official proclamation of a Macedonian Republic with Macedonian as its official language was on August 2, 1944 at the first plenary session of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (*Antifašističko Sobranie za Narodno Osloboduvanje na Makeonija*, ASNOM).

³ I refer here generally to the broad category of *tradicionalna muzika* (traditional music), which encompasses rural, village music and its associated instruments, repertoires, and styles, as well as some old urban (*starogradski*) styles. See Chapters 9 and 10 for a more thorough discussion of these and other related terms and concepts.

and discourse reveals much about their strategies for navigating the economic and political challenges of everyday life in Macedonia as it entered its third decade of independence.

This dissertation is organized into four parts, each constituting two or three individual chapters, followed by a conclusion. In part one, I flesh out my primary argument over three chapters by introducing the main premises and concerns that run throughout the dissertation. Chapter one provides a brief history of the so-called “Macedonian Question” and its political, cultural, economic, social, and musical consequences in Macedonia. I also provide a picture of the socio-political situation that formed the backdrop for my ethnographic research in Macedonia, demonstrating how Macedonia in this period cannot be described only as “postsocialist,” but that more recent waves of prevailing nationalisms and neoliberal policies by the powerful must also be taken into account.

Chapter two elaborates on key theoretical concepts framing the dissertation. I situate “scenes” as elastic, ephemeral sites for the musical and sonic making of senses of “belonging.” Here I also position this dissertation in discourses of practice theory, teasing out how practice can constitute “alternative” social formations—and alternative senses of belonging—that are at once elements of hegemonic formations and breaks from them without being oppositional. As practice constitutive of this type of alternative is often by necessity full of apparent and real contradictions, I introduce the concept of “sociovirtuosity” to describe this kind of practice, where actors move seamlessly among overlapping structures and embrace contradictions in the pursuit and negotiation of their own ends.

In chapter three, I seek to further develop a framework for collaborative musical ethnography, building on existing ethnomusicological discourse that deals with ethnographic musical participation. I do this not simply to move forward understandings of method and

potentialities of the musical ethnographer as collaborative musician, though I am doing that. I also suggest that in the act of making music together, ethnographers and collaborators enter into a different epistemological mode, one where knowledge is produced that is often and perhaps always distinct from the knowledge produced collaboratively in other texts (such as written ones) both in form and in content. Furthermore, I connect this ethnomusicological theory of method to the work of Charles Seeger, Ingrid Monson, Steve Feld and others who have dealt with how meaning is made and communicated in music making itself. I argue for a concept of the “co-production of acoustemology” that has implications not only for the making of alternative belonging in scenes, but for other interrelated social processes such as building trust, fostering loyalty, inducing particular affects, and nurturing shared aesthetic preferences.

The second, third, and fourth parts of this dissertation each constitute a case study of one scene. Each part begins with a chapter that considers the history of that particular scene, relating its musical practices and their meanings to social, political, and cultural developments over time leading up to the period of my research. In many of the histories, I allow my collaborators to tell their stories, and I quote their narrations at length. Each historical chapter is then followed by one or two ethnographic chapters. At the close of each multi-chapter part, I provide a final ethnographic example where scene participants engage with some institution that might in some capacity be categorized as dominant or hegemonic. In each case, the example is demonstrative of how actors musically and sociovirtuosically maintain their own senses of alternative belonging even as they participate in projects advancing the interests of the powerful.

Part two deals with the techno DJ scene centered at a particular *diskoteka* or night club, Club Sektor 909. The actors in this scene—DJs, club proprietors and employees, and other scenesters—exhibit sociovirtuosity through their ability to employ a sophisticated set of social

and musical skills in interacting with players from both within and without nepotistic networks towards ends that are at once sonic and ideological. Music making in this scene engages with local and transnational histories of techno as Macedonian scene participants continually make and re-make senses of belonging that can be best described as urban. They do so in the space of Sektor 909 as well as in several other spaces through their musical/sonic, social, and business practices. Chapter four discusses the history and ideologies of the techno DJ scene in Macedonia since the 1990s and its roots in the development of Detroit techno in the 1980s. Chapter five details the everyday musical and social practices of scene participants, closing with a discussion of a concert featuring a collaboration between Derrick May (one of the originators of techno in Detroit) and the state-funded Macedonian Philharmonic, organized by the Sektor 909 team in the summer of 2014.

In part three, I discuss the jazz scene in Macedonia, arguing that it is constituted by the intersection of what I call “transnational jazz pathways” and the narratives that travel along them. These narratives are competing musical and discursive assertions of what jazz is (and is not), or what it should (and should not) be as a sonic, social, and affective practice. In following these narratives from various institutions (e.g., educational institutions abroad and in Macedonia, the Skopje Jazz Festival, and the heritage of Macedonian Radio Television), I explore the ramifications of aesthetic preferences with regard to issues of race, ethnicity, labor, and the ways musicians make and experience belonging to one or a number of transnational jazz narratives. Chapter six provides a history of jazz in Macedonia since the 1940s, highlighting the narratives carried by musicians, composers, and arrangers of Yugoslav-era institutions, most prominently Dragan “Špato” Gjakonovski. Chapter seven focuses on guitarist and composer Toni Kitanovski (arguably the most prominent jazz musician in Macedonia during the time of my research), the

pathways he has traveled, and the narratives with which he aligns himself. Central to the discussion is his collaboration with the Čerkezi Orchestra, a Romani brass band, which provides avenues into an analysis of conceptions of avant-garde jazz, blackness, and Romani musicians in Macedonia. In chapter eight, I examine the consequences of jazz narratives carried back to Macedonia by some young jazz musicians who have studied jazz abroad. Aesthetic preferences, affective labor, and economic uncertainty converge in the musical lives of these musicians as they negotiate their music making vis-à-vis the realities of increasing precarity in Macedonia. This chapter closes with a discussion of a “jazz party” hosted at the residence of Macedonia’s president, a convergence of multiple jazz narratives in a moment of what I call “apparent political patronage.”

Part four focuses on the proliferation of independent musical ensembles known as “ethno bands” in an “ethno music” scene. Most of these bands have emerged in Skopje, Macedonia’s capital, in an urban renaissance of traditional music practices. In chapter nine, I discuss what I deem the “first wave” of ethno music in Macedonia in the 1990s, focusing on its roots in the score and soundtrack to the Oscar-nominated film *Before the Rain* (1994) and the group DD Synthesis, which was formed subsequent to the film by one of the key contributors to the film’s music, Dragan Dautovski. Chapter ten examines the second wave of ethno bands that began in 2005, following two prominent trends in the music of those bands: drawing on a repertoire of folk songs from the Macedonian-speaking communities of northern Greece, and employing features of an Ottoman urban musical style known as *čalgija* that has roots in the nineteenth century. I argue that though ethno bands draw on nostalgia and other resources of the current political environment (and sometimes those of the state), their musical practices actually distance them from state nationalism and create a space for participants in their scene to maintain

alternative senses of belonging that are indeed nationalistic, but in a way reminiscent of Macedonian nationalism in the Yugoslav period rather than the nationalism being fostered under the current party/state.

The conclusion reviews the major findings and arguments of the dissertation with regard to concepts of scene, alternative belonging and sociovirtuosity, and the co-production of acoustemology. I close the dissertation with an epilogue which comments briefly on how actors in these scenes have responded to and/or participated in significant social changes that have occurred in Macedonia since the end of my field research.

PART I

History, Theory, Method

CHAPTER ONE

Music, History, and Macedonian Nationalist Ideologies

The Republic of Macedonia is a small country in the Western Balkans that has existed as an independent nation-state since its peaceful separation from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY, referred to henceforth as Yugoslavia) in 1991. Its geographic area is comparable to the state of Vermont, and its population of approximately two million consists of approximately 64% ethnic Macedonians, 25% ethnic Albanians, 4% ethnic Turks, 3% Roms, 2% ethnic Serbs, and 2% other groups (notably Aromanians and Bosnians, who are both mentioned in the Macedonian Constitution, Statistical Office 2005).⁴ Since even before its independence from Yugoslavia, challenges from Macedonia's geographic neighbors to the ethno-national distinctiveness of a Macedonian nation and an ethnic Macedonian people have been contentious. From 1948 until 1991 Greece denied the existence of a Macedonian ethnicity and language, while Bulgaria claimed both as part of the Bulgarian nation and language. Since 1991, these challenges have most often coalesced in public discourse in three categories: (1) the name "Macedonia" and the flag of the Republic of Macedonia as symbols contested as Greek by official Greek policy, which denies the existence of a Macedonian-speaking minority on its own territory; (2) the heroes of the 1903 Ilinden uprising against the Ottoman Empire and the Macedonian language as entities claimed as Bulgarian by official Bulgarian policy; and (3) the Macedonian Orthodox Church, whose legitimacy is challenged by (and, to some extent, whose

⁴ These figures draw on data from a census taken in 2002. Numerous political factors have precluded any census from being taken since 2002, not the least of which is nationalist politicians fearing or demanding higher representation of minorities in parliament and other governmental spheres of influence. Since 1991, Albanian ethnopoliticians have argued that the Albanian population constitutes as much as 35% of the population. Neither the internationally supervised 1994 census nor the 2002 census (also observed) confirmed this figure (see Friedman 1996).

property is subject to territorial claims by) the Serbian Orthodox Church and some Serbian politicians (Trajanovski 2009:15).⁵ Contestations to the “ownership” and legitimacy of these symbols, practices, and institutions are perceived in Macedonia as challenges to the legitimacy of the Republic of Macedonia as a nation-state, of ethnic Macedonians as an ethnic group, and of Macedonian Orthodoxy as a religion. In many ways, these contestations constitute concrete threats to a distinct Macedonian identity, which has resulted in “identity” (*identitet*) itself emerging in Macedonia as a highly politicized concept (and a political tool) in recent years. Some national symbols have also been contested from within, especially as the sizable Albanian minority has not consistently identified symbols associated with the Macedonian ethnicity as sufficiently “national” to represent the entire citizenry (in particular the flag and national heroes identified as ethnic Macedonians, among others).⁶

The significance of these contestations has continued to grow in the time period since Macedonia became an independent nation-state in 1991 (contestations from Greece increasing to the greatest extent), which has contributed to difficulties not only for the Macedonian state in the realm of international diplomacy to varying degrees, but also for Macedonian citizens in everyday life because of consequential struggles in local spheres of politics, ethnic relations, and economic development. Political parties in power have also mobilized these unresolved contestations as tools for accruing popular support and power through appealing to and encouraging ethnic nationalism among ethnic Macedonians.

⁵ In 1999 Bulgaria officially recognized the Macedonian language as distinct, though no such distinction has been given to Macedonian dialects as something other than dialects of Bulgarian.

⁶ Žarko Trajanovski (2009) discusses at length the history and historiography of Macedonia’s national anthem, adopted in 1992 and contested in certain ways by ethnic minority populations in Macedonia. The anthem features primarily ethnic Macedonian symbology, and it has arguably failed to serve as a unified national symbol that effectively or affectively unites and represents citizens of Macedonia.

These kinds of political tools would lose their efficacy if such contestations were in any way resolved, and understanding the use of these and other tools by the hegemonic state during the period of my field research is essential before fully exploring the ways that music-making practices matter in light of the state's dominance. Before that discussion, and in order to fully explicate the political, ethnic, and economic contexts in which the music making of this dissertation takes place and in part constitutes, I will first provide a brief historical background of what is known as the "Macedonian Question," which actually asks two related questions pertaining to power: "who are Macedonians?" and "whose is Macedonia?" The ways that scholars, politicians, diplomats, nationalists, musicians and other interested parties inside and outside Macedonia have sought to answer these questions is exceedingly relevant to this study, because this discourse and the power relations they produce have arguably impacted Macedonian society more than any other issue.

Though conceptions of a geographical region known as Macedonia have changed in the course of history, the area considered geographical Macedonia has been generally consistent since the nineteenth century. "Macedonia" was first used to designate a geographical area during antiquity, appearing in reference to several different regions in the writings of fifth century BCE Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides with regard to events beginning ca. 510 BCE (Wilkinson 1951; Hammond 1995). The use of one geographical name as a label for multiple different entities was common in the ancient period, evidenced in four cities known as Philippi or Philippopolous, two or three regions known as "Doberus," and a plethora of Alexandrias, among other examples (ibid.:120). Philip II and his son Alexander the Great expanded the kingdom of Macedon during the fourth century BCE. After the fall of Alexander's empire, the borders of what was considered geographical Macedonia continued to shift under the Roman and Byzantine

Empires. In the Byzantine period, various factions fought for control of areas of geographical Macedonia, including the First Bulgarian Empire, the Serbian kingdom of Raška, and the kingdom of Thessaloniki (see Wolff 1948; Fine 1991). After the Ottoman Empire took full control of the region at the end of the fourteenth century, the term Macedonia as a geographical designation continued on West European maps, but had no administrative referent. Its use resurfaced in the nineteenth century as a geographical term referencing the region bordered by the Pindus mountains (Albanian highlands) on the west, the Pirin mountains and the lower course of the Mesta (Gr. Nestos) river on the east, the Šar mountains on the north, and Salonika and the Aegean on the south (Wilkinson 1951:1–3; Hroch 2013:192).⁷

This region covers parts of six countries today: the Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, and Kosovo (see Fig. 1).⁸ In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide a brief history of this geographic region beginning in the nineteenth century, focusing on issues of consequence in the Republic of Macedonia during the time of my field research. I touch on relevant themes of geopolitics, linguistics, religion, ethnicity, and nationalism, and briefly mention a few historical music-making practices (to be fleshed out in subsequent chapters) as they provide background for the three music scenes that constitute the bulk of the dissertation. I first discuss the period from the Ottoman Empire to World War II. Then, I deal with Macedonian national ideology in the Yugoslavia period. I close with an analysis of relevant issues since Macedonia's independence in 1991, focusing on the rise of right-wing party that has come to dominate nearly every sector of Macedonian society since it came into power in 2006.

⁷ This would be more or less defined as the Ottoman Vilayets of Manastir, Selânik, and the southern part of the Üsküb Sanjak/Kosovo Vilayet.

⁸ Throughout this dissertation I use “geographical Macedonia” in reference to this broader geographical region. I use “Macedonia” as a synonym for the Republic of Macedonia, consistent with local usage. When I refer to “Macedonians” I am referring to ethnic Macedonians, whether they live in Macedonia, Greece, or elsewhere.



Figure 1. Geographic Macedonia (in blue)

Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire to the End of World War II

During the five centuries of Ottoman rule in geographical Macedonia from the early fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, a religious and ethnic multiplicity existed including Christians, Muslims, and Jews, who were speakers of Greek, Albanian, Turkish, Aromanian, Judezmo (Ladino), and Slavic dialects that were referred to by various names. Most people identified themselves as belonging to one of the religious groups but, often being multilingual, the choice of language for a nascent “national” identity could shift depending on circumstances.⁹ The controversy over the place-name “Macedonia” and the label “Macedonian” for a people group began with the rise in the nineteenth century of the nation-state as the most legitimate, salient, and politically powerful form of statehood. The emergence of national

⁹ In the later years of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1870) created a “national” split among Orthodox Christians, since the Ottoman Porte allowed only one Orthodox Church (Greek Patriarchate or Bulgarian Exarchate) to control a diocese.

consciousness and ethnic nationalism in the Balkans that accompanied the rise of the nation-state posed internal threats to the Ottoman Empire. Piece by piece, the empire slowly crumbled as ethnically-defined revolutionary liberation organizations began to challenge its authority, their efforts successful only when aided by Britain, Austria-Hungary, Russia, or another Western European “Great Power” in pursuit of expanded influence in Eastern Europe. In most cases, regions of the empire would first become autonomous regions, and later achieve independence as nation-states on the model of European nation-states such as France and Germany (and unlike the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, who were simply seeking to extend their own dominance in the region). Politics that achieved autonomy under the Ottoman Empire during this period included Serbia (1817), Greece (1821), and Bulgaria (1878), all of which began transitions of varying lengths towards national independence. In contrast, geographical Macedonia remained entirely under Ottoman authority throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, with nationalists from Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia all making claims to it based on various justifications. Bulgarian nationalists considered Slavic Macedonians to be part of the Bulgarian nation; Greek nationalists considered all Macedonia as ancient Greek territory that should be part of the Greek nation-state; Serbian nationalists, who occupied Macedonia beginning in 1918, claimed that Slavic Macedonians were actually southern Serbs speaking a Serbian dialect.^{10,11}

¹⁰ For more specific detail regarding the complex politics involved in the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of various nation-states in the Balkans of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Mazower 2000:86–115.

¹¹ In the realm of studies of nationalism and the nation-state, Hechter (2000) suggests that nationalism and nation building occur in a region when an empire moves from indirect rule of that region (making it effectually self-governing) to direct rule. The case of the region surrounding Macedonia supports this theory, as the “national consciousness” of each region arose after either the Ottoman Empire or Austro-Hungarian Empire began to exert more direct rule on it. This also seems to connect with Gellner’s assertion that “nationalism maintains that

Nation building in Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria at this time included designs on expanding territory into geographical Macedonia, and each budding nation, true to the model of the European nation-state, promoted its language and ethnicity in geographical Macedonia, primarily using educational and religious institutions to convince the local population that they belonged to the Serb, Greek, or Bulgarian nation.¹² In the 1890s appear the earliest examples of Macedonian Slavs calling for recognition of a Macedonian literary language distinct from Serbian and Bulgarian, a move that met resistance but indicated the early stages of a distinct Macedonian national awakening (Roudometof 2002:91–93).¹³ The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (*Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija*, or VMRO) a small group led by Slavic speakers but including Christian speakers of other languages seeking autonomy for Macedonia comparable to that of its neighbors, formed in 1893. The writings and pronouncements of VMRO's founders and early leaders indicate an awareness of the extensive religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of geographic Macedonia, yet seemed to define their

the similarity of culture is the basic social bond" (1997:3), as regions with a greater similarity of culture than geographic Macedonia began processes of nation-building earlier. But when considering the number of Muslims expelled from "liberated lands," towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, the dissimilarities of culture did not necessarily impede the development of nationalism, but inspired nationalists to rid their lands of those with such dissimilar culture (see McCarthy 1995).

¹² This supports Gellner's (1983) overarching framework that the nation is an outgrowth of modern industrial civilization maintained by a public system of mass, standardized literary education. Darden (2012) posits a thesis that enduring national identity, loyalty, and passions are solidified when communities are initially schooled, shifting from an oral to a literate mass culture (both are reminiscent of B. Anderson 2006). This twist on Gellner's (and Anderson's) model contends that enduring nationalist loyalties are formed by the national content of a community's *initial* mass schooling in a literary language.

¹³ See also Misirkov 1903 for a call for a Macedonian identity separate from the Bulgarian one, and a language based on dialects from towns currently in central and western Macedonia. Misirkov originally published this work in Sofia, and was subsequently expelled to Russia by authorities, and most copies destroyed by the Bulgarian police (Friedman 1975:91; Poulton 2000:58). This work was published in English in 1974, and its English text is available at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/On_Macedonian_Matters (accessed April 21, 2015).

revolutionary aims as based on geography rather than their Slavic language. Perhaps they avoided focus on language or ethnicity due to the lack of ethno-linguistic uniformity in the region and the impossibility of an autonomous region there based on ethnicity or language (Rossos 2008:102-104). Bulgarian and Greek narratives of history situate VMRO and its leaders (e.g., Goce Delčev, Dame Gruev) as distinctly Bulgarian, while Macedonian narratives situate them as distinctly Macedonian. Pitu Guli—a hero of the Ilinden Uprising (see below)—presents an interesting case, as he was a Vlah (i.e., a speaker of Aromanian), as was a large portion of the Kruševo population. According to the 2002 census, there are approximately 10,000 Vlachs in Macedonia today, many of whom still speak Aromanian, and most of whom identify with the Orthodox Christian religion and the Macedonian Orthodox Church.¹⁴ Trajanovski (2009) also discusses Pitu Guli's presence in the text of Macedonia's national anthem, where his heroism is celebrated. Trajanovski observes several discourses that position Guli as a Macedonian in a civic nationalist sense rather than an ethnic nationalist one, and thus situates the anthem as not including *exclusively* ethnic Macedonian symbology. I would argue that because of the relatively high degree of assimilation of Vlachs in Macedonia, the mention of a national hero with Vlah ethnicity does not qualify the anthem as an inclusive, civic national symbol. Rather, it demonstrates the assimilation of Vlachs and shared characteristics between Vlachs and ethnic Macedonians, while staking a claim on a national hero who is also claimed by Bulgaria.

An autonomous Macedonia under Ottoman rule would have provided no benefit to any of the Great Powers, and VMRO did not receive significant outside assistance in its revolutionary efforts. The most significant of those efforts was the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, when VMRO rebels staged an uprising against Ottoman powers, taking control of the town of Kruševo and

¹⁴ Studies of the acculturation and fluidity of the Vlah ethnicity in Macedonia and elsewhere in Southeastern Europe can be found in Winnifrith 1987, Friedman 2001, and Kahl 2002.

establishing the “Kruševo Republic” (Ilinden, or St. Elijah’s Day, takes place on August 2, the day the uprising began). Though this republic would only last ten days before Ottoman military forces suppressed it, Kruševo occupies a significant place in Macedonian national history, and Ilinden is celebrated annually in Macedonia as a national holiday as perhaps the most significant historical event in the advent of the Macedonian nation.¹⁵ An autonomous Macedonian region was never established under Ottoman rule, and at the end of the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), the region was divided among the nation-states along its borders at the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest into Serbian (Vardar) Macedonia, Greek (Aegean) Macedonia, and Bulgarian (Pirin) Macedonia (see Fig 2), with a few villages in three regions going to Albania. The region appropriated by Serbia roughly corresponds to the current Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians today commonly use “Aegean Macedonia” and “Pirin Macedonia” to refer to the regions of geographic Macedonia located in Greece and Bulgaria, respectively.



Figure 2. Borders Established by the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest

¹⁵ The date was chosen for the ASNOM declaration of the Macedonian People’s Republic in 1944 (see note 2), which is also celebrated as part of the August 2 holiday. See Brown 2003 for a comprehensive study of how Kruševo and the 1903 Ilinden Uprising have been constructed as geographical and temporal points of origin for the Macedonian nation. Ilinden is also celebrated in ethnic Macedonian villages in Greece, but on July 20, the Julian (O.S.) calendar date.

After World War I, Serbia—including Vardar Macedonia—became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (and subsequently the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929 to 1944), and along with Greece and Bulgaria, continued to foster brands of European nationalism within its borders. Concurrently, groups of Macedonian speakers began to build a greater, more cohesive sense of ethno-linguistic Macedonian-ness in the contexts of Vardar, Aegean, and Pirin Macedonia. Between 1918 and 1944, various small political parties formed throughout geographic Macedonia that claimed the legacy of VMRO, each of them seeking to appropriate the significance of VMRO’s brief victory over the Ottomans as the first distinct (though short-lived) Macedonian national success. At the same time and despite many restrictions on language in the three portions of Macedonia, an educated group of Macedonian speakers began to emerge, especially in Vardar Macedonia. They studied in Serbian or Croatian, but began to publish poetry, plays, and material on various themes in a language they labeled as Macedonian in the 1920s (Rossos 2008:159–175; see also Friedman 1999, 2000b).^{16,17} It was not until the end of World War II and the advent of socialist Yugoslavia that a distinct Macedonian nation, ethnicity, and language would be recognized by a nation-state under first the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia

¹⁶ For example, Vasil Iljoski’s play *Begalka* (Refugee Woman, also known as *Lenče Kumanovče*, Little Lena from Kumanovo) was performed in Skopje in 1928 not in a Kumanovo dialect, but close to what would become standard Macedonian (see Friedman 1999).

¹⁷ To be clear, Macedonian literary history stretches back to the nineteenth century. A notable contribution came from Giorgi Puljevski (b. Galičnik 1838–1894). In his *Rečnik od Tri Jezika* (Dictionary of Three Languages, 1875), advocated not only for a Macedonian literary language, but also a separate nationality and a free Macedonia (Friedman 1975:285). Notable Macedonian literary figures from the nineteenth century include the brothers Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Kiril Prličev, Jordan Hadži-Konstantinov-Džinot, and Rajko Žinzifov (Rossos 2008:83). These figures are typically situated as Bulgarian in Bulgarian historiography. Friedman (1975) offers a clear historical overview of the emergence of the Macedonian literary language.

(1944), and then under SFR Yugoslavia (1945–1991).^{18,19} A particular brand of ethnic Macedonian nationalism was fostered in the context of Yugoslavia, connected to a Slavic history and associated folk traditions and symbols identified as distinctly and uniquely Macedonian.

Macedonian National Ideology under Yugoslavia

I have attempted to summarize this history so far in a fashion that does not suggest the existence of a long, enduring Macedonian people, but rather views the development of a Macedonian nation-state in the context of the development of other nation-states in the region, all of them “imagined communities” coalescing over time into what had become the most powerful form of political legitimacy in Europe (if not the entire world), the nation-state (see B. Anderson 2006; also Meyer et al. 1997; Wimmer 2012). After World War II, the Macedonian Question became even more hotly contested, as Yugoslavia fostered a Macedonian national identity distinct from a Bulgarian one in terms of history, language, ethnicity, and cultural expression, including music. This is similar to what Katherine Verdery (1991) terms “national ideology” in her work on communist Romania. Even though the Yugoslav context is quite different from the Romanian one, I follow Verdery here in that I suggest that this moderate, widespread form of nationalism was the one most broadly adopted by ethnic Macedonians in the early years of the Republic of Macedonia. The overt aims of the Yugoslav state were to keep Vardar Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia and prevent an identification of the Macedonian speakers as Bulgarian due to the closer proximity of their language and cultural practices

¹⁸ In 1934 the Comintern had passed a resolution recognizing the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation and language (Perry 1997:228–230).

¹⁹ As Miladina Minova suggests, the 1903 Kruševo Republic was based on the equality and freedom of “all of the peoples of Macedonia;” while the 1944 declaration of Macedonia as a constituent nation of the Federation of Yugoslavia was the first time that “Macedonian” became an ethnonym in an official document (Minova 2002:39).

language to those of Bulgaria than those of Serbia.²⁰ The growing Macedonian intelligentsia published prolifically, compiling dictionaries and grammars of the Macedonian language, and writing short stories, poetry, novels, and other prose that provided the foundation for a Macedonian-language literary tradition.²¹ The Yugoslav desires for a distinct Macedonian identity coincided with Macedonian desires to be distinct from Bulgarians (traced back to the early nineteenth century with regard to language and literature in Friedman 2000b), and were not forced upon the population. On the contrary, if those desires became too strong and began to challenge the hegemony of the Yugoslav state, they were suppressed. The Yugoslav state made sure Macedonian nationalism remained moderate through actions such as the sentencing of popular Macedonian president (1944–1945) Metodij Andonov-Čento to twelve years in prison and the purging of other Macedonians who had advocated, an one time or another, for an independent Macedonia (Rossos 1988:220–226).²²

The Yugoslav state invested resources in musical institutions such as Tanec, the Macedonian state ensemble for folk songs and dances established in 1949, which performed folklore stylized for the stage following the Soviet model (in presentation, but not necessarily in institutional mechanisms), linking traditional folk music and dance traditions of ethnic Macedonians with an ethnocentric Macedonian national identity.²³ Elsie Ivančić Dunin and Stanimir Višinski (1995) show that throughout the Yugoslav period, the institutionalized folk

²⁰ Bulgarians often maintain that the Macedonian language and culture are essentially the same as or subsets of Bulgarian language and culture, discussed further below.

²¹ For examples of such Yugoslav-era publications of the Macedonian intelligentsia, see, e.g., Koneski 1948, 1954–1957; Dimevski 1963; Hristov 1971; Simovski 1972; Katardjiev 1977; Bitoski et al. 1981; and Andonov-Poljanski 1985a, 1985b. For more on the history of the Macedonian language and its relationship to nationalism, see De Bray 1980, Friedman 1975, 1985, 1986, 1993, and Lunt 1952, 1959, 1984.

²² Macedonian traditional multilingualism also played a role in inhibiting widespread ethnocentric nationalism.

²³ See Dunin and Višinski 1995:65–66, 99–114, 160–164, 204.

music and dance of Tanec adapted for the stage became a model for those practicing folk music and dance throughout Macedonia, gradually replacing many diverse traditions considered *izvorni* (literally “from the wellspring” or “from the source” and linked to a concept of authenticity, see Chapters 9 and 10) with a more homogenized national repertoire. They note that in the early years of Tanec the repertoire included Turkish and Albanian dances (e.g., Osman Paša, Anadolka, Jeni Jol), until the ensemble was scaled down in size from over ninety to about fifty members in 1953. Dances from ethnic Macedonian sources became the focus of the repertoire after that, though some Romani dances such as Čifte Čamče became part of the repertoire, albeit in ways that did not particularly highlight the Romani roots of the dance but rather subsumed dances with general “oriental influences” into the general repertoire danced by the ethnic Macedonian dancers.²⁴

The Yugoslav state also supported discourses that highlighted the presence of ethnic Macedonians in the Greek region of Macedonia. A brief analysis of the periodical *Macedonian Review* (published between 1971 and 1996 in three annual volumes) provides an overview of the most prominent discourses of Macedonian nation building both under Yugoslavia and during the first five years of Macedonian independence after 1991. Although only one of many examples that demonstrate the narratives involved in Macedonian nation building, *Macedonian Review* provides a particularly telling perspective as it was published in both English and Macedonian and distributed in diaspora communities, articulating a national Macedonian historiography and

²⁴ See Kitevski and Veličkovska 2015:92 for current representation of Čifte Čamče by Tanec. Ethnomusicological studies discussing similar processes among socialist-era institutions of music and dance include Shay 2002 for Croatia, L. Olson 2004 for Russia, Buchanan 2006 for Bulgaria, Merchant Henson 2006 for Uzbekistan, and Rancier 2009 for Kazakhstan, among others.

cultural memory both in Macedonia and abroad.²⁵ In the period before Macedonian independence (1971–1991), its contents consist primarily of studies that affirm (1) the history and presence of an ethnic Macedonian population and culture in Aegean Macedonia (northern Greece), (2) the existence a Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia (southwestern Bulgaria), (3) the uniqueness of the Macedonian language, (4) the prominence of Ilinden Uprising and its heroes in Macedonian history, (5) the ninth-century roots of Slavic literacy in the work of Cyril and Methodius in geographic Macedonia, (6) the legitimacy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and (7) a flourishing contemporary Macedonian culture of literacy, visual arts, and music in the European classical tradition. Occasional articles also appear describing cultural expressions of Albanian and Turkish minorities in Macedonia.

The overall narrative of *Macedonian Review* between 1971 and 1991 affirms an ethnic Macedonian nation that is explicitly Slavic-speaking, with roots in the Slavic-speaking population that migrated to the region in the sixth and seventh centuries and experienced a national awakening beginning in the nineteenth century. Only two articles appear in this twenty-year period of *Macedonian Review* that deal with the legacy of Alexander the Great and his father Philip II of Macedon, figures who have come to great prominence in certain nationalist narratives of independent Macedonia that form the political backdrop for this dissertation. The first article, titled “The Ancient Macedonians and Alexander the Great” (Andonovski 1978), takes the position that the ancient Macedonians were neither Greek nor Slavic, stating: “We are not so brave as to claim that the modern Macedonians are direct descendants of the ancient Macedonians.” However, it hints in one short paragraph that it might be possible that the ancient Macedonians intermarried with the Slavs when they arrived in the region, and that the

²⁵ See Lozanovska 2014 for an analysis of *Macedonian Review* with regard to the extent to which it focused on emigrant populations themselves.

Macedonian people today could ostensibly be descendants of both (ibid.:14). This argument is not pursued, and the article concludes: “surely it is wiser to abandon all efforts to prove descent from the glories of Alexander the Great. They are pretentious and without foundation because the glory only belongs to the ancient Macedonians” (ibid.). The second article (Andonovski 1979) focuses on the 1977 discovery of a tomb claimed to be that of Philip II in the northern Greek town of Vergina by Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos (there is no consensus among archeologists around the world as to whether the tomb is actually that of Philip II). The article makes an argument against the continuity of a Greek population in geographical Macedonia since time immemorial, suggesting instead that ancient Macedonians were inhabitants of this area. It only briefly mentions—but does not describe—a “shining star” symbol that adorns the sarcophagus as well as coins and shields associated with the burial site (see Fig. 3). This symbol took on great significance in both Greece and Macedonia in later years and is known in Macedonia today as the “Vergina Sun.” Aside from these two articles, Alexander the Great, Philip the II, their associated symbology, and any discussions of the continuity of the Macedonian people from antiquity to the present do not appear in *Macedonian Review* between 1971 and 1991.



Figure 3. Burial chest found at Vergina believed to be of Philip II, with 16-pointed star
adornment

As Yugoslav Macedonia affirmed the presence of an ethnic Macedonian population (speaking a Slavic language) and culture in Aegean Macedonia, it also promoted expressive culture that has its roots in that area, especially folk music. This was manifested in several ways. Radio Television Skopje supported groups such as “Bapčorki,” Kosturčanki, and Vodenki, female vocal groups consisting of women who, as children, had fled Aegean Macedonia as refugees in 1948 during the time of the Greek Civil War. The groups were named for the villages and towns whence they fled, using the Macedonian forms of the toponyms.²⁶ Thousands of Macedonian speakers were killed in the course of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), and many villages were completely destroyed. Fifty thousand ethnic Macedonians fled to Yugoslavia. Throughout the SFR Yugoslav period (as before it), Greek policies of denationalization and assimilation continued, discriminating against Macedonian speakers especially in the areas of education and employment (Danforth 1995:54). The Bapčorki group was formed by Radio Television Skopje in 1971 and sang folk repertoire from the village of Bapčor (Gr. Pimeniko) and surrounding region (see Chapter 10 for further discussion of this repertoire). Some examples from Tanec during the Yugoslav period include repertoire from the Aegean region, including the folk dances “*Egejsko oro*” (“Aegean dance”) and “*Solunka*” (“Dance of Solun,” the Macedonian name for Thessaloniki), both of which were added to the repertoire in 1973 and are still performed by Tanec today. The choreography for each of these dances is inspired by various dances from the region around the town of Kostur (Gr. Kastoria). The dances are accompanied by folk songs from that region and for these particular dances, the dancers wear the traditional folk attire of the Kostur region (Kitevski and Veličkovska 2015:72, 89). Though Alexander the

²⁶ In the case of Voden, the name was also used by Greeks in the form “Vodena” until the Greeks changed the Slavic toponyms all over northern (but not southern) Greece between 1913 and 1928. Voden became Edessa, named for the ancient site located near the modern town (see Danforth 1995:69).

Great and connections to Aegean Macedonia's Macedonian-speaking population were part of the national narrative affirmed during the Yugoslav period, the Slavic roots of the language of ethnic Macedonians were of primary importance in the national narrative fostered under Yugoslavia. While Alexander the Great existed in the Macedonian historiography developed under Yugoslavia, he did not play a central role in that historiography. Rather, he was depicted as a hero of the ancient (pre-Slavic) Macedonian people and constituted part of a historical legacy of *geographic* Macedonia, not a legacy of a pre-Slavic ethnic Macedonian people that has persisted from antiquity to the present.

The program notes from Tanec's first tour of the United States in 1956 illustrate this point. A section of the program titled "'Tanec' Means Dance—All Kinds of Dance: The Repertory" reads:

Macedonians have a long, unbroken history—literally and in the dance. And these dance-dramas of the Macedonians go back in time to the earliest ritual of pre-Slav tribes and to pre-classic Greek periods. They also show the influences of all the conquerors who marched through this pathway of history. They preserve elements from their own Greek ascendancy under Philip and Alexander, of the Roman Empire, two eras of Byzantine rule, medieval feudalism, the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Slaves of every empire, they have preserved their national unity and identity and their dream of freedom through their native arts and some valiant fighting, all of which come together in their dance. ("Yugoslav National" 1956)

Though the author of the program is not listed, the rhetoric indicates the building of a general narrative that suggests mythologies and memories of an ancient Macedonian people consistent

with typical strategies of ethnic nationalists and nation building (see Smith 1988 for a perspective on nations that suggests that they actually have ancient ethnic roots). But the wording here obfuscates whether Macedonians are descendants of Slavs or some pre-Slavic people and whether they were a group *under* the domination of Alexander and Philip. It may even suggest that they might be Greek—an idea that would be unimaginable in independent Macedonia or even the later years of SFY Macedonia. It also is unclear here whether it is the dance form or the ethnic nation that has lasted through so many eras; perhaps it conflates the two and is suggesting both.

Greek scholarship on Macedonia has provided a counternarrative to the Macedonian one, often asserting the homogenous nature of the Greek population in its northern province Macedonia, referring to Macedonian speakers there as Slavophone Greeks, and denying the existence of a Macedonian nation or language, naming Slavs outside Greek borders as Bulgarians or “Skopians.” The Greek objection to the use of “Macedonia” and “Macedonian” by the Yugoslav regime for an area outside of Greece and a non-Greek people stems from powerful historical connotations the terms have for Greeks since Greece initiated its territorial designs on Macedonia in the late nineteenth century. These connotations are claimed to stretch back to Greek histories of their relationships to a people labeled Macedonians before any people labeled as “Slavs” inhabited the region (see, e.g., Christides 1949; Vacalopoulos 1972, 1973; Martis 1984; Kofos 1987, 1993; Tachiaos 1990; Kondis et al. 1993; for a counternarrative see Lithoxou 2012[1998]).

The Bulgarian perspective has been perhaps less passionate and more fluid through various political climates since World War II, but scholarship has mostly maintained at least the Bulgarian origins of the ethnic Macedonian population, its pre-World War I national heroes, and

its associated cultural symbols (see, e.g., Bozhinov and Panayotov 1978; Bulgarian Academy of Sciences 1978; MacDermott 1978; Vanchev 1981; Michev 1994; Gotsev 1999; Daskalov 2004). Particularly relevant to this study are folk musical instruments, repertoires, and practices shared between Macedonia and Bulgaria as markers of ethnicity and sometimes nation. Macedonian ethnomusicologists, particularly those associated with the Institute of Folklore “Marko Cepenkov,” have been involved in projects establishing the geographical origins of musical repertoires and practices within Macedonian borders and distinguishing them from Bulgarian ones (an obvious example would be highlighting the one-piece end-blown, rim blown Macedonian *kaval* as distinct from the three-piece Bulgarian *kaval*). For example, the first issue in the Institute’s journal *Makedonski Folklor* (Macedonian Folklore) contains an article stating that over 50% of the instrumental dances (*ora*) have either a 7/8 or a 7/16 meter, and that a meter in seven can be called a “Macedonian 7” (Hadžimanov 1968). A more recent example explores “musical dialects” in Macedonian traditional ritual folk singing practices, categorizing repertoire and styles by region and associating them with dialects of the Macedonian language (Veličkovska 2008).

These discourses continued in various and important ways throughout the Yugoslav period. In sum, by the end of the Yugoslav period, Macedonia played host to a well-established Macedonian ethno-national consciousness related to its roots in Ilinden Uprising and the VMRO heroes, the Macedonian language, the Macedonian Orthodox Christian religion, an assortment of practices including Macedonian rural songs and dances, and, with a more limited scope, symbols to those associated with Alexander the Great.^{27,28} This served Yugoslav goals of cultivating and

²⁷ Several areas in western Macedonia play host to a Muslim Macedonian population, known as *Torbeši* (in some sources grouped with *Pomaks*, Bulgarian-speaking Muslims). Macedonian

maintaining a Macedonian nationality distinct from a Bulgarian one, as well as the identification of the Slavic-speaking minority in Northern Greece as ethnic Macedonian rather than Bulgarian.²⁹ While Greece took issue with the name of Yugoslav Macedonia (the Socialist Republic of Macedonia) and the identification of Slavic speakers in northern Greece as Macedonian, and was known to deny visas to Yugoslav Macedonian citizens wanting to enter Greece (especially if they had been born in Greece), relations between Yugoslavia and Greece remained stable. No land claims were made on Aegean Macedonia by Yugoslavia, Belgrade policy supported the moderation of Macedonian nationalism, and the name “Macedonia” did not officially appear in the international political sphere.³⁰ This did not cause particular disruption, and served Yugoslav goals of cultivating a Macedonian national identity and maintaining the borders of Yugoslavia as they were established in 1945. But in 1991 when Macedonia became an independent nation-state and adopted the constitutional name “The Republic of Macedonia,”

Muslims first organized politically in the Association of Macedonian Muslims in 1970 (Perry 1997; Poulton 1997)

²⁸ In the Yugoslav period, the place of the Church was very limited. That fact notwithstanding, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate recognized the Macedonian Orthodox Church as autonomous (but not autocephalous) from 1959 to 1967. From 1919 to 1959 the Serbian Orthodox Church was the only church in Macedonia (prior to that, the Greek Patriarchate and Bulgarian Exarchate fought over jurisdiction in the Macedonian dioceses). In 1967, the Macedonian Orthodox Church declared its autocephaly, and since then, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate has viewed it as schismatic, a view that has taken on greater significance after Macedonian independence when SFRY state limits on the church were no longer present. Macedonian anthropologist Ljupčo Risteski (2009) discusses how the Macedonian Orthodox Church is connected to national identity in light of this ongoing contestation from the Serbian Orthodox Church (see also Ramet 2002:109).

²⁹ Throughout the period of Yugoslavia (1944–1991 in Macedonia), those maintaining pro-Bulgarian sympathies were repressed throughout Macedonia and Yugoslavia, resulting in imprisonment and sometimes death sentences (see Poulton 2000:118–119). Historian Andrew Rossos (2008) suggests that the Yugoslav Communist Party simply labeled any of its opponents (including Macedonian nationalists) as having pro-Bulgarian sympathies and punishing them accordingly.

³⁰ For example, when Tanec would tour internationally, it would do so under the name “Yugoslav Folk Ballet,” as would Serbian national ensemble Kolo and Croatian national ensemble Lado.

these matters took on new significance, not only on the international stage with regard to relations with Greece, but also within Macedonian society with regard to inter-ethnic relations and struggles for political dominance.

The Republic of Macedonia after 1991

Arguably the three most important arenas of Macedonian political life since its independence in 1991 are: (1) relations with Greece regarding disputes over the name issue and related symbols; (2) relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians; and (3) the emergence of a party-dominated state whose neo-liberal and nationalist policies have arguably shaped life for citizens of Macedonia more than any other factor. Understanding the way these overlapping arenas have developed since 1991 and how they played out during the period of my field research is crucial to understanding the meaningful ways that music scenes and their music-making practices provide spaces for belonging that are alternative to those of the increasingly dominant state.

At its independence, the Republic of Macedonia continued processes of nation building begun under Yugoslavia, adopting some national symbols that affirmed the legacy of the Ilinden Uprising (e.g., its heroes are listed in the text of the national anthem), and others that gestured towards a legacy of Alexander the Great, such as its flag which featured the sixteen-pointed “Vergina sun” in yellow on a red background (adopted 1992, see Fig. 4). In the period immediately following Macedonia’s independence, Greece, fearing, among other things, Macedonian land claims on its northern province also named Macedonia, placed a number of barriers to the establishment of Macedonia as a legitimate nation-state including a trade embargo (lasting 19 months between 1994 and 1995) and a refusal to admit Macedonia to the UN or any

other international body as “The Republic of Macedonia.”³¹ The 1995 Interim Accord between the two nations ended the embargo and allowed for Macedonian UN membership under the conditions that it adopt the name “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (FYROM), remove the sixteen-pointed “Vergina sun” symbol from its flag, and remove language from its constitution that hinted at claims to Greece’s northern province. At the time of writing, the name dispute has not been resolved, and both NATO and the EU have halted processes of Macedonian accession until the name issue is settled.³²



Figure 4. Flag of Macedonia, adopted 1992 (left); flag of Macedonia, adopted 1995 (right)

Beyond national symbology, interest among Macedonians in establishing connections with ancient Macedonians has taken several forms since 1991. Publications supporting continuity of a Macedonian people since antiquity have appeared in areas of history (e.g., Belčev 1993;

³¹ Any sort of aggression has always been out of the question, especially considering the sizes of the respective armed forces. Questions of property ownership and/or restitution for ethnic Macedonians who had fled Greece in the late 1940s are potentially a legal issue. Macedonians I knew in Skopje would often comment to me that they knew the location of their grandparents’ or great-grandparent’s former homes or land in Aegean Macedonia. Greek citizenship was not restored to any of the refugees, unless they were “Greek by race,” in which case they could reclaim their property (Roudometoff 1996; Monova 2002:250, 328).

³² Bulgaria has also, more recently, voiced opposition to Macedonian EU membership, its president Rosen Plevneliev accusing the VMRO-DPMNE of an “ideology of hate” and an “anti-Bulgarian campaign [with] the manipulation of historical facts” in a 2012 statement issued to the EU Enlargement Commission (quoted in Gotev 2012). Incidentally, Plevneliev was born in a town in southwestern Bulgaria named “Goce Delčev” (formerly Nevrokop) in Pirin Macedonia and he has family roots in a village in what is now the Greek region of Macedonia.

Popovski and Kosturski 2000; Donski 2004), linguistics (Čašule 2003, 2004), and genetics (Arnaiz-Villena 2001; Damianopoulos 2012). As Vasiliki Neofotistos (2011) notes, regardless of the highly questionable accuracy of the research and the shoddy methodologies involved in these types of publications, their conclusions have often gained some traction in public discourse; their claimed status as academic and/or scientific publications lend a sense of legitimacy (if only a sense) that supports a Macedonia that is both an ancient nation (because of their content) and a modern one (because of their “scientific” or “scholarly” format).³³

The right-wing party VMRO-DPMNE formed in 1990, claiming to draw on the heritage of VMRO and the 1903 Ilinden Uprising.³⁴ In the early 2000s, it began to increasingly capitalize on national frustration resulting from Macedonia’s lack of progress on the international stage as well as on these developing discourses in order to gain support. The party won a majority in the 2006 parliamentary elections, but solidified its grip on power only after Greece’s successful exclusion of Macedonia from NATO at the 2008 Bucharest Summit.³⁵ Since the subsequent 2009 election, VMRO-DPMNE has increasingly promoted a new nationalist ideology, shifting away from the Slavic heritage emphasized in the Yugoslav era and based on the fact that modern Macedonian is a Slavic language. Instead the party’s national narrative features the continuity of an ancient Macedonian people descending from Alexander the Great and Phillip II that persists

³³ See Ilievski 2008 for a rebuttal of such pseudo-scientific research that attempted to prove that the middle text of the Rosetta Stone, which is in Demotic Egyptian, was in Ancient Macedonian, mistakenly identified by researchers as Modern Macedonian. The research Ilievski (himself a linguist and member of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts) critiques was carried out not by linguists, but by a mathematician and an engineer from the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

³⁴ *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija–Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo*, or Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity.

³⁵ Greece was later found in violation of the 1995 Interim Accord for this move, but sanctions were not imposed.

today as the ethnic Macedonian people. With this new focus on Alexander the Great (who, not incidentally is known colloquially in Macedonia as *Aleksandar Makedonski*, or Alexander the Macedonian), as the central symbolic figure of Macedonia, VMRO-DPMNE not only appeals to nationalist passions in demonstrating its unwillingness to compromise with Greece on the name issue, but also continues to prevent all ethnic minorities from being represented by Macedonia's national symbols, which unapologetically depict a state that is dominated by monoethnic interests.³⁶

VMRO-DPMNE's most visible project has been "Skopje 2014," a comprehensive reconstruction of Skopje's center featuring new neo-classical and neo-baroque facades for older buildings, the construction of new museums and government buildings in neo-classical and neo-baroque styles, several new bridges over the Vardar river that runs through the city center, and erecting on Skopje's center square and all over nearby crossroads dozens of statues of historical figures from Macedonia, many of whom are also claimed as heroes by Bulgaria (if 19th or 20th century) or Greece (if ancient). The central monument of Skopje 2014 is a large fountain topped by an enormous statue officially named "Warrior on a Horse" that represents Alexander the Great on his horse Bucephalos, located at the center of Skopje's square. At about eight stories high, the Alexander fountain towers over all of the surrounding buildings and measures higher than the statue of Alexander in Thessaloniki in the Greek province of Macedonia 150 miles to the south.

³⁶ The party essentially buys into the logic of a falsehood promoted by Greek policy, following suit by compounding that falsehood with its own.



Figure 5. “Warrior on a Horse” and fountain (view from the northeast)



Figure 6. “Warrior on a Horse” and fountain (view from the southwest)



Figure 7. Tsar Samuel



Figure 8. Archeological Museum of Macedonia and Bridge of Artists



Figure 9. Porta Makedonija



Figure 10. Philip II Monument

Before this initiative, Skopje's architectural landscape was dominated by buildings in the Brutalist style erected after the 1963 earthquake that devastated the city. These large, bulky structures featured exposed concrete exteriors and were surrounded by socialist-era block apartments that were also built in the aftermath of the earthquake. The center square was a large open space with a humble circular grass and flowerbed at its center. Macedonian scholar Despina Angelovska argues that, by covering over this socialist-era Brutalist architecture with neo-classical facades and by erecting a pantheon of Macedonian heroes stretching back to antiquity, VMRO-DPMNE suggests a discontinuity with Macedonia's socialist past, redefining that past as an interruption of Macedonian historical continuity. I would add that the new buildings and monuments also served to obscure the views of Ottoman era monuments such as the Mustafa Paša Džamija (Mosque) and the Daut Pašim Amam (a Turkish bath-house), which were previously visible from the square. Albanian heroes received their own statues, but removed from the city center in the traditionally mixed (and increasingly Albanian) neighborhood of Čair. These forceful, physical configurations of public space diminish the heritage of Yugoslav socialism, reinforce monoethnic nationalism, and encourage ethnic segregation, all in an attempt to situate Macedonia as a distinctly European nation-state with a long and enduring ethno-national history (Angelovska 2014; see also Janev 2011; Vangeli 2011).

Other government initiatives support this same shift away from Yugoslav-era conceptions of Macedonian national identity and towards an affirmation of pre-Slavic heritage, including increasing support of academic and pseudo-academic projects supporting this heritage. For example, the work of archaeologist Florin Curta became popular among some academic institutions in the years after 2006. His book *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology*

of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700 (2001) argues against the occurrence of a Slavic migration into southeastern Europe, asserting that “the Slavs” were an invention of Byzantine writers, a view widely rejected by historians.³⁷ Skopje’s Euro-Balkan University invited him to be a featured guest lecturer at the 2013 Ohrid Summer University, where he taught a course re-evaluating concepts of Slavic identity.³⁸

Another example concerns the Hunzukuts (as members of this group refer to themselves), from Northern Pakistan. In their oral tradition, they claim that they descended from five soldiers of Alexander the Great’s army and are, thus, Macedonians. In 2008, royal representatives from the Hunza Valley in northern Pakistan visited Skopje, received by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and blessed by the Archbishop Stefan of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The “Macedonian Institute for Strategic Research 16:9,” a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with ties to the Macedonian government, invited the group to Macedonia to demonstrate supposed ties between Macedonians currently living in Macedonia, Hunzukuts, and ancient Macedonians (see Neofotistos 2011). Through these types of initiatives, VMRO-DPMNE has built on the “modern” (i.e., pseudo-academic/scientific) methods of “confirming” the antiquity of a Macedonian people that began to rise to prominence in the 1990s. And because of the ongoing refusal by Greece to recognize the cultural and national legitimacy of Macedonia under the name “Macedonia,” the party/state can use these projects of *antikvizacija* (“antiquization”—a local term used sometimes disparagingly to describe especially Skopje 2014) to assert the existence of

³⁷ See especially Heather 2010:395–398; also M. Greenberg 2002 for a perspective from linguistics.

³⁸ See the program for the 2013 Ohrid Summer University, available at http://www.euba.edu.mk/tl_files/OSU%20aplikacii%202013/OSU%202013%20Byzantium.pdf (accessed May 12, 2015).

a long-enduring and legitimate Macedonian people.³⁹

Macedonian national ideology has long focused on *affirmation* of the existence of a unique people and on gaining *recognition* of that fact from international institutions and states (Danforth 1995:43). In a departure from the Slavic-based national ideology fostered under Yugoslavia, VMRO-DPMNE has since 2006 shifted the direction of this drive for affirmation and recognition in order to accrue power, and Skopje 2014 and other antiquization projects are one of many tools the party uses to stoke nationalist passions and rally public support. The inherent problem in using unachieved affirmation and lack of recognition as a political tool is the fact that the party is actually de-incentivized from resolving the name dispute or moving forward towards EU membership; if it accomplished either of those stated goals, it would lose the ability to use their unresolved status as a mechanism for garnering public support. After nearly a decade of VMRO-DPMNE governance with no visible progress on these issues (alongside many other developments in the party-dominated state, described below), it began to become clear to many citizens that I spoke with (in private spheres) that despite the party's calls for name recognition and support for EU and NATO membership, party leaders had little to gain in moving towards a resolution to the name dispute or accession processes to NATO or the EU. Unresolved tensions with Greece and the EU played to the party's advantage and fed increasing governmental support of ethnocentric antiquization projects that consequently had the power to mobilize ethnic Macedonian nationalism and further marginalize ethnic minorities.

Even as this diplomatic tension with Greece and its domestic political consequences were being played out in the years since 1991, independent Macedonia was also dealing with a second arena of political life, namely internal ethnic tensions, primarily involving ethnic Albanians, the

³⁹ People pushing the ancient Macedonian connection are also sometimes sarcastically referred to as Bucephalists and their approach Bucephalism, after Alexander the Great's horse.

country's largest minority. Macedonia played host to over 300,000 refugees from Kosovo in 1999 related to the Kosovo War after the launch of NATO air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Though these refugees remained in Macedonia for a relatively brief period (most from March until July 1999), the issues of the Kosovo War stemming from tensions between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs had some influence on ethnic relations in Macedonia.⁴⁰ A combination of those influences and both *de jure* and *de facto* policies of governmental representation, education, and resource distribution biased against Albanian and other minorities led to the 2001 insurgency between ethnic Albanians and Macedonian state security forces (other complex factors were also in play).⁴¹ The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) of the same year resulted in not only the end of violence, but also greater representation of Albanians among employees of public administration, more power on local levels of government, more language rights for minorities in education and public life, and more rights to the expression of identity in public forums such as flying an Albanian flag next to the Macedonian flag in front of local public buildings. Among the signatories of the OFA was a special EU representative, and the adoption and implementation of the OFA became a condition for Macedonia's accession to the EU (Marolov 2013).

The constitutional amendments resulting from the OFA began an era where Macedonia can no longer be officially defined as a nation of just the ethnic Macedonian people, and it increased many rights of ethnic Albanians and other minorities. However, though the relevant

⁴⁰ This stretches back even further to the 1981 uprising in Kosovo, which was inspired by student demonstrations and forcefully suppressed by Yugoslav authorities (see Mertus 1999; Kostovicova 2005).

⁴¹ All told, between 150 and 250 people were killed and at least 650 were wounded (Phillips 2004:161). For more details on the conflict, see Phillips 2004 for a journalistic account and Neofotistos 2012 for an ethnographic account of everyday life and interethnic cooperation during the time of the conflict.

constitutional amendments defined Macedonia as a country with a civic and multiethnic character, the implementation of the agreement has led to a state and a society that is in many respects de facto biethnic. This has manifested not only in the further marginalization of Romani, Turkish, and other smaller minority ethnic groups in Macedonia, but also in the deepening of segregation between ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian populations (Reka 2008). Most public institutions have followed the OFA to the letter, hiring the correct proportion of Albanian employees and allocating the minimum appropriate funds to Albanian and other minority projects.⁴² The parties that have prevailed in parliamentary elections have always formed multi-ethnic coalitions involving at least one Albanian party, though this has also resulted not in cooperation and collaboration, but rather a method of governing that proportionally divides power (e.g., in the form of resources, Minister posts) among primarily ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, allowing each group to develop its own nepotistic network.

This has become particularly pronounced since VMRO-DPMNE took power in 2006 (and especially since 2008), because of its right-leaning ethnocentric nationalistic policies. In relation to the Skopje 2014 project, this “divide and distribute” strategy with regard to power and resources has manifested itself in that all of the monuments in Skopje’s central square and in a new square immediately across the Vardar River feature figures and symbology associated with the heritage of ethnic Macedonians. As part of the project, a completely separate square has been constructed (and is being expanded) just past the aforementioned new central square, in a mixed

⁴² This is a prevailing perception, even among those who work in state administration. Some ethnic Macedonians take pride that there are funds, representation, and protections provided for minorities, but many others see this as a political strategy to satisfy the OFA in a way that increases nepotism and appeases opposition politicians. Ethnic Albanians I talked to complained that while representation is proportional and projects benefitting the Albanian population are financed, those projects and institutions that are primarily Albanian are not financed well, while politicians from the Albanian political parties and their networks benefit greatly as a result of corruption.

but predominantly Albanian neighborhood, that has a statue of Albanian national hero Skanderbeg.⁴³ The Skopje 2014 reorganization of public space by the VMRO-DPMNE government thus powerfully illustrates how the government has turned to antiquization of Macedonian national identity not only in response to the name dispute with Greece, but also to physically segregate ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian populations, giving each its own place to assemble, with the central, national space reserved for ethnic Macedonians.

In my descriptions of diplomatic tensions between Macedonia and Greece and internal ethnic tensions between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians so far, I have alluded to the rise of a state dominated by the right-wing political party VMRO-DPMNE since 2006, the third arena of Macedonian political life. The mechanisms that enabled this type of ascent had been developing since the disintegration of Yugoslavia when new formations of political and economic power were taking shape. As Yugoslavia crumbled, a political class emerged from the structures of the former regime, formed by people with inside knowledge and often illicit access to large state funds. Interconnected with this political class were those who came to dominate the market economy, people who made fortunes by diverting public or state funds to their personal accounts. This interconnectedness has never been organized along ideological or political (or, some would suggest, even ethnic) lines. Rather, it is characterized by influence, which is spread through nepotistic patronage systems involving a hyper-inflated state administration (where being part of a nepotistic network is considerably more crucial to employment than qualifications) and its associated private corporations who often serve as its contractors (necessary for massive projects like Skopje 2014). The “divide and distribute” strategy of political parties is relevant here, as both Macedonian parties such as VMRO-DPMNE and

⁴³ Skanderbeg (Al. Gjergj Kastrioti/Skënderbej) was a fifteenth-century Albanian nobleman who is today the most celebrated national hero of Albanians.

Albanian parties such as VMRO-DPMNE's coalition partner Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) have implemented such systems of nepotism and patronage. Though the main opposition party the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (*Socijaldemokratski Soyuz na Makedonija*, SDSM) and its leaders developed this system when they held power in the early years of Macedonia's independence, VMRO-DPMNE (along with its coalition partner, DUI) has refined this system in the years since 2006. The party spread its influence in this manner, inflating the state administration even more and engendering a highly nepotistic society in which open disagreement with the party will threaten one's employability or financial livelihood. Many have refrained from criticizing the state publicly out of a fear of imprisonment or danger to their personal safety and well-being.

I follow Macedonian political scientist Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, who characterizes not only the political life of Macedonia, but "overall life," as under such considerable influence of political parties that Macedonia should be considered a "partyocracy," a society ruled by dominant political parties (Siljanovska-Davkova 2013:109). In her thorough analysis of the developments of political parties in independent Macedonia since 1991, she details the ways that the current party system has led to a biethnic society that marginalizes smaller minority groups, points to parties being organized less around ideology than the pure acquisition of power and resources, and suggests that the current situation is "heaven for ethnodemagogy" and the "rule of leader" (an ethnoparty elite) rather than the "rule of law" (ibid.:127). She also describes Macedonia's adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1990s as dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and the ways that parties in Macedonia are not actually driven by ideologies, but rather by recruitment and organization—which assist in the

accumulation of power—that put a priority on patronage and clientelism.⁴⁴ The partyocratic state run by VMRO-DPMNE during the period of my research held power not only over employment and the livelihoods of much of the populace, but also over the judiciary, the electoral process, and the media, whose press freedoms it greatly limited.⁴⁵

In light of the ways that VMRO-DPMNE has built power since 2006, common critiques of Skopje 2014 in everyday discourse (not in the highly-censored press) not only contested its antiquization of Macedonian national history, kitsch aesthetics, and ethnocentric spatial and ideological marginalization of minorities. They also challenged the enormous cost of the project,

⁴⁴ I view this particular formation of dominance that and its foundation on neoliberal ideologies as an aspect of a new era of sorts in Macedonia. I avoid over-reliance on the label “postsocialist” to categorize Macedonia during the time of my research, as describing the situation only in relation to its socialist past seems to discount other factors that have contributed to the development of such a dominant state. The socialist past of Macedonia and its associated symbols, ideologies, and social strategies certainly played a role in shaping the Macedonia of 2011–2014. But global flows of all kinds (namely economic, but also political, ideological, and technological, as well as those related to media and human migration, cf. Appadurai 1996) that have entered Macedonia since 1991 have also had great influence. This line of thinking generally follows scholars who are expanding the research questions that have characterized “postsocialist studies” or questioning the sufficiency of the postsocialist category altogether (e.g., Verdery 2002; Keough 2006; Buden 2009; Chari and Verdery 2009; Rogers 2010; Horvat and Štikš 2015). I agree that new, neoliberal structures of domination have become prevalent in countries of so-called “postsocialist Eastern Europe” (e.g., Kosovo, Moldova), as governments simultaneously accumulate power and deregulate the private sector, whose players are interconnected in networks of state nepotism and corruption. At the same time, I argue that these structures are inseparable from the socialist (i.e., noncapitalist) past that lives on in numerous mediated forms, such as nostalgia, memory, on-the-ground practice, and revisionist historiography.

⁴⁵ Macedonia’s ranking on the 2014 Press Freedom Index published annually by Reporters Without Borders was 123 out of 180 countries. See <https://index.rsf.org/#!/index-details/MKD> (accessed May 7, 2015). In addition, in the first half of 2015 public discourse in Macedonia was dominated by an enormous wiretapping scandal, wherein opposition party leader Zoran Zaev accused Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and his cousin, Secret Police head Sasho Mijalkov, of illegally listening in on the telephone communication of 20,000 citizens. The recordings were released over a period of five months beginning in February 2015, and alleged conversations between cabinet members, Gruevski, and Mijalkov seemed to confirm corrupt government activities related to control over the judiciary, illegal manipulation of elections, a murder cover-up, and suppression of press freedoms, among other illicit activities.

frequently questioning why the millions of Euros being spent on statues could not be used to update state health facilities, schools, dilapidated higher education facilities, or infrastructure needs in Macedonia outside capital city Skopje. The conclusion for many citizens was that the lavish expense of the project was one of many tools used by the powerful to line their pockets with more illicit funds, even as the population became more dependent on the party/state for employment and financial survival, and thus more reticent to criticize its projects, policies, and ideologies.

Anthropologist Andrew Graan explores Skopje 2014 as a neoliberal statecraft project of “nation branding,” or “strategic efforts to formulate national identity as a branded commodity that can motivate and enhance the movement of capital into a country” (Graan 2013:165). Graan argues that for neoliberal nationalism and the brand nationalism that accompanies it, national representation is more concerned with economic functions such as attracting tourism and foreign investments, and less concerned with political functions such as representing a citizenry with numerous and multifarious interests.⁴⁶ This, in combination with ethnic entrepreneurship, corruption, censorship, and electoral manipulation, have made Skopje

⁴⁶ I would add here the economic functions that connect to a domestic audience, in terms of what some have called “commercial nationalism.” In a study on reality television production in the Balkans, Zala Volčič and Mark Andrejevic incorporate this notion of commercial nationalism, or the “way in which nationalist appeals migrate from the realm of political propaganda to commercial appeal . . . as a means of increasing ratings, popularity, and sales” (Volčič and Andrejevic 2011:115). They comment that “the logic of the market reinforces the mobilization of nationalism not as a top-down imposition but as the reflection of the aggregated desires of individual consumers” (ibid.:116) and draw on commercial nationalism as described by Seo (2007, 2008), Ju (2007), and others (Volčič 2009; L. White 2009). Skopje 2014 unavoidably influences the desires of individual consumers even as it reflects them (i.e., it gives them *a* brand for consumption, even if it is not one that they feel will be successful on the international stage because of its kitsch and obvious lack of perceived authenticity). I argue that this form of commercial nationalism is a top-down imposition, at least in part, because it reorganizes the central public space of the Macedonian nation-state and forces the public to interact with its cadre of heroes and other symbols.

2014 so much more than a representation of an ancient and enduring monoethnic Macedonian people. Its statues, facades, bridges, and monuments are thus physical representations of the partyocratic nature of Macedonian society itself. They have reorganized Macedonia's central public space in a way that forces citizens to interact with statues and monuments that are symbols not only of an ancient, monoethnic Macedonian nation, but also of a powerful state that dominates virtually every aspect of life.

Musicians and Party/State Dominance

Musicians in Macedonia during this period have responded in a variety of ways to this environment increasingly dominated by the party/state. In describing here a broad range of responses and where the music scenes of this study fall in that range, I find it useful to think through, first, distinctions between public and private and how the music-making practices described in this dissertation navigate those distinctions. Second, I situate this study among the various claims that ethnomusicologists have made about music-making practices with regard to issues of power and political dominance, especially when related to nationalism in some way.

During the period of my research (2011–2014) Macedonia's partyocratic state was particularly powerful and press freedom was steadily declining in ways that I have described above. Though the public was rather discontented with the dominance of the government, there was no widespread criticism in the public sphere and certainly nothing coming close to mass protests. And yet, many people privately maintained highly critical stances with regard to the situation, even while remaining silent in any forum that might be considered public. Musicians in Macedonia responded to this situation in a variety of ways. On the one hand, a number of musicians (especially pop musicians) enjoyed the benefits of a patron-client relationship with the

state and/or party-affiliated corporate sponsors, and publicly exhibited, at a minimum, tacit support and at a maximum wholehearted endorsement of their patrons. Musicians involved in state musical institutions such as Tanec, the Macedonian Philharmonic, the Macedonian Opera and Ballet, and the music departments at two state universities (the Faculty of Musical Arts at the state university in Skopje and the Music Academy at University “Goce Delčev” in Štip, the second formed by the VMRO-DPMNE government in 2007), followed a similar pattern. Those in leadership positions tended toward party/state allegiance while performers and other employees publically refrained from criticizing the party/state and privately held a range of positions that depended on several factors (e.g., the function of the particular institution, the duration of their employment, and the security of their employment status, defined as either permanent or contract-based).

On the other hand, several bands in the popular music sphere and at least one independent record label positioned themselves as explicitly oppositional and critical of the increasingly dominant state. PMG Recordings is well known for historically supporting groups with oppositional viewpoints, such as the post-punk band Bernays Propaganda, known for their highly political music. PMG is mostly on the outside of state networks of nepotism and some of its artists have been known for open resistance to those in power. Ska/punk band *Superhiks* are also known for being oppositional to the current situation, though they have being historically aligned with oppositional political party SDSM and thus have participated to an extent (and perhaps before 2006), in a network of nepotism. In 2014 they released a single titled “*Majmuni*” (“Monkeys”), whose chorus includes the following lyrics “*Majmuni nasekade, ova e babun grad*” (“Monkeys everywhere, this is a baboon city”). The band’s text accompanying the official video of the song on YouTube reads: “Without an intention to insult, denigrate, or underestimate

actual monkeys . . . Actual monkeys are intelligent and cultured (*kulturni*) beings as opposed to ‘ours’ [*naši*]. Ours use all of the ‘monkey’ tricks to succeed in this life, and in that way ‘wave’ to the other category of ‘monkeys,’ and that somehow still brings them success.”⁴⁷ The word used for “they wave,” *maftaat*, has the double meaning of “they cheat.”

Musicians of other scenes, including the techno, jazz, and ethno music scenes I am focusing on in this dissertation, were generally not part of either of these groups. That is, they were neither oppositional nor aligned participants in party networks. Through their musical practice and the musical sign vehicles they produced, they seemed to exhibit a much more complex, multi-layered, and constantly negotiated position vis-à-vis the partyocratic society in which they were participants. That is, they were clearly not avid supporters of the party/state nor particularly active participants in nepotistic networks and their associated systems of clientelism. Neither were they among a small but vocal opposition to state projects or aligned with the opposition party. Like many Macedonian citizens, they did not necessarily keep their discontent a secret, but rather confined it to spheres of life that might be considered private as they maintained their livelihoods with varying degrees of struggle.

The existence of a distinction between public and private spheres in Macedonia and other so-called “postsocialist” nation-states has its roots in the socialist period. Virtually all scholars of state-socialism and postsocialism have dealt with such a distinction between the public and the private in one form or another, and each case represents a specific variation on the way public and private actions and discourses play out (e.g., Wedel 1986; Verdery 1996; Garcelon 1997; Kharkhordin 1997; and Kligman 1998). Susan Gal generalizes about Eastern Europe in the socialist period thus:

⁴⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qDnVJVTPHQ>, accessed May 21, 2015.

The public/private distinction was aligned with a discursive opposition between the victimized “us” and a newly powerful “them” who ruled the state. Private activities, spaces, and times were understood by people throughout the region as “ours” and not the state’s. Different moral principles and modes of motivation and reward were considered appropriate to work, spaces, and social relationships considered “ours” as opposed to those considered the purview of the state. . . .

The imperative to be honest and ethically responsible among those who counted as “us” contrasted with the distrust and duplicity in dealings with “them” and with the official world generally. (Gal 2002:87)

Gal also suggests that public and private in state-socialist societies and in capitalist parliamentary democracies are “so different . . . yet also eerily familiar” (ibid.:80). Furthermore, she recognizes the instability of positioning public versus private as a singular dichotomy with one flexible boundary. Instead, she suggests a nesting model wherein public/private dichotomies can be embedded within one another,

momentary and ephemeral, dependent on the perspectives of participants . . .

[o]r . . . lasting and coercive . . . binding social actors through arrangements such as legal regulation and other forms of ritualization and institutionalization.

(ibid.:85)

Participants in the three music scenes discussed in this dissertation constitute an exemplary case of such social actors navigating nested public and private spheres that are momentary and ephemeral in some instances and lasting and coercive in others—and thus continue this legacy of practice with roots in the socialist period, if not before. While they modify their discourses depending on their location in a public or private sphere, their practices of musical and sonic

expression traverse these public/private dichotomies. For example, those in the techno DJ scene continually aligned themselves with the music of early African American Detroit techno pioneers and associated ideologies; those in the jazz scene propagated aesthetics of either straight-ahead or avant-garde jazz while negotiating the position of jazz in the academy; those in the ethno music scene turned to a variety of traditional music practices from geographic Macedonia, adapting them for contemporary performance in projects independent of state institutions and party affiliations. These music-making practices—beyond existing as merely expressions of aesthetic preferences—make sites where individuals and groups can sonically live out their own divergent views and overall dissatisfaction with the dominance of the state in an explicitly non-verbal way (techno and jazz are for the most part instrumental musical practices, and the lyrical content of ethno music is constituted mostly by existing songs).

As an ethnographer and participant in these scenes, I faced my own set of challenges in dealing with the ephemeral and nested public and private spheres. In the writing of this dissertation (a document that will be publicly available), I have striven to discern when a given moment or piece of information would be considered private, and to what extent, especially because understanding of something as public or private was rarely articulated. Since the participants in all of these scenes occupy a middle ground where they are sonically making space in between the dominant and the resistant—and not taking stances through public statements. I thus err on the side of caution and have decided to keep details out of this dissertation in cases where there was any doubt as to whether they were public.

This especially comes into focus in my discussion of financial matters such as payment amounts for employment and compensation for one-off performances at cafés or clubs. With regard to these matters, I was privy to this information because of my position in each scene and

the trust that I had built with club owners and musicians. Even though some payment amounts were common knowledge within the scenes and even in Macedonia more broadly, I decided to omit many of the specifics of these agreements and transactions. Though it was common for friends to ask one another about the amounts of their salaries, I observed many individuals demur about how much they were being paid when asked in a setting that could be understood as more public (e.g., with an acquaintance or someone outside their field). This was especially the case when the amount of financial compensation for work was low, or perhaps embarrassingly low in the case of some of the musicians of these scenes. The fact that these musicians accepted work for such low compensation speaks to the increasing precarity of those not participating in the pervasive network of nepotism and clientelism of the party/state. The financially desperate situation in which many of these musicians found themselves meant that the stakes for their music making in these scenes could be high, especially in the cases where musicians were making a living strictly through musical performance and teaching. My cautious approach to these delicate matters pervades the ethnographic chapters of parts two, three, and four of this dissertation, but I address it in the most detail in part three where I discuss the jazz scene.

Gal's assessment of an exhibiting of "distrust" and "duplicitous" when interacting in public or with official institutions under state socialism also applies to the situation in Macedonia during the period of my fieldwork. Throughout my field research, rumors and conspiracy theories of government corruption pervaded private discourse as frustrated and economically desperate citizens outside the party network spoke of fraudulent elections, a judiciary controlled by the VMRO-DPMNE state, press censorship involving both control of all televised media and imprisonment of opposition journalists, and targeted inspections and fines of businesses that were oppositional or outside of the party network. These discourses remained largely in private

throughout my research, though many of these rumors and conspiracy theories would be confirmed in the months after the period of my field research had concluded when, in November 2014, approximately two months after I concluded my field research, a series of multi-ethnic university student protests against a new education law began, constituting the largest protests that independent Macedonia had seen in its history.

This initiated a snowball process that resulted in several other mass protests at the end of 2014 and the first half of 2015. At the end of January 2015, SDSM leader Zoran Zaev accused the state of conducting a mass surveillance operation wherein Prime Minister Gruevski and his cousin and head of counterintelligence and security, Sašo Mijalkov, allegedly supervised the recording of telephone conversations of 20,000 citizens (1% of the population), including cabinet ministers, members of the judiciary, and other high-ranking members of the government including Gruevski and Mijalkov themselves. Zaev began a gradual process of publically releasing recordings allegedly containing the voices of these high-ranking government officials that apparently confirmed the organization of fraudulent elections, the appointment of party insiders to the judiciary, control of the media, and attempts to cover-up the murder in 2011 by one of Gruevski's bodyguards of 21-year old Martin Neškovski, a student who supported the party (among other discussions of how to organize systemic corruption). This eventually led, amid massive multi-ethnic protests in May 2015, to a joint statement questioning the government's commitment to democracy by ambassadors from the United States, the European Union, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, and to the resignation of Mijalkov, the Minister of the Interior Gordana Jankulovska, and the Minister of Transport and Communications Mile Janakieski, the three officials who were most seriously implicated by the

contents of the recordings (aside from Gruevski himself).⁴⁸ Because this dramatic shift in Macedonian society as it pertains to the domination of the party/state began almost immediately after the conclusion of my fieldwork, my analysis and discussion in this dissertation pertains only to the time period before this shift.

My study of music making and musicians' other social strategies during this period in Macedonia joins a long list of ethnomusicological studies of music making in the context of nationalism or the dominance of a particular regime. These studies usually take one of two general approaches. The first approach examines musical practices that symbolize or represent a nation or a powerful state and the ways individuals and groups from various subject positions engage with those musical practices. They generally focus on the role of music and music making in the negotiation of power and/or national identity through framing state policies in a dialogical relationship with the practices of citizens and other outside cultural forces. Studies of this type have included: the postcolonial construction of a cosmopolitan musical nationalism (Turino 2000); the selective co-opting of various music-making and dance practices (and omission of others) in processes of nation-building (Askew 2002); musical practices constructed as national but employed by non-state groups to negotiate power (Guilbault 2007); practitioners of a national musical tradition informing and responding to regime changes (Buchanan 2006); the shaping of national anthems as symbols of political power (Daughtry 2003); the development of musical institutions and significance of instruments as national symbols in nation-building processes (Nercessian 2001; Merchant Henson 2006; Rancier 2009); and the musical nationalism of a dominant state taking quite eclectic, polymorphic, and seemingly inconsistent forms to accommodate a vast and diverse population and allow for political changes (Tuohy 2001);

⁴⁸ Political scientist Heather Grabbe (2015) offers an astute analysis and pointed policy recommendations, written in the days after these resignations.

among other examples.

The second approach examines the music-making practices of individuals and groups who are marginalized, oppressed, or discriminated against by a dominant group (in some cases, a dominant state) or are overtly oppositional or resistant to such a group. These studies are countless in ethnomusicology, but some general thematic areas include: the music of minority groups in the act of resisting and/or acting in opposition to dominant ones (e.g., Mitchell 2001; Keyes 2004; McDonald 2009, 2013; Perman 2010), oppositional youth cultures centered on musical practices (e.g., Wallach 2008), and studies of the experiences of refugees, diaspora communities, and other migrant populations (e.g., Levin 1996; Sugarman 1997; Shelemay 1998; Reyes 1999; O'Connell 2001; Baily and Collyer 2006). Several scholars have focused on the many Romani minority groups in Europe and ways their music-making relates to identity, in national contexts such as Austria (Hemetek 2006), Romania (Beissinger 2001), Bulgaria and Macedonia (e.g., Silverman 1996a, 2012), and Kosovo and former Yugoslavia in general (Pettan 1996, 2001).⁴⁹

These two approaches—musical engagement with nationalisms and national identities, and musical practices of dominated groups—seem to emerge in part from the heritage of ethnomusicological research inspired by scholars' interest in traditional music. With traditional music as the starting point for research, it is perhaps not surprising that many studies have focused on the roles of traditional music and its practitioners in negotiating nationalism and national identity, since traditional music has played an integral part in the performances and representations of many nations, especially in post-colonial and socialist contexts. Also not

⁴⁹ The International Council for Traditional Music Study Group on Music and Minorities has been significant in bringing together scholarship on this topic. To date, they have published their proceedings in several volumes (Pettan et. al. 2001; Hemetek et. al. 2004; Ceribašić and Haskell 2006; Stelova et. al. 2008; Jurkova and Bidgood 2009; Hemetek 2012; Hemetek et. al. 2014).

surprising is that studies of traditional music have included explorations of music as a vehicle of representation, resistance, and opposition for minorities and other dominated groups for whom traditional music practices are emblematic and often embodied expressions of belonging.⁵⁰

Some of the studies of musical resistance and opposition to dominant groups that I reference above also deal with popular musical practices that are either commonly associated with anti-establishment views (e.g., punk rock) or address marginality and political or economic disenfranchisement (e.g., rap and hip-hop). In discussing political action in popular music, Mark Mattern (1998) challenges scholars to consider strategies beyond categories of opposition, resistance, and struggle in analyses of popular music. He calls this form of political action “confrontational” and includes among its limitations a tendency to dichotomize two groups into a dominant one and an oppositional one, which can result in overlooking fluidity between the groups and erasure of intragroup struggles and differences (ibid.:34). He also suggests that limiting studies to confrontational political action omits other potentially productive political options of musicians and others, options that he categorizes as “deliberative” (action that engages a musical negotiation of *divergent* interests, citing examples from Rose 1994) and “pragmatic” (action that musically promotes *shared* interests among oppositional groups) (ibid.:36). I follow his line of thinking in challenging narrow interpretations of political action in popular music as strictly confrontational, though I go beyond his three categories (confrontational, deliberative, and pragmatic) and situate the music scenes of the study as “alternative” rather than “oppositional” and further destabilize the dominant-oppositional dichotomy, as I describe in detail in Chapter 2.

In this dissertation I look, I believe for the first time, at a third approach to music making

⁵⁰ See Bohlman and Petković 2012 for several perspectives on how Balkan epic poetry and folklore play into issues of nationalism, marginalization, and the related crossing of borders.

in conditions of nationalism and dominance. Since the three music scenes I approach as a musically collaborative ethnographer are neither spaces for the endorsing of and participation in the dominant party/state and its pervasive nepotistic network, nor vehicles for resistance or opposition to the party/state *per se*, they constitute musical/social formations that cannot be neatly situated as aligned with or against the dominant group.⁵¹ Though each scene has points of contact with the party/state and its network, these three scenes are for the most part not involved in state constructions of representations of the nation through traditional music. They also do not enjoy the mass popularity of the bands and solo artists in popular music or the governmental support of elite institutions such as conservatories and orchestras of classical music, remaining (for the most part) on the margins of the fields of popular and classical music and their associations with partyocratic patronage and clientelism. The actors of these scenes, because (and perhaps in spite) of their various positions on the margins of power, are able to musically make spaces for lived experiences of belonging that serve as alternatives to the belonging put forth by the powerful. To these concepts—scene, alternative, and belonging—I now turn.

⁵¹ Because of the partyocratic nature of Macedonian society, almost any practice—including music-making practices—could be and often were interpreted in relation to party politics, and could be thus considered political practices even if their practitioners considered themselves apolitical. (Cf. the related “nonparticipation in politics” in Serbia in J. Greenberg 2010, which in turn draws on “resolute nonparticipation” in Gutmann 2002.)

CHAPTER TWO

Scenes and “Alternative Belonging”

In analyzing the musical and social processes at work in this study, I am thinking through several theoretical perspectives, primarily developing the concept of a “scene” as well as what I call “alternative belonging.” In this chapter, I describe in detail the ways I am using (1) “scene” as way to describe a social formation; (2) the concept of the “alternative”; and (3) “belonging” as something that can be made and experienced in the context of a scene. In addition to defining these terms as they appear in various discourses, I will elucidate the precise ways I am using them in my analysis of the music-making practices of this study.

Scenes

In discussing the three music scenes of this dissertation, I draw on Will Straw’s definition of a scene as “all the places and activities which surround and nourish a particular cultural preference” (Straw 2001b:249), and situate the concept of a “scene” as a flexible, elastic social formation that interacts and intersects with more rigid structures (following William Sewell) and fields (following Pierre Bourdieu). Throughout the dissertation, I explore the ethnomusicological utility of the “scene” concept, working it out in very different ways in the three ethnographic contexts of my research. I argue that “scene” is more useful than other terms (e.g., community, affinity group, subculture, tribe) to describe these musical-social formations, precisely because its ephemerality and elasticity are reflected in the ephemerality and elasticity of such formations.

The word scene (*scena*) is used colloquially in Macedonian in the same way that is in English in this context.⁵² When speaking about scenes, Macedonians would categorize something as a scene only if it exhibited a certain sense of vibrancy or a high level of activity. For example, when I told jazz musicians that I was writing a dissertation about several music scenes in Macedonia including the jazz scene, they would try to explain to me “*ama Dejv, nema scena tuka!*” (“but Dave, there’s no scene here!”). What I think they meant was that there was not the kind of scene that they desired—they hoped for more gigs, higher pay, and more interest in their music. But these musicians had a strong cultural preference for jazz, and there were numerous places and activities surrounding and nourishing that cultural preference and constituting a jazz scene, even if it was a scene that disappointed them for a number of reasons (see Chapter 8). Even though these scenes surround preferences for specific musical genres, I avoid using the term “affinity group” proposed in ethnomusicology by Mark Slobin (1992), since the musical-social formations I explore are not simply based on common interests or aesthetic preferences.⁵³ Rather, their significance spins out of and around those interests and preferences as it is grounded in realities of specific geographical spaces, imaginations of the past and the future, and experiences of belonging available only in the context of a given musical-social formation. I also avoid describing these formations using the word “community,” as the term’s multifarious and slippery meanings, tendency to evoke positive emotion, and apparent sense of

⁵² *Scena* also carries other meanings of “scene” as in English, including a scene in a play or film, and even “to make a scene” (*da pravi scena*). It also, as in other Slavic languages as well as Romance and some Germanic languages, also means “stage.”

⁵³ Slobin defines affinity groups as ensembles that are “charmed circles of like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding” (Slobin 1992:72). Though he also talks about affinity groups as constituting imagined worlds at temporary moments of fusion, the concept seem to be limited to musical ensembles and not quite as flexible as “scene.”

more stable and enduring boundaries (than “scene”) are ill-suited to the social formations I am analyzing here.⁵⁴

The literature on popular music scenes reveals a tension between, on one hand, the notion that scenes are necessarily linked to local heritage and, on the other, the idea of scenes as part of a mobile, global culture (S. Cohen 1999:242–243). For example, Straw (1991) seeks to decouple the definition of scenes from an essentialist idea of local, authentic, geographical rootedness, while Mark Olson (1998) emphasizes the effectiveness of scenes for cultural change characterized by what he terms “radical territorialization.” Elsewhere, Straw (2001a) argues that scenes increasingly function as spaces organized against change, in that they support the perpetuation of minor tastes and habits through networks of small institutions. He asserts “scenes are, much of the time, lived as effervescence, but they also create the grooves to which practices and affinities become fixed” (2001b:254), and concludes that the “virtue of scenes is that they offer laboratories for cultural citizenship which are largely untainted by the sense of unfulfilled collective obligation which national cultural policy so often seeks to impart” (ibid.:256, see also Miller 1993:xi–xii).

The three scenes of this project each establish their own musical and social grooves, fixed to the practices and affinities that create the conditions of “cultural citizenship”—a notion I am extending and calling “alternative belonging.” I would not go so far as to say that this belonging is untainted by the “collective obligation” imparted by the dominant cultural policies of the state, but rather position it in conversation with that collective obligation as actors play with various manners and degrees of partially fulfilling it and partially leaving it—intentionally—

⁵⁴ See Amit and Rapport 2002 for the slippery nature of “community,” A. Cohen 1985 for a situating of community as a symbolic construct dependent on consciousness of boundary.

unfulfilled.⁵⁵ Additionally, the ephemeral aspects, elastic boundaries, and effervescent experientiality of scenes make them ideal sites for the negotiation of nested and equally ephemeral public and private spheres on the part of actors.

David Hesmondhalgh (2005) challenges not only the use of “scene” but also “subculture” and “tribe” (or “neo-tribe,” argued for in Bennett 1999) as ways of conceiving musical collectivities. He is uncomfortable with the ambivalences that the term invokes (ambivalences found as useful in Straw 2001b) and attempts to detach these three terms from their associations with youth cultures by suggesting “genre” and “articulation” as advantageous alternatives. I side with Straw in this case, as the elasticity of boundaries associated with the term “scene” allow it to effectively describe the musical-social formations at hand. Also, since none of these scenes (except perhaps the techno DJ scene) can be completely associated with youth culture or defined in totality as “popular music” in the Macedonian context, “scenes” in this case reveal themselves as able to encompass a broad range of meaningful musical and social practices.

I am less concerned here with the degree to which scenes effect cultural change (as disputed by Mark Olson and Straw, both referenced above), but rather I pursue scenes as social formations that are rooted in local, geographical, spatial and sonic realities and imaginations, while at the same time (and to varying degrees) interwoven with transnational networks of musical practice and taste—networks that might be themselves considered “scenes.” At the local level, actors in scenes adapt and adopt the meanings of those practices and tastes to their own ends, which may or may not be concerned with effecting cultural change. Each scene has its own

⁵⁵ For a comparative example see Emma Baulch’s *Making Scenes* (2007) on reggae, punk, and death metal in Bali. Scene has been theorized for analysis in some ethnomusicological works (e.g., Gerstin 1998, Rouleau 2012), and used as an implicitly understood concept in others (e.g., S. Cohen 2005, Rommen 2007, Wallach 2008). Popular music studies and cultural studies have grappled with the term the most, often turning to it as a replacement for the term “subculture” (see, e.g., Harris 2000, O’Connor 2002, Saldanha 2002).

history that is at once local and transnational, real and idealized, and is always linked not only to spaces and places near and far, but also to ever-changing forms of musical expression. These histories—and the ways that they are represented, imagined, and deployed—bring meaning to all aspects of participation in scenes, and knowledge of and direct experience within such pasts can also serve as important symbolic capital for scene participants. I situate each scene, then, in the context of its own history.

Because of Macedonia's relatively small population and Skopje's status as its urban center, these scenes all carry on in close proximity to one another, and their histories and current practices overlap at many musical and spatial junctures. Straw argues that in contemporary and urban settings "a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (1991:373). In Macedonia, and I would suggest elsewhere, the interconnectedness of musical and other social practices results in processes of differentiation that are not only about musical sound and practice, but negotiate broader categories of belonging that, while linked to meaningful music-making practices, extend beyond them to other issues such as politics, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and provinciality.

In pursuing the ways that actors negotiate such categories of belonging, it is important to recognize that while these actors make music in the elastic scenes framing this discussion, those scenes—and their lives lived outside those scenes—exist within broader and more rigid social structures. Straw (2001b) recognizes that it is in its slipperiness that the "scene" concept finds its utility in settings characterized by fluidity and fuzzy boundaries. But this does not have to mean that scenes do not have their own structures and hierarchies (if ephemeral ones), or that they cannot be situated in the context of broader social formations and categories. In my analysis of

each scene in this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with power and in how actors and their music-making practices intersect with and respond to the powerful in their society who are connected with the party/state. I find it useful, then, to conceptualize each scene as having a structure of sorts and, to an extent, as a Bourdieusian field.

William Sewell asserts that a multiplicity of structures exists for any society, and that various structures operate within even a single sphere (he uses the example of the religious sphere). Due to the multiplicity of structures,

the knowledgeable social actors whose practices constitute a society are far more versatile than Bourdieu's account of a universally homologous habitus would imply: social actors are capable of applying a wide range of different and even incompatible schemas and have access to heterogeneous arrays of resources.

(Sewell 2005:140)

Each scene in this study is the site of several overlapping structures at any given moment, and actors' application of incompatible schemas and mobilization of heterogeneous resources is inextricable from—and actually constitutes—the musical and social practice by which alternative belonging is made. Though Sewell discards what he calls Bourdieu's "universally homologous habitus," Bourdieu's concept of field is a helpful addition to Sewell's framework, primarily because it allows for a discussion of power. While the multiplicity of structures accounts for the existence of highly versatile actors who have the resources to play the "serious games" of society (Ortner 1996), the concept of field allows for a more precise discussion of power relations negotiated by those versatile actors (Bourdieu 1993). As part of broader fields of cultural production, the techno, jazz, and ethno music scenes in Macedonia provide myriad examples of actors applying diverse (and sometimes incompatible) schemas in multiple structures as they take

positions in various fields. Thus when I use terms associated with field such as “position,” “the taking of position” (Fr. *prises de position*), and “capital” in this dissertation, I always use them in the Bourdieusian sense.

This dissertation examines the many diverse positions held by these versatile actors in terms of social class, their artistic fields, the field of politics, and the ubiquitous field of power. Yet even the actors in dominated positions, using Sewell’s terms, are capable of applying a variety of schemas and can access a wide range of resources (Sewell 2005:140). I keep in mind here that the agency of actors is always embedded in and constituent of structure (Giddens 1979), questions of agency are always complex and contradictory (Ahearn 2001), and agency can be exercised not only for or against the powerful, but in pursuit of “projects” on the margins of power (Ortner 2006). In developing the “agency of projects” concept, Sherry Ortner extends her notion of “serious games” (1996), grounding her discussion in intentionality, which includes “all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose” (2006:134). This intentionality in agency can include “highly conscious plots and plans and schemes; somewhat more nebulous aims, goals, and ideals; and finally wants, desires, and needs that may range from being deeply buried to quite consciously felt” (ibid.).

The actors in these scenes demonstrate this full range of intentionality in their agency of projects at the margins of power. This intentionality in agency, however, is not always towards relatively simple culturally-constituted goals, but in pursuit of projects that are truly “‘serious games,’ involving the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials” (ibid.:144). To more precisely describe the exercise of this kind of agency, I consider actors’ versatility in navigating overlapping structures and in the taking of their multiple positions in various fields, characterizing such agency by what

I term “sociovirtuosity.” The actors of these scenes exhibit sociovirtuosity through their ability to employ a sophisticated set of social skills in interacting with players from both within and without nepotistic networks towards their ends that are at once sonic, musical, and ideological. With sociovirtuosity, I extend and adapt Weber’s concept of the “religious virtuoso” (Weber 1968:539–540) from his *Economy and Society*. Colloquially, the word “virtuosity” implies technical and/or musical brilliance. Weber’s discussion of “virtuosi” also points to the “virtue” at the root of the word, meaning an ethic of sheer commitment in a particular context (he provides examples of religious virtuosi in several religions including Sufi dervishes in Islam, Buddhist monks, ascetic Protestants, and ancient Christian martyrs). They exhibit brilliance and highly developed technique, but in issues of the morality of their religion, usually with regard to issues of restraint, self-sacrifice, and/or self-discipline.⁵⁶ By using sociovirtuosity, I too imply a highly developed set of skills—social ones that can also be sonic and musical—but I also resituate Weber’s play on the word “virtue” to imply a virtue whose definition varies by social context and is virtuosically deployed in myriad, seemingly contradictory ways, again nodding to Sewell’s versatile actor.⁵⁷

The actors of all of these scenes exhibit such sociovirtuosity in their music making and other social practices, and thus have the social and musical tools to negotiate power in their scenes and the broader social structures in which those scenes are situated. As they do so, they open up possibilities for neither fully subscribing to the ideologies and networks of the state nor risking their own livelihood or career by taking oppositional stances. In this way, these practices can be described as constitutive of an “alternative.”

⁵⁶ Guenther Roth (1975) also tackles Weber’s religious virtuosi and the charismatic communities they constitute, suggesting a broader “ideological virtuosi” within such communities.

⁵⁷ See “from the side” in Neofotistos 2009 and “conflicting conviviality” in Mattioli 2012 for examples of social strategies that seem contradictory but are actually sociovirtuosic.

Alternative

I use the word alternative here—and throughout this dissertation—in the same way that Raymond Williams uses it in his model of social transformation related to the dominant, the residual, and the emergent (Williams 1977). Williams describes the residual—the remnant of some past social formation—as having aspects (experiences, meanings, and values) that have been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture as well as aspects that “cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture” and “may have *alternative* or even *oppositional* relation to the dominant culture” (ibid.:122, emphasis mine).⁵⁸ He situates alternative and oppositional formations as “significant elements in [a] society,” adding that “their active presence is decisive [. . .] as forms which have had significant effect on the hegemonic process itself and add indicative features of what the hegemonic process has in practice had to work to control” (ibid.:113). While recognizing that nearly all alternative and oppositional formations are limited, neutralized, adapted, or even incorporated by hegemonic ones, he suggests that alternative and oppositional formations “are at least in part significant breaks beyond [hegemonic limits and pressures]” and that “in their most active elements [these formations] come through as independent and original” (ibid.:114).

Along these lines, Jean and John Comaroff point out that while dominant groups exhibit ideologies, subordinate populations possess their own ideologies constituting an aspect of the inherent gaps in hegemony that prevent it from being total. As they have it, hegemony “is always threatened by the vitality that remains in the forms of life it thwarts . . . the hegemonic proportion

⁵⁸ In Williams’ terms, the residual could be considered the remnant of a dominant social formation under Yugoslavia. Much of this has been incorporated into the current dominant of Macedonia, but the scenes of this study can be considered part of the alternative—that which “cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture.”

of any dominant ideology may be greater or lesser. It will never be total, save perhaps in the fanciful dreams of fascists . . .” (1991:25). For Williams, the “authentic breaks” within and beyond hegemony are easier to see if modes of analysis focus on the fluidity of what he calls “works” and “activities,” and discern “the finite but significant openness of many actual initiatives and contributions” (Williams 1977:114; he suggests works of art as relevant examples). The scenes of this study are all exemplary cases where an “agency of projects” is at work on the margins of power, with actors sociovirtuosically deploying sonic and other social practices that initiate breaks beyond hegemonic limits and pressures. Music making is an ideal “finite but significantly open” practice through which to enter an analysis these breaks beyond the hegemonic, both because it is a symbolically rich practice that always plays out in time and space and because it induces ongoing responses that affirm, manipulate, or transform meaning (see Chapter 3 for the related concept “interpretive moves” in Feld 1984). Since this study focuses on actors and music-making practices that are not oppositional, and are in part limited, neutralized, adapted, and incorporated by the hegemonic (but are also breaks beyond it), they can be characterized as “alternative.”

To be clear, I avoid usage of the term “alternative” the way it is colloquially used in reference to popular music or other forms of associated expressive culture and corresponding social formations. Since the 1980s, “alternative” has been used to describe all varieties of popular music in the English-speaking world, including alternative rock (the first and most well-known usage) and other genres such as alternative country and alternative hip-hop, even alternative classical music. In most cases, the alternative label juxtaposes the music and its practitioners against some conception of what would be considered “mainstream.”⁵⁹ In her

⁵⁹ Dichotomous relationships between ideas of “mainstream” and “subculture,” “indie,” and/or

analysis of an alternative country scene in Brooklyn, Kathryn Hohman (2012) frames “alternativity” both as a characteristic structure of feeling for the scene (see Williams 1977 on “structures of feeling”), and as a tactic employed by middle-class subjects for negotiating class. For her, alternativity is a concept that appears in the everyday discourse of scene participants that constitutes both a tool employed to navigate the terrain of class and a set of flexible boundaries for participating in and experiencing the meaningful and expressive activities of the scene.

In Macedonia, none of the scenes of this study are labeled by participants as *alternativna* (f. adj. or *alternativa*, s. n.), a word that translates as and is a cognate with the English “alternative.” Thus, I am again not using the word in a colloquial sense. As in English, *alternativna muzika* (alternative music) refers primarily to alternative rock, and in Macedonia alternative music/alternative rock has a history going back to the 1980s when, inspired by British and American new wave, punk, and post-punk, alternative rock bands such as *Električni Orgazam* (Electronic Orgasm, Serbia), *Grč* (Spasm, Croatia), and *Mizar* (named for the star “Mizar” from the constellation Ursa Major, Macedonia) formed and became known throughout a network of small clubs, publishers, and bands in Yugoslavia’s larger cities.⁶⁰ Such alternative rock bands in the Yugoslav period positioned themselves (and were positioned) against music and other cultural practices that were considered “mainstream,” existed in a semi-legal space due to less state-approved promotion than mainstream popular music, and were characterized by a level of social engagement through lyrical content that addressed problems in society, economic policies, and other political and cultural issues.

“underground” are discussed and problematized in various studies of music and music scenes, including Thornton 1996, Hebdige 1979, Azerrad 2001, Kruse 2003, Fonarow 2006, Moore 2010, and Mall 2012, among others.

⁶⁰ See Zhabeva-Papazova 2012, 2014 for more historical background on alternative rock in both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts.

Another key node of what has been labeled as a musical *alternativa* in Macedonia is Skopje radio station *Kanal 103* (Channel 103), known colloquially as *Stotrojka* (One hundred three). *Stotrojka* was founded in 1991 and enjoyed a particularly vibrant period in the 1990s, constituting the first public node for musical practices that were not promoted by state-run radio stations, and thus labeled *alternativno* and carrying the colloquial meaning associated with oppositional (in contrast to my usage). Though it has undergone many changes (e.g., it was shut down briefly in 2004 and reopened as a volunteer-run radio station) *Stotrojka* still exists today and constitutes an aspect of *alternativna kultura* (alternative culture), if a diminished one. Today it embodies nostalgia for the 1990s as well as an ongoing oppositional position consistent with *alternativna kultura*.⁶¹ For *Stotrojka* and throughout Macedonia the word *alternativen* retains this oppositional, activist quality in Macedonia when used in everyday discourse to describe music, music scenes, and other social formations.

Sarah Thornton (1996), although she focuses on developing “subculture” as a concept based on a context specific to British clubbing activities in 1980s and 1990s, offers a useful observation of ideologies that serve as “alternatives”—not as discursively situated by participants, but in an analytical sense very close to the way I am using the term. She states: “Rather than subverting dominant cultural patterns in the manner attributed to classic subcultures, these clubber and raver ideologies offer ‘alternatives’ in the strict sense of the word, namely other social and cultural hierarchies to put in their stead” (Thornton 1996:115). The

⁶¹ Macedonian musicologist Tina Ivanova’s impassioned and detailed monograph of the history of *Stotrojka*, *DOKUMENT 103*, closes thus: “This radio station will arouse nostalgia, but will also resonate with these current times. It will be faced with its own burdens in the context of these constant changes of ours, changes that no one can yet sense where or towards what they lead. Fortunately, *Stotrojka* is still here—to provide a necessary distance from the all-encompassing, long-enduring, and exceedingly wearying Macedonian transitional environment” (Ivanova 2011:186). In its oppositional position, *Stotrojka* also does work to provide for breaks beyond hegemonic limits.

scenes of this dissertation similarly do not involve overt subversion of dominant cultural patterns, and their participants do not necessarily identify themselves as part of an *alternativna kultura* or *subkultura* (alternative culture or subculture), which would imply they were actually oppositional. But Thornton's assertion that "alternatives" put other social and cultural hierarchies in the stead of dominant ones is perhaps also too strong for the cases of this study. Though they have their own social and cultural hierarchies, they are not replacements for those of the dominant, but exist within such dominant hierarchies with several points of intersection and overlap.

In more current scholarship, David Hesmondhalgh and Leslie Meier (2015) give a thorough analysis of the concept of the "alternative" in relation to popular music and concepts of musical independence in the context of contemporary capitalism. They detail the decline of the power of the idea of the alternative to invoke as strong a notion of democratized cultural production as it once did, citing its validation and appropriation by capitalist organizations and its decoupling from social critiques. Their perspective is a hopeful one, that musical alterity, as they have it, has a future in new forms of musical independence in culture industries. As the scenes at the center of this dissertation are, for the most part, distant from the mainly American culture industries Hesmondhalgh and Meier discuss, attempting to relate them would be a largely futile exercise, even if I were using the concept of the "alternative" in the same manner.

To reiterate, in my development of the concepts of alternative and alternative belonging, I am not analyzing discursive usage of the concept "alternative" among participants in the three scenes of this dissertation—mostly because they do not use it to define themselves. I strictly follow Williams in describing alternative and alternative belonging in terms of social formations that, while encompassing many musical practices and discourses, exhibit characteristics of being

limited by and incorporated into dominant formations while also representing significant breaks within them and beyond them.

Belonging

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb “to belong” in three interrelated ways: (1) to be related or connected, (2) to have a certain connection indicated or implied in a context, and (3) to fit a certain environment or group. It adds a specific definition of “belonging” as the fact of appertaining, relationship, especially a person’s membership in, and acceptance by, a group or society.⁶² These definitions highlight the membership quality of belonging as well as its multilayered quality, in that people always belong to more than one group or collectivity simultaneously. Many studies theorizing belonging have focused on national and ethnic belonging, approaching themes such as: the ways nations and nation-states create “structures of belonging” (Calhoun 2007); the ways minority ethnic groups make their own “structures of belonging” (Castillo 2014); tensions and overlaps between nationalistic and cosmopolitan senses of belonging (Calhoun 2003, 2009); concepts of belonging in urban settings across several ethnic groups (Fenster 2004), and belonging as a more robust concept than either “citizenship” or “identity” in analyses of nation and nationality (Yuval-Davis 2004).

I use belonging following Nira Yuval-Davis’s assertion that concepts of “citizenship” signify participatory dimensions of belonging, while “identification” relates to a more emotive element of belonging whereby one feels (or yearns) to be part of a community, collective, or social category (Yuval-Davis 2003:131). She suggests that belonging, like other hegemonic constructions, can be rather invisible in hegemonic formations (cf. Ortner 1998 and 2003 on the

⁶² See definition 4b at <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/17506#eid23769802>, definition II at <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/17508?rskey=JmqnWr&result=1#eid> (accessed May 22, 2015).

invisibility of class), appearing only when one's stable connection to the collectivity is disrupted and boundaries of belonging are articulated and reflexive. Along these lines, Yuval-Davis recognizes that while theories of identity have celebrated the changing, fluctuating, and contested natures of identities, such theories can often disguise power dimensions that can fix identities, creating "forced identities" or resulting in "the burden of identification" (2003:130). She further reiterates that to *feel* that one is part of a community, a collectivity, or a social category, or to *yearn* to do so, does not mean that someone necessarily belongs to it. Thus for the scenes of this study, belonging can only be experienced by those who are actually also *participating* in them—sociovirtuously making music as they make space for this belonging.⁶³

Belonging thus is an ideal concept for this study considering that music-making is as much a social practice that necessarily embodies participatory elements of belonging as it is the making of highly symbolic texts/contexts that allows for processes of identification involved in belonging. In the case of Macedonia, the hegemonic party/state forcefully asserts a national

⁶³ Identity is a concept that has frequently been approached by ethnomusicologists over the last 30 or so years (there are many studies; see Rice 2007 for an overview of several from the journal *Ethnomusicology*). As Rice notes, its use widely varies and definitions of identity are often implied rather than clearly stated. In this dissertation, I focus on belonging, of which "identification" is an element, but not the only one. Participatory elements of belonging come into clearer focus in this dissertation because one of the primary tools of the dominant state in arousing nationalist fervor is a hegemonic notion of Macedonian national "identity" (*identitet*). "Identity" is often evoked in public discourse with regard to the contestation of Macedonia's distinctive national and cultural identity by its geographic neighbors. Sociovirtuosic actors not aligned with the state also play with this term, deploying it in cases where they seek state/media attention or support, but limiting their participation in party/state networks and their identification with party/state definitions of Macedonian national identity. I avoid focusing on any notions of "alternative identity" or "construction of identity," because those notions (1) tend to muddle the relations of power I am teasing out by eliminating elements of participation and practice and (2) too easily slip towards defining these scenes in the terms of (or in opposition to) the hegemonic state and its politicized rhetoric about identity. I thus de-center the "identity" concept in this dissertation, discussing it mostly as a discursive political tool, and instead observing processes of identification as they are linked with processes of participation in the making of belonging in the social practice of those I often call, not unintentionally, "scene participants."

belonging that is characterized by not only identification with an ancient pre-Slavic and long-enduring Macedonian ethnicity, but also with participation in its nepotistic network undergirded by neoliberal policies and corruption. The music scenes of this dissertation maintain senses of belonging characterized to some extent by identification with a Slavic Macedonian ethnicity, and by participation that is not restricted to those who have (or have not) joined party networks, but includes individuals distanced from these networks at proximities that vary by type and degree. Because these scenes are primarily constituted by ethnic Macedonians (the extent and types of inclusion of various minorities in these scenes is significant in my analysis), and not those who are overtly oppositional to the state, they are an example of what Williams calls “alternative” formations. This is especially clear in the senses of belonging that they provide, which I call “alternative belongings.”

Ethnomusicologist David McDonald situates belonging in discourses of power with relation especially to nationalism in his book *My Voice is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Resistance* (2013). In his ethnography of music among nationalist Palestinians in various contexts in Palestine and in exile, he is concerned with “uncovering how belonging is fostered, structured, and articulated through performance” (ibid.:283). McDonald focuses on the performativity of belonging, drawing on how Judith Butler employs performativity as a means of understanding how bodies themselves are passionately performed and produced in contexts of great political and social consequence. For him, Palestinians are marked and fashioned as Palestinian as they perform, while performances themselves not only constrain, regulate, and mediate what it means to be Palestinian and what it means to resist, but also are “citational practices that in their representation give materiality to the belongings they purport to describe” (ibid.:25, see also Bell 1999). Through this ethnography of the performativity of belonging,

McDonald challenges what he sees as shortcomings of ethnomusicological studies of power in their attempts to provide a satisfactory theoretical framework for understanding both the creation and sustenance of social formations of domination and the possibilities for subverting those formations.⁶⁴ He builds on Lila Abu-Lughod's conceptualization of resistance as a diagnostic of historically changing structures of power, moving beyond binaries of dominant and dominated (or powerful and powerless) and understanding each performative act as illustrative or even instructive of the dynamics of power from which it emerges.⁶⁵

My interests parallel McDonald's in uncovering how belonging is made, fostered, and articulated, albeit in social formations that do not fit into any sort of conception of "resistance."⁶⁶ Situating the belongings of this study as "alternative" serves to further destabilize the powerful/powerless binary as music-making practices reveal the shifting dynamics of power from which they emerge and to which they contribute. For Macedonians of these music scenes, their performative senses of belonging can be about being an ethnic Macedonian in a way that is alternative to the way asserted by the dominant state. But this belonging does not always (and does not only) concern Macedonian nationalisms and conceptions of Macedonian ethnicity. As musicians in techno, jazz, and ethno music scenes make music, they engage with music-making

⁶⁴ Indeed, Yuval-Davis concludes that belonging "should be examined not as an abstract notion, but as one embedded in specific discourses of power, in which gender, class, sexual and racialized social divisions are intermeshed" (Yuval-Davis 2003:140).

⁶⁵ McDonald goes even further than Abu-Lughod, refraining from embracing "resistance" itself as a useful category for analysis. Instead, he situates it as a performative construct for analysis rather than a categorical lens through which to interpret the actions of Palestinian musicians (see Abu-Lughod 1990).

⁶⁶ McDonald also mentions that belonging can be "structured" and Calhoun, Castillo, and others describe "structures of belonging," while Yuval-Davis contends that belonging is "multiplex and multilayered, continuous and shifting, dynamic and attached" (Yuval-Davis 2003:141). I hesitate to label these alternative belongings "structured," and I tend to follow Yuval-Davis in recognizing their dynamic, shifting, and ephemeral elements as consistent with the scenes in which they exist.

practices that reveal myriad intersubjective conceptions not only of ethnic Macedonian-ness, but also of Macedonia's ethnic minorities, general European-ness, African and African American expressive culture, race relations in America, gender, and sexuality. As musicians draw on various musical traditions, they simultaneously reveal their own interpretations of those traditions and employ them in the performative making and re-making of their alternative belongings—a belonging that continually re-signifies what it means to be Macedonian.

It is important to note here that while these scenes allowed for such intersubjective conceptions of gender and sexuality in the context of their alternative belongings, the central scene participants were for the most part heterosexual males who participated in the production and reproduction of patriarchal masculinity. In the course of this dissertation, I do mention a number of cases in these scenes where women outside of patriarchal roles and members of the LGBTQ community participated in the sonic making of spaces for belonging. Though the scenes to varying extents existed as important spaces for belonging outside of patriarchal heteronormativity, the men that formed the core of these scenes for the most part continued the construction of traditional patriarchy for themselves—that is, in their own lives and in their inner social circles. They simultaneously (and again, to varying extents) rejected homophobic and patriarchal gender norms, deploying music making and other social practices to do so. The ways that the men at the center of these scenes concurrently reinforced traditional masculinity and made room for it to be challenged were multi-layered, complex, and seemingly contradictory, just like many of the other social and musical practices of this dissertation. I witnessed this nuanced making of gender in each of the scenes, and it was a significant aspect of musical and social life of the scenes and contributed to their alternative belongings. For the sake of the clarity of my larger arguments I do not pursue a detailed analysis of these processes, but rather situate

them as another example of sociovirtuosity, in this case actors both embracing and challenging patriarchy as they negotiate the middle ground between the dominant and the resistant.

One final aspect of belonging is its relationship to space, a central concern in Macedonia due to the forceful reorganization of public space of the Skopje 2014 project. Building on Yuval-Davis and incorporating Michel de Certeau's practice-based "theory of territorialization" (1984), geographer Tovi Fenster articulates a process in which a sense of belonging is established, "a process of transformation of a place, which becomes a space of accumulated attachment and sentiments by means of everyday practices" (Fenster 2005:243).⁶⁷ She emphasizes practice by human bodies (for her and de Certeau, walking) as that which transforms place into a "space," to which one can experience a sense of belonging through performativities (also referencing Butler and Bell).⁶⁸ Fenster has it that

the "boundaries of belonging" are usually symbolic and they may change according to the needs and goals of the hegemony. The power to exclude, which is based on "the boundaries of belonging," becomes in many cities the power of urban planning, of monopolizing space through zoning, and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable and attractive spaces. (Fenster 2005:249)

As the state spatially inflicts on the Macedonian citizenry its ethnocentric (and party-centric) senses of belonging, the scenes of this study provide alternative belongings that refuse to orient their defining characteristics according to party affiliation or the definitions of ethnicity and nation espoused by the party/state. Rather, they engage with music-making practices that

⁶⁷ See also Leach 2002.

⁶⁸ Cf. the "production of space" (Lefebvre 1991) and especially the "production of locality" (Appadurai 1996).

continually transform the places of clubs, cafés, concert halls, and classrooms into spaces where alternative belongings can be made, experienced, and nurtured.

Discourses on place and space vary widely. Steven Feld asserts, with regard to sonic elements, that “as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place” (1996b:91). Philosopher Edward Casey aligns with Feld and argues for the priority of place through a phenomenological approach, concluding that “as places gather bodies in their midst in deeply enculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement” (1996:46). I agree with both Feld and Casey that place is not something that is added to a previously empty, devoid-of-meaning space. But my emphasis here is on the belonging (and its elements of identification and participation) that is ascribed by and derived from human action—in this case, music making. I thus depart from Feld’s conception of place, instead following de Certeau and situating space as a contextualization of place, “a practiced place” (de Certeau 1984:117), which means that space can be momentary and ephemeral (just like scenes and belongings). This also means that a given place can be made into spaces whose meanings and senses of belonging may vary to a significant degree depending on the practice that inhabits and contextualizes it at any point in time. Ethnomusicologically, I line up with Kristina Jacobsen, who focuses on the place- and space-making practices of Navajo musicians. She asserts that space is “carved out of (a more general) place” and “created through uniquely local epistemologies of embodiment and experience and can be experienced as highly porous and ephemeral” (2009:461).

These alternative belongings are always related to the scenes within which they are made, and this dissertation argues that music making is essential in the making of these alternative belongings. Many citizens privately exhibited disgust and disdain for the practices of the

hegemonic state that promoted ethnic divisions, economic precarity, and corruption-laden nepotism, refusing to subscribe to the belonging it advocated. In their reticence to voice those sentiments publicly, they also rejected a belonging to anything oppositional or resistant to the dominant. Finding and making space for alternative belongings, then, is crucial in order for people to maintain their own ideologies, even when those ideologies are not articulated in words. That these belongings are extant confirms that hegemony is not totalizing; their persistence keeps the breaks from hegemonic limits breaking, ensuring that social transformation is always a real possibility.

CHAPTER THREE

Collaborative Musical Ethnography and the Co-Production of Acoustemology

Ethnomusicologists have long engaged in music making as a constituent aspect of ethnographic methodology. This often takes the form of the ethnographer learning new styles and repertoires from master musicians in settings that might be described as educational, but can also take the form of ethnographers and collaborators making music together in various modalities. Scholars have discussed the values, challenges, dynamics, phenomenological aspects, and potential pitfalls of music making as a research methodology at length over the past sixty years of ethnomusicological discourse (see, e.g., Hood 1960; Slawek 1994; Rice 1997; Titon 1997; Washburne 2008; Wong 2008; Feld 2012). Concurrent with this discourse on music making as methodology is a discourse on music making as an activity that is able to communicate or even produce knowledge in sound itself (see, e.g., C. Seeger 1961, 1977; Feld 1984, 1996b; Monson 1996).

In this chapter, and in this dissertation, I bring these two discourses together and suggest that making music together in processes of collaborative musical ethnography can shed light on the types, forms, and content of knowledge and discourses that are inherently sonic, as well as on how that knowledge and those discourses are communicated. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the collaborative nature of ethnography, reviewing the anthropological literature on the subject, connecting it to theoretical developments about musical collaboration in ethnomusicology, and offering a definition of collaborative musical ethnography. I bridge this literature to discourses on music making itself as a discourse with its own means and manners of communication and its own epistemologies. Steven Feld uses the term “acoustemology” to

describe such sonic ways of knowing (i.e., acoustic epistemology), defining it as “local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in [a] culturally specific sense of place” (Feld 1996b:91). His work engages with human participation in the sonic making of place, and he sums up his argument regarding sound and place rather poetically in a phrase that bears repeating: “as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place” (ibid). Whereas throughout his work Feld explores how people participate with their sonic environments to acoustemologically make senses of place, I depart from Feld and explore the practice whereby social actors produce sound in places that already exist, transforming those places into ephemeral spaces for belonging that can only be experienced when agentic sonic elements are also present (following de Certeau 1984 and Fenster 2005; see my discussion of how their conceptions of space-making diverge from Feld in Chapter 2).

I suggest that the agentic production of sound—in this case collaborative music making—be positioned as a co-production of acoustemology; a *co*-production because it usually involves more than one person sonically interacting with surrounding sounding environments.⁶⁹ Acoustemologies that are co-produced carry knowledge and meanings that are made by and reflect the social and sonic negotiations among collaborators, the co-experience of collaborators, and their ongoing interpretations of the sonic and social moment, interpretations often voiced only in sound. This supports one of my broader aims in this dissertation, which is to show that when actors participate in music making, a given place is necessarily transformed into space. In

⁶⁹ This extends what Feld calls “co-aesthetic,” which refers more to a shared aesthetic understanding, relationship, or experience, and does not include the degree of intent or agency that I am suggesting (Feld 1990:217, 236, 237). He astutely explains that “co-aesthetic witnessing can only be accomplished honestly if ethnographers let themselves feel and be felt as emotionally involved people who have an openly nondetached attitude about that which they seek to understand” (ibid.:236).

this sonic, acoustemological, and evanescent space made by people making music together, categories for belonging can be engendered, experienced, transformed, and redefined.

In the second part of this chapter, I elaborate on my own collaborative music making as a central component of my research methodology. I first describe my own positionality and pathway to these music scenes in Macedonia before discussing issues of trust and friendship in collaborative musical ethnography. In the chapters that follow, I draw on ethnographic examples to support and illustrate this theoretical framework of collaboration and production of sonic meaning, and many of my interpretive conclusions are driven by this mode of research, even when I do not connect those conclusions directly to collaboration. More broadly speaking, I am also (and perhaps primarily) suggesting this theoretical framework in order to describe and advocate for an approach to ethnographic research where collaborative music making is a central activity.

Collaborative Musical Ethnography

Over the last twenty years, one stream of the anthropological literature has begun to flesh out the collaborative nature of ethnography. Luke Lassiter has led the way in developing concepts of collaborative ethnography, initially considering it an ethnographic model that “fully embraces dialogue in both ethnographic practice *and* ethnographic writing” (Lassiter 1998:10) and connecting it to what others have called a dialogical or reciprocal approach (see, e.g., Tedlock 1983; Titon 1988; Feld 1990; Lawless 1992, 1993). He later expands the concept, defining collaborative ethnography as:

an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from

project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process. (Lassiter 2005:16)

This concept has been developed in a series of projects with African American and indigenous American communities where collaboration is positioned not only as a moral choice but also as constituting good ethnography (Ridington and Hastings 1997; Lassiter et al. 2004; Field 2008). It has become particularly useful in “public anthropology,” which engages an educated general public, and “activist anthropology,” which is characterized by political engagement.⁷⁰

In 2008, Lassiter founded the annual journal *Collaborative Anthropologies*, which offers collections of articles regarding collaboration often surrounding a certain theme. In the first volume, Joanne Rappaport advocates for a collaborative ethnography that involves “co-theorization,” defined as:

the collective production of conceptual vehicles that draw upon both a body of anthropological theory and upon concepts developed by our interlocutors; I purposefully emphasize this process as one of theory building and not simply coanalysis in order to highlight the fact that such an operation involves the creation of abstract forms of thought similar in nature and intent to the theories created by anthropologists, although they partially originate in other traditions and in nonacademic contexts. Understood in this sense, collaboration converts the

⁷⁰ In a post on the public anthropology website www.publicanthropology.org, Robert Borofsky defines public anthropology thus:

Public anthropology seeks to address broad critical concerns in ways that others beyond the discipline are able to understand what anthropologists can offer to the re-framing and easing—if not necessarily always resolving—of present-day dilemmas. See <http://www.publicanthropology.org/public-anthropology/> (accessed June 4, 2015).

Charles Hale defines activist anthropology as, “the institutionalized practice of collaborative and politically engaged scholarship” (Hale 2007:104).

space of fieldwork from one of data collection to one of co-conceptualization.

(2008:5)

In my view, such co-theorization has been present in ethnomusicological methodologies since at least the 1980s.⁷¹ Rappaport recognizes that this type of collaborative ethnography has also long been at the heart of anthropology in Latin America, specifically with regard to social engagement, and she productively turns the focus from collaboration in producing a literal text (e.g., a dissertation, a monograph) to the actual methodological aspects and concerns of collaborative ethnography.

The 2013 volume of *Collaborative Anthropologies* contains several essays on the theme “Collaborative Ethnographies of Music and Sound” (Clifford-Napoleone 2013a), and builds on Rappaport’s methodological concerns and ideas of co-theorization. As noted by guest editor Amber Clifford-Napoleone, the authors in the volume suggest that collaborative ethnography, as both theory and method, gives researchers new ways to think through and interpret the master-student relationship so common in ethnomusicological research. Clifford-Napoleone offers that, in the master-student relationship, “the scholar must listen for two strains of information: the produced sound that one is trying to learn, interpret, and understand, *and* the complicated process of ethnographic listening” (2013b:33). Additionally, she describes difficult negotiations in the “gap between field-based knowledges (what the scholar seeks to learn) and disciplinary knowledges (what the scholar seeks to publish and teach)” (ibid.). But limiting types of

⁷¹ Feld 1981 and 1988 are classic examples. Margarethe Adams (2013) demonstrates that ethnomusicologists have long been co-theorizing through collaborative ethnography, citing Feld and some other key sources (e.g., Sugarman 1997; Wong 2001; Buchanan 2006; Levin and Süzükei 2006; Bates 2010; Perman 2010). She is also mainly concerned with the master-student relationship and how the student-ethnographer theorizes aesthetic or sonic concepts (such as timbre) through modes of thinking expressed and/or embodied by the master musician, or in some cases by a community of musicians.

knowledge to only include “what a scholar learns,” “what a scholar seeks to publish and teach,” and a presumed gap between them, even in the master-student relationship, results in the omission of a category of knowledge that is sonic and co-produced. This type of knowledge is produced in the act of collaboration itself, constituting acoustemologies that require listening that is by its nature reflexive, but attuned to social and sonic negotiations between collaborators and the significance and signification of those negotiations. Learning, interpreting, and understanding these sonic ways of knowing are processes that vary greatly depending on subject position, as does their meaning.

Clifford-Napoleone argues that collaborative ethnography could form two bridges, one between anthropology and ethnomusicology and the other between musical/sonic performance and the theorization of such performance as a cultural practice (2013a:34–35). It seems, however, that these bridges have already been built, if not frequently traversed. Stephen Slawek, writing in 1994 and responding in part to anthropology’s move towards experimental writing in the 1980s, argues that musical performances by ethnomusicologists have been under-recognized as intellectual endeavors, asserting:

If anthropology’s future contribution is to be a more artfully conceived ethnography, I would contend that ethnomusicologists engaging in cultural studies through performance practice have, in a sense, been ahead of the anthropologists without getting credit for it. (Slawek 1994:22)

I am not suggesting a return to the ethnomusicological responses to anthropology’s shift towards “artfully conceived ethnography,” though building on those responses is imperative. Rather, I am positioning music making as a constitutive element of collaborative musical ethnography, one that has been arguably present in ethnomusicological discourse since at least the early 1960s.

In 1960, ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood introduced his concept of bi-musicality, or musical aptitude in multiple musical traditions including the native tradition of the researcher and that tradition constituting the basis for his or her research. Hood asserts: “The training of ears, eyes, hands and voice and fluency gained in these skills assure a real comprehension of theoretical studies, which in turn prepares the way for the professional activities of the performer, the composer, the musicologist and the music educator” (Hood 1960:55). In showing how proper analysis of music’s meaning in a cultural context requires at least basic fluency in the musical practice itself, Hood presents bi-musicality as an essential research tool. And yet in practice, the “basic fluency” in a musical tradition required by bi-musicality is often as far as a researcher can go because of many constraints, not the least of which is the demanding time commitment required to achieve a high level of proficiency in many musical practices. Though such a basic knowledge of making music is significant for an understanding of the embodied experience of a tradition, as far as collaboration goes it is usually constrained to collaboration of the master-student type.

For example, following the anthropological turn towards poetics and the generative possibilities of reflexivity in the 1980s, ethnomusicologists’ responses in the 1990s recognized the legacy of Hood and its intersection with moves towards greater reflexivity and artful modes of ethnography. Slawek has it that “Mantle Hood advocated studying performance practice as, among other reasons, a means of intuitively constructing a music theory for traditions in which an articulated theoretical tradition did not exist” (1994:15–16). He goes on to challenge the limits of this approach in relation to his own performance-based research as a student of Indian art music, noting that the tradition already has an existing articulated theoretical tradition. Instead of constructing a music theory, his activities as a performer allowed him to access knowledge of

this particular master-student relationship such as musical vocabularies particular to a certain guru, rarely found musical practices, processes of transmitting musical knowledge, manners of expressing musical ideas in words, and intimate dynamics of rapport and trust-building. Other ethnomusicologists have also described in great detail their own processes of learning a musical tradition, recognizing the importance of the ethnographer's experience as well as the ways specific musical practices speak to larger issues both musical and otherwise (e.g., Chernoff 1979; Berliner 1994; Rice 1994, 1995; Brinner 1995; Bakan 1999; Hagedorn 2001).⁷²

In *Shadows in the Field* (1997), a collection of essays reflecting on ethnomusicological fieldwork, Timothy Rice further explores the experiential in field research where learning a musical tradition is one of the primary activities, suggesting a phenomenological approach. He argues that by positioning musical ethnography (and music making) as phenomenologically lived experience, binaries of insider/outsider, method/experience, and "music in its own terms"/"music as culture" in ethnomusicological studies break down, as do the imagined fixed boundaries around concepts of "the field" and the "work" done in fieldwork. In the same volume, Jeff Titon also emphasizes a phenomenological approach to fieldwork with regard to collaborative music making. He is less concerned with the master-student dynamic, but more broadly grounds musical knowing (an epistemology of music) in musical being (a special ontology that is musical) (Titon 1997). Rice and Titon both engage with the phenomenological experience of making music collaboratively, highlighting particularly musical ways of understanding, knowing, and being that need to undergird fieldwork. This, in effect, lays the groundwork for the musically collaborative production of acoustemology that I am getting at, but I will consider several other

⁷² This became more commonplace beginning in the 1990s, but John Chernoff's study of Ghanaian drumming (1979) provides an intriguing antecedent as does Alan Merriam's review of it (1980), which is highly critical of Chernoff's approach.

positions first.

While I argued above that the master-student relationship is the principal one explored in most of these performative collaborations in the pursuit of knowledge, other positions on musical collaboration come from scholars who participate in the traditions they study as professional or respected performers rather than as amateurs or students. In situating himself as a musician-scholar in his ethnographic study of various jazz practices, Paul Austerlitz notes that Hood warns students not to be “seduced by playing music lest it distract them from ‘the sterner stuff of which academia is made’” (Austerlitz 2005:xviii, quoting Hood 1971:40). Austerlitz suggests that while this warning might apply to researchers who play music at an amateur level, it does not apply to those who do so at a professional level, citing the intellectual demand involved in performance as a justification.⁷³ In his version of the bridge between musical performance and its theorization, he highlights performance as an intellectual endeavor, emphasizing the extent to which “musical thinking is scholarly and academic work is expressive” (Austerlitz 2005:xix). Austerlitz indeed moves beyond the limited ethnographic situatedness of the master-student relationship so common in ethnomusicology and engages with a different mode of collaboration.⁷⁴ But a dichotomous professional/amateur distinction unnecessarily limits conceptions and understandings of collaborative musical ethnography, which, I argue, can involve collaborative

⁷³ Austerlitz also notes that “ethnomusicology has never overcome the Cartesian separation of theory and practice” (2005:xviii), though he does not pursue Rice’s related musing, which posits this question: “could theory and method, which take for granted a fixed and timeless ontological distinction between insider and outsider, be reordered within an ontology that understands both researching and researched selves as potentially interchangeable and as capable of change through time, during the dialogues that typify the fieldwork experience?” (Rice 1997:106).

⁷⁴ While many of Austerlitz’s examples, perspectives and interpretations presumably resulted from his professional affiliation with musicians and the types relationships it enabled, he does not comment on this or any aspect of his musical collaboration after the introduction. In one sense, the way he masks or omits his own music making leaves the reader wondering whether he is still thinking about Hood’s warning not to be seduced by playing music.

music making at nearly any level of perceived musical competency and prestige. Additionally, I do position as extremely significant questions of the extent to which musicians are (or are not) being financially compensated or making their living from musical performance, and the extent to which their aim is to do so. However, privileging any type of musical collaboration as productive of knowledge that is more important or significant can pave a road towards elitism and privilege that has the potential to re-enact the colonial roots of ethnography and the legitimizing role of the privileged ethnographer.⁷⁵

Christopher Washburne similarly situates himself as a participant performer among expert musicians in *Sounding Salsa* (2008). He offers that “participation through performance served as my principal means of collecting data” (Washburne 2008:32), suggesting that because of this positionality, he was privy to musical and social concerns that other scholars had either chosen to ignore, or have simply not seen. Unlike Austerlitz, he does not particularize the “professional” aspect of the collaboration, and thus opens pathways for collaborative music maker-researchers to look to their own positionalities for musical and social concerns that might not be available through other modes of research. He also grapples with the consequential overlapping modes of being, namely “fieldwork,” “gigging,” and “just hanging” (ibid.:33). The result of this for him was a dialogical editing that, instead of a detailed process where his interlocutors read his work and responded (cf. Feld 1990:239–268), emerged from ongoing dialogues about the issues he approaches in the book, a collaborative ethnography wherein his

⁷⁵ Though it provides a salient challenge to Hood’s warning, the professional/amateur distinction is not clearly defined by Austerlitz. One might assume that the distinction is based on being paid versus not being paid for musical performance, but it seems that Austerlitz is using “professional” to generally refer to an elite sphere of accomplished musicians. It would be perhaps more useful to situate musicians in one or more of the various categories of individuals typically approached in musical ethnography (see Ruskin and Rice 2012), and to include a discussion of access as a collaborator as well as the ethical and ethnographic implications of that access.

collaborators' feedback and criticisms deeply inform his observations and conclusions about salsa music in all of its historical, racial, and economic complexity.⁷⁶

Considering the ways that all of these scholars grapple with the fraught implications of ethnomusicological fieldwork, it seems that a collaborative musical ethnography concept offers a viable pathway to destabilize the ethnographer/subject dichotomy that continues to trouble ethnomusicologists. Michael Bakan approaches this type of destabilization in devoting the final three chapters of his book-length ethnography to discussions of his process of learning *kendang beleganjur* drumming in Bali (1999). He builds on the ideas of Rice and Titon, arguing for a scholarly expression of experience itself and challenging the emic/etic divide. The final two chapters focus on “the intercultural musical encounter itself” (ibid.:293), an encounter between Bakan and his teacher, Sukarata. He describes in rich detail how their music making was a highly negotiated process, and how it did not belong to the “culture” of Bakan or Sukarata. In this case, Bakan situates “beleganjur music and the Balinese cultural world of which it is an integral part” (ibid.) in the background, foregrounding the musical relationship between himself and his teacher. He seeks to move beyond understanding music “from within” and to openly consider his own musical life as an ethnomusicologist, valuing “the reflexive study of musical experience as a significant form of intercultural dialogue in which all who participate, including the researcher, are relevant contributors to meaningful music-making” (ibid.:332). This moves towards

⁷⁶ Many of my observations, interpretations, and conclusions have similarly been shaped by the feedback and criticisms of musicians I worked with in Macedonia as we discussed the issues central to this dissertation. The collaborative element of the actual writing of this dissertation, does not approach the intervocality advocated for by Lassiter, Rappaport, and others. This is due in large part to logistical factors: dissertations can have deadlines, funding has its limits, and the time required to discuss a written untranslated text and add contributions of others can be extensive. In light of these limitations, my hope is to, on my next extended trip to Macedonia, share and discuss this dissertation with many of the musicians who appear on its pages to make its next iteration even more collaborative.

collaborative musical ethnography, but still exhibits epistemological constraints by differentiating between modes of “gaining knowledge and understanding of the musical-cultural Other ‘from within’” (even though he is explicitly *not* doing that) and “understanding [an] intercultural, idiosyncratic musical world . . . invented, negotiated, and sustained” in the master-student relationship (ibid.:295).⁷⁷

Like Rice (1997) I recognize that categories of insider and outsider are not particularly helpful in describing dialogic relationships that develop when people (e.g., “ethnographers and subjects”) make music together. I would add that each music-making relationship has its own dynamics of who might be considered an insider or an outsider and to what extent, who might be learning from whom at any given moment, and who might be being constructed as “Other.” As these dynamics are always shifting and contingent, I take the approach not of wondering whether researchers are trapped in or free from this dichotomy, but rather of encouraging an ongoing awareness of the ways these dynamics shift and what shifts them depending on the collaboration at hand.

Deborah Wong further questions the persistent Self/Other or insider/outsider divide, challenging ethnomusicologists to embrace ethnographic research that hinges on autoethnography.⁷⁸ In considering her own music making in the context of ethnography, she offers the reminder that anthropologists have been working through these kinds of problems for

⁷⁷ Bakan further differentiates between getting “‘inside the heads and fingers’ of the musicians we study” and getting “inside our own heads and fingers as well, as we move—albeit sometimes erratically, unpredictably, clumsily, and circuitously—toward the particular forms and levels of musical understanding that inevitably shape our thinking and our perspectives” (Bakan 1999:333). Though this also takes a step towards a co-produced acoustemology, it continues to affirm a Self and Other dichotomy with little room for overlap.

⁷⁸ Wong cites some of the key sources from anthropological literature on autoethnography, a postmodern genre whose complexity and ambiguity she finds useful in the type of ethnography for which she is advocating (e.g., Reed-Danahy 1997; see also Bochner and Ellis 2002; Adams, Jones, and Ellis 2015).

thirty years. She emphasizes how:

the problems with ethnography aren't new and haven't changed: they include the false binary of the insider/outsider, colonial baggage, and the empiricism still lurking behind a solidly humanistic anthropology and ethnomusicology. But ethnomusicology still struggles with its own relevance to anthropology because it hasn't sufficiently theorized the relationship between participatory research and the specific kind of ethnography that we do, which is very similar to anthropology but in fact not quite the same. (Wong 2008:77)

Wong cites some of the contributions to this discourse that I have mentioned so far, moving it forward as she considers her participation in North American *taiko* as a player and as an ethnographer. She recognizes that experience has been sufficiently theorized in ethnomusicology, yet seeks to push ethnomusicologists to see experience and interpretation not as yet another contrasting binary but rather as overlapping at a “critical interface where at least two modalities are engaged . . . so that a dual awareness becomes habitual” (ibid.:82). In other words, she focuses on the overlap where modalities of experience and interpretation (and maybe others) are engaged simultaneously and in a self-aware manner by the ethnographer.⁷⁹ That is, ethnographers are constantly experiencing, constantly interpreting, and perhaps constantly reflecting and responding to their experience and their interpretations concurrently in an ongoing process of simultaneously being, knowing, and understanding. As Wong considers the inevitable multiple subjectivities for ethnographers and collaborators, a constant ethnographic lens, and an assertion that performing is not categorically different from everyday life, she takes up Michelle

⁷⁹ I wonder whether all people making music are always also engaging at least the modalities of experience and interpretation in this point of overlap, without the same ethnographic self-awareness of an ethnographer—but perhaps with a different type of self-awareness.

Kisliuk's challenge that ethnomusicology be characterized by "a fully transdisciplinary, transgeneric, interactive, embodied scholarship" (1998:314, quoted in Wong 2008:82). Wong argues for ethnography that is performative, critical, and hinges on autoethnography, and I suggest that this is at least part of the broadest definition of collaborative musical ethnography.

In seeking to complete the definition of collaborative musical ethnography, it is not just the access to new epistemologies because of collaborative proximity to performers, though it is partly that. It is not just the dialogical editing and collaborative production of texts (written, musical, visual, and others), though it is partly that. It is not just an awareness of the multiple subjectivities involved in the phenomenological experience of ethnography in combination with the interpretive intersubjectivity of the co-produced text, though it is also partly that. And while I agree with Wong that "the mere act of participating in performance will not necessarily achieve, cause, or produce anything in particular" (ibid.:80), I suggest that this act always achieves, causes, or produces *something*, and that *something* is always at least some kind of acoustemology.

Thus, collaborative musical ethnography always also includes a consideration of the co-production of acoustemology in whatever form it takes. That is, collaborative music ethnography interrogates the acoustemologies that are produced in musical collaboration and the musical, ethical, epistemological, and ontological implications of such collaboration. I am not suggesting performing collaboratively as an exemplar research methodology in all settings—there are certainly many settings where it is more ethical, appropriate, and/or effective for a researcher to aim for a positionality other than that of co-performer.⁸⁰ What I am suggesting is that in the act of collaborative music making itself, acoustemologies are agentively co-produced. Furthermore,

⁸⁰ My definition of music making here is not to the exclusion of listeners, audience members, and other "non-musicians" that are involved in the co-production of an acoustemology (cf. "musicking" in Small 1998).

they are co-produced as musicians collaborate regardless of whether or not a researcher is present, though an individual's positionality as a researcher undoubtedly shapes the type of acoustemology that is produced and leads to other modalities of engaging with such acoustemology such as written discourse, film, photography, audio recordings, and archival practices. That the act of participating in collaborative music making always achieves, causes, or produces at least some kind of acoustemology raises the question: what are the nature and substance of this co-produced acoustemology? To move towards an answer to this question, I now turn to the literature concerning music making as a discourse.

Breaking Down “Music-discourse vs. Verbal-discourse”

In his classic 1961 essay on research in ethnomusicology, Charles Seeger distinguishes between “speech-discourse” (i.e., speech about music) and “music-discourse” (i.e., communication in music itself) (1961:78). He advocates for a “half-independence” and “half interdependence” between the two, urging scholars that “research should be continually on guard against the encroachment of the hidden assumption that speech-knowledge can comprehend all knowledge and can or should control the use of all knowledge” (ibid.:79, 80). He stresses that “the limitations of speech-conceptualism and speech-phenomenalism must be unremittingly subjected to question and re-definition” (ibid.:79). Elsewhere, he terms this the “linguocentric predicament,” asserting,

Every act of composition, performance, and improvisation is a critical as well as a phenomenological act. *The prime critic of music is the producing musician.* For him, the music-critical act can be entirely free of the speech-dilemma fact versus value. But to the extent that he talks about music or allows speech-thinking to

intrude in or influence his music-thinking, to that extent he is in thrall to the verbal dilemma intrinsic versus extrinsic and must accept the linguocentric predicament in which he has placed himself by entering the musicological juncture. (C. Seeger 1977:61–62, emphasis in original)

Seeger recognizes the phenomenological aspects of music making, even connecting the phenomenological to the critical as he suggests that the sonically experiential act of music making can be a site of discourse (cf. Rice 1997 and Titon 1997 above). But in situating the linguocentric predicament as a dichotomy between music making and speech, he makes them mutually exclusive modes of discourse, calling the predicament the “biggest problem of all” and “insoluble” (ibid.:133).⁸¹

Beginning in the 1980s, Steven Feld explores this predicament from a more optimistic perspective, positioning metaphor (one of many ways people talk about music) as mediating between speech and music, and considering both as having figurative (and not only referential) capacities and existing as “feelingful” activities (see Feld 1984). He departs from Seeger’s focus on only referential aspects of speech and explores the metaphorical engagement in “interpretive moves” wherein listeners attempt to “recreate, specify, momentarily fix, or give order to emergent recognitions of the events that take place so rapidly and intuitively when we experience musical sounds” (ibid.:15). He also rethinks Seeger’s question “what does music communicate?” and replaces it with others such as “what is the shape of a music communication process?” and

⁸¹ Austerlitz (2005) also finds himself in the linguocentric predicament, noting that Seeger did not suggest turning away from verbal discourse about music, analysis, or transcriptive notation. Though he recognizes the contributions of Feld (1984), Berliner (1994), and Monson (1996) on the issue, Austerlitz seems to agree that the predicament is insoluble, and instead seeks to attenuate a biased (Eurocentric or otherwise) position by providing a compendium of music notation systems that each highlight different aspects of music, situating them as “hermeneutic clues into Afro-diasporic aesthetics” (2005:27).

“how do music communication processes implicate interpretation?”, questions which point in the direction of a collaborative-interpretive and processual epistemology (ibid.). In the intercultural, intertextual musical collaborations that constitute so much of this dissertation and music-making practices everywhere—but especially in urban and heterogeneous settings—understanding the interpretive moves made not only by listeners but by music makers themselves is essential in the higher order task of interpreting the negotiations taking place in experiential, collaborative relationships.

Feld’s later discussion of acoustemology as “local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in [a] culturally specific sense of place” (1996b:91) is grounded in a sensory interplay among human actors and the places they inhabit. He demonstrates that through poetics and bodily performative practice, places are “voiced,” “made sensual,” and become cultural entities (ibid.:134). For Feld, human participation is always present in productive and interpretive aspects of acoustemology as people continually give meaning to and shape places through their poetic and perceptive interactions and conceptions of places. In my re-situation of Feld, I am considering what happens when new acoustemologies are co-produced in places that already exist as cultural entities, perhaps having been made sensual previously. This agentic co-production is what I suggest makes spaces for belonging as it engages further processes of interpretation on the part of all who are hearing the sound, processes that are tied to the sonic, musical, economic, political, and social negotiations among participants in the collaborative act. It is this co-production that is my focus, as it is an exercise of an agency of projects that can be sociovirtuosic and involves intentions, purposes, and desires (Ortner 2006:144).

An exemplary study of the epistemologies and understandings made in the act of music

making is Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* (1996). Here Monson offers an in-depth analysis of jazz improvisation and the emotional and cultural production it involves, focusing in particular on the interactive relationships among rhythm section musicians. She explicitly follows Feld (1981, 1984, 1990) in emphasizing the significance of music as a metaphoric process and the necessity of understanding the linguistic mediation of musical concepts in order to interpret the cultural aesthetics of a given musical practice or society (Monson 1996:75). She draws on Marjorie Goodwin's "participant frameworks" (1990) to describe how participants in different modes of verbal communication situate themselves in conversation combined with jazz musicians' use of language metaphors to describe improvisatory performance. Monson situates the rhythm section as a framework for participation, full of culturally meaningful practices that can be deployed by musicians as they collaborate in improvisation. Through bridging those participant frameworks to linguistic theory and close musical analysis of recordings of improvised jazz, Monson suggests that "interactive musical participation creates something larger than local interactive exchanges in terms of both musical shape and human bonds" (Monson 1996:189).⁸²

Monson situates the groove (or rhythmic feel)—established by the interactive relationships among rhythm section musicians—as an interactive text or framing device for jazz improvisation. This framing device is dynamically related to an additional interactional text that exists between the rhythm section and the soloist. Intermusical relationships layer on top of these texts and involve references to additional compositions, quotations of classic jazz recordings, and/or timbral, dynamic, rhythmic, or stylistic signals. Additionally, Monson highlights the way human relationships form, strengthen, and change among musicians and audiences and thus

⁸² See the discussion on friendship and trust below for more on the musical creation of human bonds.

contribute to the way “interactionally produced texts” develop, adding that “these interactionally produced events structure both musical and social space” (ibid.:190). Monson brings structural aspects of music (jazz improvisation in this case) together with contextualizing and interactive aspects of sound, recognizing that interactive components of improvisation and its historical and socially constructive dimensions represent a path around ethnomusicologists’ “rather unproductive debates over whether the cultural contexts or ‘the music’ should predominate in our scholarship, as if it were actually possible to make some clear separation” (ibid.:191). In a way, she echoes Feld’s “interpretive moves,” suggesting that communication in and about music does not fit into a “music vs. context” dichotomy or a framework of referential texts, but rather shapes perceptions, produces epistemologies, and makes social realities. Monson could also be read in parallel with both Bakan’s assertion that ethnomusicologists need not ignore their own music making in their research but rather focus on the knowledge it necessarily produces, and with Wong’s suggestion that ethnography in ethnomusicology hinges on autoethnography. If, as Monson describes, interaction and intermusicality frame music making and layer on top of one another to make meaning, the researcher embedded in such processes may be able to provide particular insight as to how these processes play out. It is here that I return to Feld and his positioning of acoustemology as a “relational ontology” (see again Feld 1996b, but also Feld 2012:126), that is relational not only between people, but also among people and the meaningful sounds of their environments.^{83,84}

⁸³ Feld connects acoustemology as a relational ontology to other anthropological literature on relational ontologies beyond the sonic including Bird-David 1999, Viveiros de Castro 2004, and Poirer 2008 (see also Feld 2012:272n5).

⁸⁴ Paul Berliner also contributes to ethnomusicological studies of jazz practices and the types of musical interactions that occur among jazz musicians. He includes an analysis of how venues and their atmospheres or “vibes” (made by their acoustics, the makeup of the audience, policies of the venue) interact with and mutually influence musical performance (Berliner 1994:449-484).

Feld engaged in several modes of collaboration in his five-year project working with several musicians on musical performances, recordings, and documentaries in Accra, Ghana. His 2012 book, *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra*, recounts these musical experiences and is written in concurrent modes of memoir, ethnography, biography, and history.⁸⁵ In his introduction, Feld admits that conceiving of this project as a book came along during a period of reflection; the only published forms of the project were originally intended to be musical recordings and documentary films available through his independent label, VoxLox (eleven CDs and three documentaries were produced). Feld explains:

it felt more natural to let photographs, recordings, video, and performances express the sensuous substance and spirit of my inquiry as an artist among artists. Both as a matter of credibility and engagement, I wanted to make everything immediately accessible in Ghana, to make sound and image the centerpiece of our collective musical exchanges . . . I didn't set out to gather material to write another scholarly book. (Feld 2012:5–6)

Through his “inquiry as an artist among artists” and by making “sound and image the centerpiece” of their musical exchange, Feld situates himself squarely as a collaborator and collaborative ethnographer, self-aware that his mediated accounts of his experiences are just that—mediated—and involved as a collaborator not with the “end” of ethnography in mind, but with ethnography flowing through all of his various activities. Through these modes of discourse—the book, the films, the recordings, the visual media—he provides a platform for his collaborators to assert their theoretical interpretations of the meanings of their music making in their own ways. He is resolutely acoustemological in his approach, focusing on sound as a way

⁸⁵ See Wilson 2012 for my full review of the book.

of knowing musical life-worlds, and knowing those worlds through “intervocality [and] intersubjective vocal copresence” (2012:7). His voice (literal, written, and musical) mingles with the voices of his collaborators, a process wherein acoustemology is an “intimacy-making bridge” (ibid.:10) and “the agency of knowing the world through sound [. . .] the imagination and enactment of a musical intimacy” (ibid.:49).

Feld describes many acoustemological dialogues with his collaborators throughout this project in several modes: a layered recording process involving listening to and musically interacting with recorded sounds of toads in the street sewers of Accra (Annan and Feld 2008; Feld 2012:134-140); a documentary film following the ritual funeral music played on squeeze-bulb horns by a union of lorry and minibus drivers (“A Por Por Funeral for Ashirifie”); and participation in a trio that recorded and performed live, “joined Coltrane, Africa, and experimental jazz,” and allowed Feld to “acoustemologically apprehend something of how Nii Noi and Nii Otoo [his collaborators] conducted their Ghanaian roots–infused diasporic dialogues with the late sixties black avant-garde” (Feld 2012:28, 26; see also Accra Trane Station 2006, 2007). He continually returns to “musical intimacies,” describing them both as “intervocal” and “heightened and almost always nonverbal collaborations” (Feld 2012:206), and always situating them as acoustemological intimacies.⁸⁶ In each case, Feld is describing sonic ways of knowing: of knowing place, of knowing cosmology, of knowing a sonic discourse, or of knowing—intimately—another person.

Yet I take acoustemology here another step further than it being “the agency of knowing the world through sound” and suggest that co-produced acoustemologies in such musical

⁸⁶ Feld builds on “diasporic intimacy” as described by Svetlana Boym (1998) and nods to Jocelyne Guilbault’s conceptualization of how musical intimacies interweave their “emancipatory and repressive potentials” (Guilbault 2010:17).

intimacies not only engage with ways of knowing but also can be transformative. Since these intimacies are acoustemological, they not only involve interaction with environments, but also participation in contributing acoustemologically to those environments. Perhaps these intimacies sonically make sense of place as Feld has it; and perhaps they can also move beyond “knowing “place” to an agency of ephemerally transforming that place into a space for belonging, or provide it with the capacity for such transformation. I suspect that such intimacies occur in virtually every form of collaborative music making, intimacies where people interact sonically with one another and the existing places they find themselves in. As these intimacies are made and played out, they involve the simultaneous modalities of experience and interpretation. Participants both find meaning in the phenomenological and ontological musical experience and make interpretive moves in intermusical interaction with one another.

Ethnographers, then, can take any of a number of positions vis-à-vis musical intimacies that participate in the production of acoustemology, only one of which is that of a collaborative music maker. All modes of collaboration that constitute collaborative musical ethnography shed light on the co-production of acoustemology, and throughout this dissertation I flow between these modes as I observe, experience, interpret, and participate in musical worlds in Macedonia. Sometimes my collaboration with musicians in Macedonia makes its way to the forefront of the narrative, as I explore the co-production of acoustemology as one of its co-producers. At other times, it may seem that I disappear from the narrative as a collaborator (aside from the fact that my voice is the one narrating), and this is intentional. As I focus on the co-produced acoustemologies that make spaces for belonging in the scenes of this study, those spaces are sociovirtuosically and sonically made primarily by actors on the ground who have stakes in maintaining their positions as alternative—neither overtly supportive nor oppositional to the

hegemonic party/state.

What I would like to zoom in on here are the negotiations involved in collaboration, specifically the negotiations that happen in collaborative music making—negotiations that I have observed and taken part in from various positions. In the second half of this chapter, I will briefly contextualize my general positionality as an ethnographer-musician-ethnomusicologist-composer in Macedonia and address the issues of friendship and trust in forging collaborative relationships and musical intimacies. This then sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation, which is produced by collaboration and is illustrative of the experience, interpretation, negotiations, and intimacies of a co-production of acoustemology.

Making My Way to Macedonia

Understanding the nature of my personal relationships with Macedonian musicians is important because it sets the terms of acoustemological co-production and the myriad negotiations that so significantly inform it and the other types of collaboration I engaged in. That being the case, my own pathway to (and through) the music scenes of this study has unavoidably and considerably shaped the direction, nature, and conclusions of my research. I first lived in Macedonia from 2002 to 2004, living and working in Skopje in the non-profit sector. Aside from my American and Macedonian co-workers, most of my time was spent with university students; some were Skopje natives but many came from other towns and villages throughout Macedonia to pursue their education in the capital city. Though I had friends from Albanian, Turkish, and Romani minority groups, I spent most of my time with ethnic Macedonians, hanging out in Skopje but also taking opportunities to travel with my friends to their towns and villages whenever possible. From those relationships, I began to develop a basic knowledge of a broad

range of practices constituting everyday life for ethnic Macedonians—from languages, regional dialects, social life, culinary practices, life-cycle rituals, religious traditions, and music to geographies, histories, politics, nationalisms, and ethnic tensions.

I had studied jazz and classical saxophone as part of my undergraduate degree in music at Indiana University that I finished in 2002, so even though I was not actively looking to pursue anything musical while working in non-profit in Macedonia, I brought along my alto saxophone just in case some opportunities to play came along. After about a year, my friends began to introduce me to local jazz musicians and we played together occasionally when I had spare time outside of my work commitments. In the summer of 2004, as I was preparing to leave Macedonia, I was involved with some recordings with jazz pianist Simon Kiselički that took place in Chicken Madness Studio, owned by drummer Goce Stevkovski. It was during that recording process at Chicken Madness—at the time a node of much activity in the jazz scene—that I met Goce along with some other musicians active in that scene. One musician, Georgi Šareski, was on his summer break from his studies in jazz composition at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, preparing, like me, to return to America. The time I spent with Georgi in July and August 2004 performing, recording, and hanging out formed the foundation not only for a longstanding musical collaboration and friendship between us, but also for my introduction to many of the musicians whose sounds and stories fill the pages of this dissertation.

When I returned to Macedonia in 2011 to begin preliminary dissertation fieldwork and refine my Macedonian language skills (after 2004 I had only visited once, in 2009 for about a week), I found myself challenged in terms of how to represent myself to those around me, particularly to musicians. Though many years had passed since my initial (and not especially deep) involvement in Macedonian musical circles, the musicians I had played with remembered

me as a musician—not just because of the gigs I had played, but also because the album I had recorded with Simon Kiselički, *Levitation* (2009), had been released, and I was “the American saxophone player”—as in, the only one. This is the first of innumerable instances where I realized that Macedonia’s relatively small size (both in geography and in population) had an enormous impact on nearly every element of life across all sectors of society. A common saying about Skopje is that it is a village—*Skopje e selo*—referencing both the fact that everyone seems to know one another and the sense that it has a stereotypical village mentality, one where gossip is rampant and people are always involved in each other’s business. This came as something of a surprise since, as Macedonia’s capital and largest city by a long shot, it would seem that Skopje would be defined *against* villages, rather than *as* a village.⁸⁷

I initially decided during the summer of 2011 to introduce myself to new people that I met as an ethnomusicologist. Because ethnomusicology in Macedonia is associated almost exclusively with research on traditional music and dance, most people I met for the first time had wonderful suggestions of which traditional musicians I needed to meet, which festivals featuring traditional music I needed to attend, and which traditional ensembles I needed to connect with. Many of my long-time jazz musician friends assumed that I was pursuing a degree in ethnomusicology because I wanted to learn about Macedonian traditional music and add that knowledge to my skills as a jazz musician. Although I was and am interested in Macedonian traditional music, the questions behind my research were more related to power and the everyday experience of politics and belonging in Macedonia than in the roots and particularities of traditional music and culture. When I mentioned that I was also interested in researching jazz, DJ scenes, and popular music in Macedonia, I was met with responses characterized mostly by

⁸⁷ Population estimates of Skopje range between 500,000 and 750,000 inhabitants. The next largest city, Bitola, has around 100,000 inhabitants.

confusion. This likely occurred for two reasons. First, ethnomusicology (*etnomusikologija*) in Macedonia as a discipline is for the most part concerned with traditional music, its origins, and its preservation. Second, I was not following the well-trodden path of “outsiders” (i.e., Europeans, Americans, and Asians) who have come to Macedonia and Southeastern Europe to learn about folk music and other folk traditions. Among the former Yugoslav republics, Macedonia has long held a reputation—if a stereotypical one—of being the home of many great folkloric musicians and dancers. Throughout my research in Macedonia, I would frequently be met with this saying: “If you go to Bosnia, don’t sing—you will be out-sung. If you go to Serbia, don’t dance—you will be out-danced. If you go to Macedonia, don’t sing or dance—you will be out-sung and out-danced.”⁸⁸ Ethnic Macedonians generally embraced this characterization of themselves as a musical *narod* or people, and generally assumed that researchers from outside Macedonia would be interested exclusively in the folk music and dance that ostensibly allowed for that characterization to come into being.

Though I took a number of *kaval* lessons with a member of Tanec, and learned some repertoire on the clarinet from some traditional musicians, I did not pursue deeper training in the ornamentation of *kaval* performance, nor did I explore the various clarinet performance practices in the folk genres commonly performed in Macedonia (cf. Rice 1995 for a contrasting example with regard to ornamentation and the Bulgarian bagpipe, the *gaida*). Instead, I shifted my self-representation and began to situate myself as a saxophonist-composer whose primary area of musical expertise was jazz, though with a flexible set of musical boundaries. This did not preclude me from exploring my interests in traditional music, but did not limit me to them. The

⁸⁸ Sentiment related to this saying was also common throughout Yugoslavia (and later former Yugoslavia), where Macedonia was regarded as having not only the best singers and dancers, but also the best folk music of all of the Yugoslav republics.

jazz scene was thus a natural place for me to collaborate as a player and composer, and this extended into the techno scene, where it was not unheard of for instrumentalists and DJs to collaborate. As I was not an expert in traditional music performance like the local musicians who had grown up performing in those styles, the ethno music scene provided only scant opportunities to musically collaborate. I decided, in line with my view that collaborative performance is not always the ideal modality for collaborative musical ethnography, it would be more effective for me to approach that scene primarily as a researcher, as a listener, and as an audience member.

Beyond the surprising element that a researcher would be interested in anything other than folk music, it was also rare for an individual to participate in multiple scenes to the extent that I did.^{89,90} Though most music scenes overlapped and most musicians knew one another by name regardless of the circles they ran in because of Macedonia's relatively small population, actual musical collaboration between musicians of various scenes occurred infrequently and usually only on special occasions.⁹¹ At first, I found navigating the process of building social capital among musicians of multiple scenes tricky, since reputations seemed to be defined by the company one keeps and rather durable. But when I shifted my self-representation to that of a

⁸⁹ I participated in classical music as well, contributing a new composition to the Days of Macedonian Musical festival in 2014 and performing in two concerts of that festival. My ethnography of that festival and new music in Macedonia lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

⁹⁰ One notable exception is Džijan Emin, an extraordinary musician in his 30s who grew up playing folk music, plays principle horn in the Macedonian Philharmonic, composes and arranges orchestral and film music, and is a trained classical conductor and an accomplished jazz pianist. See Chapter 5 for Džijan's involvement bridging classical music and techno.

⁹¹ Macedonians often talk nostalgically about the early 1990s when Skopje had "a real scene" where musicians from many genres worked together with artists from many disciplines. The fragmentation of these scenes is often attributed to the smaller number of venues for performance, changes in technology that have led to less interest among youth in the arts, and the related ascent of the neoliberal-nationalist regime that disincentivizes this type of cultural production.

saxophonist-composer rather than an ethnomusicologist a few months into my preliminary fieldwork in 2011, opportunities for collaboration outside of traditional music began to open up, just as I had hoped. Because my interactions with people in, for example, the jazz and techno scenes were as a musician and/or a composer, this representation seemed more logical and brought more clarity to my relationships. It also facilitated the building of trust through much time spent together musically collaborating and socializing.

In the course of time, I began performing in various capacities with techno, jazz, and ethno musicians, attending performances in these scenes as an audience member, socializing with participants in all of these scenes, and conducting ethnographic interviews with key individuals. As this transpired, my multiple-positionality reputation as researcher-musician-composer-ethnomusicologist interested in multiple musical sensibilities became more familiar and accepted. Because of the overlapping nature of these scenes, I was seen as an interested peer, a fellow musician who frequently played and recorded with DJs and jazz musicians and was curious about many forms of musical activity, all while pursuing a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology in another country where ethnomusicology means something other than exclusively a study of musical folklore. This reputation became especially solidified when I was able to spend 13 months based in Skopje from August 2013 to September 2014.

Friendship and Trust

Through this sustained period, and because it lasted more than just a few months, I was able to spend the time required to build both trust within these music scenes and friendship with many individuals who were at the center of these scenes. In Macedonian, there are two words commonly used that both mean “friend”: *prijatelj* and *drugar*. *Prijatelj* is used in a quite similar

way as “friend” in English, and usually includes anyone who one might socialize with who is more than an acquaintance. *Drugar* is in some ways a special category of *prijatelj* and is more colloquial and denotes a closer, more intimate, perhaps lifelong friend.⁹² A *drugar* is often a constant presence in everyday life, someone in your inner circle of friends that you socialize with as a group once a week, or even more often.⁹³ It is etymologically related to the word *drug*, meaning “the other,” but does not refer to a foreign other, more closely approaching something like a person who might be someone’s “other half.” These terms are distinguished from (though sometimes overlap with) other types of non-kinship relationships such as *kolega* (colleague, co-worker, or someone who shares your same profession), *sorabotnik* (collaborator, co-worker, or contributor), and *poznajnik* (acquaintance). When I referred to various musical collaborators, I generally followed local conventions, using *drugar* with regard to those with whom I had experienced a longer friendship, a greater degree of closeness, and/or more frequent time spent together. But we also often worked together as fellow musicians—*kolegi* and *sorabotnici*—laboring not only in the acts of performing, composing, arranging, and rehearsing, but also in dragging equipment and instruments all over town (or all over the country) in cars and taxis, setting up sound systems, running the sound board at performances, recording in the studio, arranging gigs with café and club owners, and promoting performances on social media. Our collaborations were permeated with labor and its related and myriad systems and types of exchange. These activities and their constituent negotiations lie at the heart of the collaborative

⁹² During the Yugoslav period, *drugar* was the translation of the Russian *tovarishch*, or comrade, but by the time I first lived in Macedonia in 2002, the meaning as “close friend” had already been (re-)asserted.

⁹³ Some Macedonians I spoke to insisted that they used *drugar* and *prijatelj* as equivalent synonyms, while others reserved *drugar* for their closest, dearest, and/or longest-lasting friendships. This is also related to *društvo* (a group of close friends), which can also mean “society” and has no equivalent using *prija(tel)* as a base.

ethnographic process, its inherent concerns with positionality, and the building of friendship.

Friendship has been used widely and also contested in the anthropological literature.⁹⁴ Here again, the collaborative ethnography literature in anthropology is particularly useful. John Mathias advocates for an Aristotelian definition of friendship for relationships in the field where it is a reciprocal relationship where each person cultivates good and well-being in the other just as they would in themselves. It exists in the “mutual appreciation and cultivation of a shared good, not in the more contingent circumstance of mutual utility or enjoyment . . . the good found in friendship is not only private and sentimental; it is also the ethical and political good of justice” (Mathias 2010:115). He recognizes that what may be defined as “good” is necessarily shaped by friendships, and suggests that ethnographers should welcome that internal change in the course of collaborative fieldwork. In ethnomusicology, this ethical concern for the well-being of all collaborators has been highlighted in certain aspects of fieldwork, particularly with regard to cases where copyright, intellectual property ownership, and other concepts related to exchange of financial capital for music commodities are in play (e.g., Feld 1996a, 2000; Zemp 1996; Guy 2002; Rees 2003; A. Seeger 2004).

Lassiter recognizes that all relationships in fieldwork are contractual at some level and can involve mutual commitments, even though those commitments can never be fully guaranteed and often shift on one side or the other. He suggests that “promises, agreements, and commitments are temporal, despite our best intentions: ethnographers and consultants do not always have complete control over the co-commitments they make” (Lassiter 2005:90–91). And yet Mathias claims that the inability to guarantee that a person will fulfill a commitment makes a

⁹⁴ Mathias (2010) presents a review of such literature. His aim is to join activism with anthropology, thus the participant end of participant-observation is his starting point, rather than the other way around. Similarly, collaborative musical ethnography begins from the participant end, in whatever form that participation takes at any given time.

stronger case for a concept of friendship in the field. “Friendship,” he writes, “actually thrives in uncertainty. The trust that uncertainty requires is both spur and sustenance to the growth of strong friendship” (Mathias 2010:118). In collaborative music making, as in collaborative musical ethnography, some degree of uncertainty always persists, an uncertainty that demands that musicians trust one another when engaging in the various types of labor required in making music together. When this trust is exercised repeatedly, the growth of strong friendship (in Macedonian, *drugarstvo*, similarly a stronger version of *prijateljstvo*) among musicians is spurred and sustained.

Bakan, in his exploration of his musical relationship with his teacher Sukarata, situates the process of building trust as a specifically musical one. He is worth quoting at length:

meaning and value in drumming are located not so much in the playing of music itself as in the precious achievement of a trusting partnership realized and represented in that playing . . . Sukarata’s views on drumming and trust are not based on anything he has explicitly told me. Neither formal interviews nor informal conversations during our encounters prior to or since that enlightening drum lesson have confirmed or disproved my speculations. My inferences have been drawn mainly from musical experience itself: from drumming with Sukarata and also from seeing and hearing him drum with others. (Bakan 1999:328)

He continues: “Trust is both the cause and product of the technical precision of execution highlighted in verbal descriptions of Balinese drumming excellence” (ibid.:329). In this master-student relationship, trust is indispensable in the fostering of a musical intimacy involving the pedagogical passing along of musical knowledge and skill. It presumably follows that excellence in collaborative drumming happens as a result of trust, and also builds trust further. In this same

sense, musical trust was built between my collaborators and me when our musical results were assessed as excellent in a self-reinforcing cycle. The more we played together, the more trust was built; the more trust was built, the more we wanted to play together.⁹⁵ Friendship is grounded in mutual, shared experience; mutual, shared experience is grounded in friendship.

Titon also addresses relationships in musical ethnography as friendships, suggesting that friendships fall on a spectrum somewhere between two points. On one side is what he calls “instrumental friendship,” where both friends benefit from each other’s presence and work, and are partners to some extent (this is characteristic to some degree of the relationship between fieldworker and primary consultant). On the other side is something similar to what Mathias describes, a friendship based on “mutual admiration and a desire for the other’s well-being” (Titon 2008:39). As he theorizes ways of thinking about fieldwork relationships, Titon concludes that an epistemology based on musically being in the world together necessarily includes *both* mutual gain *and* caring for one another’s well being. These two elements were present in all of my collaborative relationships that were musical. They deeply informed all aspects of the musical-ethnographic process, not the least of which was the co-production of acoustemology that occurred as I made music with my collaborators. And I would argue that all agentive acoustemologies are necessarily deeply informed by the bonds of collaborators and the ways they pursue mutual gain and caring for one another’s well being. The negotiations of these friendship- and trust-grounded concerns play out sonically and can have transformative effects on the places their sounds permeate and infiltrate.

⁹⁵ Each collaboration was unique, and this worked itself out in different ways and to varying degrees depending on, for example, the participants in a collaborative moment, the venue for the performance (e.g., concert, gig at a café, recording), the size and constituency of an audience, or the perceived prestige of the performance.

In collaborative musical ethnography, researchers join this process of co-producing acoustemology, regardless of the subject position(s) they may choose to take. Is it possible that musical being in the world coupled with co-producing meaningful acoustemologies is at least part of what makes ethnomusicological ethnography “not quite the same” as anthropology, as Wong points out (2008:77)? I suggest that this type of participation, this musical intimacy, and the sonic worlds it engages and plays a role in co-producing are indeed a significant and particularly ethnomusicological mode of research.

Building Trust through Fluency

Throughout the research process, I was committed to a collaborative methodology that required trust grounded in friendship and friendship grounded in trust. But I was overly self-conscious of the symbolic capital I possessed as an American musician in especially the jazz and electronic music scenes—both of which are generally associated with America in many respects in Macedonia. I feared being “used” by musicians as some kind of “authenticating” presence for a musical project or performance. I was not only trying to earn the trust of collaborators and potential collaborators and demonstrate trustworthiness, but also striving to build trust from my side of the collaboration and exercise that trust. The uncertainties that demand trust and ultimately build friendship were at the forefront of my mind.

One key element that accelerated (and sometimes derailed) the building of trust across uncertainty was my relatively high level of fluency in the Macedonian language. I had learned basic conversational skills during my stay in Macedonia from 2002 to 2004, but dedicated much time in the summers of 2011 and 2012 to language study while conducting the initial preliminary fieldwork for this dissertation. Though English-speaking foreigners have become increasingly

common in Macedonia, especially over the past 10 or 15 years, most Macedonians have never met a fluent non-heritage speaker of Macedonian from a non-Slavic-speaking background, much less an ethnographer interested in understanding what might be described locally as the Macedonian mentality (*mentalitet*). Because of the way I speak Macedonian—with a slight American accent, but in the Skopje dialect peppered with urban slang and inflections—I would usually be marked by people I met for the first time (such as taxi drivers) as a heritage speaker who was raised in America but had spent significant time in Skopje. Whenever it came to light that I had learned Macedonian later in life and had no Macedonian ancestry, I would in many cases very quickly earn respect and maybe even trust. Intuitively, people knew that I had little personal incentive to learn Macedonian, as it would only be “useful” to me in Macedonia and among the relatively small total number of Macedonian speakers in the world (estimates vary greatly but range between 1.5 million and 2.5 million native speakers, see Friedman 1985; Topolinjska 1998).

My level of fluency demonstrated that I had dedicated time and effort to learning the language, indicating that I valued something about Macedonia enough to make it worth my while to do so.⁹⁶ For many, that was understood as a sign that I respected and valued Macedonian people and their language and culture, and they returned that with reciprocal respect for me.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ I was frequently asked if I was inspired by love to learn the language and keep coming back to Macedonia. When I responded that I had never been married to or in a relationship with a Macedonian, the next question would often be whether I would like to meet someone’s sister, friend, or daughter.

⁹⁷ This is not unrelated to the desire among Macedonians for their culture, language, and ethnicity to be recognized internationally as distinct and legitimate (see Chapter 1). My ability to speak Macedonian coupled with my inability to speak Serbian or Bulgarian very well showed that I inherently recognized Macedonian as a distinct language and not a dialect, and thus the Macedonian people as distinct and not a derivation of Bulgarians. My language fluency also opened up another potentiality of which I was rather wary—that of being situated as a cultural ambassador of Macedonia to the outside world. On one hand, ethnomusicologists and

This was often the foundation of friendship grounded in mutual trust and respect and facilitated by ease of communication.⁹⁸ Other times, especially when meeting a musician for the first time, indicating my understanding and knowledge of the language, the mentality, and the general workings of musicians and music in Macedonia would attenuate any desires or attempts to “use” me and my foreigner status as a shortcut to prestige and quash assumptions that I might possess a naivety of local scenes that would allow for such blind collaboration to take place. For the most

anthropologists have long been advocates of groups they are involved with, especially minorities. But in advocating for Macedonia, this could mean taking nationalist stances that, for instance, inherently marginalize minorities and vehemently oppose Greek and Bulgarian policies in the spirit of monoethnic state nationalism.

⁹⁸ Some people concluded that my language skills were confirmation that I was a spy working for the US government. Certain musician friends and collaborators have carried on a running joke with me about me coming to Macedonia to conduct espionage. These jokes began during my first time in Macedonia in 2002 and continued into two short trips in 2015. For many people, it was more logical (and perhaps more exciting) to assume that I was actually a spy and worked for the CIA rather than a doctoral researcher. At times I joined in the joking about being a spy, and at others, I (also jokingly) challenged the accusation by asking musicians if they really think a CIA agent would spend so much time hanging out with Macedonian musicians who have little to no knowledge pertinent to issues of US national security. They would then assert (in jest) that they have tons of knowledge that the CIA would want, so of course a spy would want to hang out with them. Regardless of the efforts I made to clearly and appropriately explain my research aims and methodology, this issue ended up affecting how I conducted research in at least two ways. First, any time I would appear at a musical event with my professional (large and conspicuous) camera to film or take photographs, someone would inevitably make a “joking” comment about me being a spy. I decided to sacrifice the quality of photographs and video and began documenting in the same way that other participants in musical events did—with my smart phone. Second, there was one incident where I was sitting with two Macedonian musicians that I knew very well and a Greek musician that we were working with on a performance. I became curious about some things that he was sharing and I started asking him more questions about it. One of the Macedonian musicians noticed my shift in tone and interjected with a smile and a laugh: “Be careful what you say, this guy is a spy, you know!” This and similar incidents certainly affected the way I interacted with people and asked about their lives and experiences, but in the end I accepted that the suspicion that I was a spy was an unavoidable part of my positionality even among my closest friends and collaborators, and had to do more with the activities of the United States and perceptions of American foreign policy than anything I could control. For a few examples of the long history of ethnographers as suspected spies or intelligence agents see, e.g., Bonilla and Glazer 1970; Sluka 1995; Dudwick 2002:24; Owens 2003; Neofotistos 2012:11 (in Macedonia); Verdery 2014.

part, however, as my language skills grew and as I acquired more experience among musicians, I could participate in processes of building trust and friendship that overflowed into processes of musical and ethnographic collaboration.

In Macedonia, like other societies in Southeastern Europe, social capital carries particular weight. Macedonian society is built on relational networks wherein social capital is required for many aspects of day-to-day life (e.g., to affordably repair a car or maintain a home, or to quickly navigate complex bureaucratic process), but most importantly, to get a job and remain employed (see Thiessen 2007:90–95 for a discussion of the inability to become employed without *vrski*, or “connections”). Building trust is a key (though complicated) process in developing social capital, and often happens over a longer period of time through much face-to-face contact and socialization. This impacted my methodology in that I decided to conduct most of my recorded interviews in the last six months of my stay in Macedonia. By this time, my reputation was established enough for people to not hesitate to allow interviews to be recorded, as they trusted that I had their best interests in mind and would not surprise them by venturing, for example, into political topics they would be uncomfortable discussing on the record.⁹⁹

Conclusion

As I have indicated, I positioned myself as both an ethnographer and a collaborator throughout my research. Musicians saw me as a collaborator when we played music together,

⁹⁹ I have considered using pseudonyms throughout, since individuals often shared information with me off the record that was essential to understanding the situation in Macedonia, but would potentially threaten their livelihoods or personal safety if it were voiced in a public sphere. I ultimately decided to use actual names throughout (and received consent to do so), since most of my collaborators are known musicians and wanted their contributions to be known and acknowledged. In cases where there is even a remote risk to individuals, I have opted for anonymity, omitting names and masking any details that might serve to identify someone.

with the undergirding understanding that I was also always an ethnographer. They saw me as an ethnographer when I asked questions and conducted interviews, with the overarching knowledge that I was also a collaborator in some capacity and often a friend. In the three parts of this dissertation that follow I examine the co-produced acoustemologies in which I sometimes participated, as well as other insights I developed about these scenes through more traditional ethnographic methods such as interviewing and observation. I draw on my multiple-positionality in forming many of my observations and interpretations, but I am unable to always spell out explicitly which positionality is at the forefront at each moment, though it is usually clear. I, like all musicians, was engaging in experiential and interpretive modalities simultaneously while also participating in processes of collaboration. These simultaneous modalities and the collaborative processes in which they took place always involved a great number of negotiations which, when untangled and analyzed, shed light both on the overall process of building the trust and friendship of musical intimacy and on the co-production of acoustemology.

The cases I approach in this dissertation demonstrate how moving beyond situating musical relationships as *either* master-student *or* professional/peer-to-peer can illuminate interpretive and experiential processes of sonic and social negotiation that are integral to acoustemological co-production. Wong suggests that ethnography is a series of “engaged encounters” where “choices [of which moments to focus on] are made by a subject who is both ethnographer and [. . .] player” (2008:88). Depending on the situation, “player” could be replaced with “audience member,” “producer,” “composer,” “friend,” and/or myriad other roles in which collaborative musical ethnographers find themselves. The engaged encounters that populate the following pages have ultimately been chosen by me, informed by the multiple positions that I am occupying and modalities that I am employing at any given moment. All of

them are drenched in sound and immersed in collaboration as the voices of my friends and collaborators resound with, through, and sometimes against mine.

PART II

Sektor 909 and Electronic Music in Macedonia: A Space for Thriving

CHAPTER FOUR

The Techno Revolution from Detroit to Skopje

This and the following chapter encompass a history and ethnography of an electronic music scene in Macedonia centered around Club Sektor 909, known colloquially as Sektor. The music at the heart of the scene is “Detroit techno,” a genre whose origins are usually attributed to a group of DJs in a predominantly African American scene in 1980s Detroit. In this chapter I will first briefly situate electronic music (and Detroit techno) in Macedonia vis-à-vis Europe, the post-Yugoslav era, and Macedonian nightlife more broadly. Next, I provide a brief summary of the historical roots of the Sektor scene in the development of techno in Detroit. I then contextualize the scene in the history of the broader electronic music scene in Macedonia over the last two decades, foregrounding techno and its prominence in the Sektor 909 scene. I also give an overview of the urban geography of Skopje’s center, and approach issues of blackness and African American culture in Macedonia. In Chapter 5, I begin with an ethnographic description of my collaboration with Maci Stojanovič, an active DJ in the scene, and provide a window into the co-production of acoustemology at the heart of Sektor’s space- and music-making practices. I will then detail how this all plays out through the everyday musical and social practices of the scene, connecting those back to techno ideologies that link Detroit and Skopje. Chapter 5 closes with a discussion of the central event of the Sektor scene during my stay in Macedonia: a concert featuring a collaboration between Derrick May and the state-funded Macedonian Philharmonic, organized by the Sektor 909 team in August 2014.

Electronic Music in Macedonia and the Post-Yugoslav Era

Since not too long after the emergence of house and techno from Chicago and Detroit, respectively, electronic dance music (EDM) has flourished in many European cities, providing a sonic and experiential point of engagement for youth cultures. While EDM scenes in Europe played host to the development of a congeries of new genres (see Reynolds 2012 for one history of EDM's development in European cities such as London, Amsterdam, and Berlin), cities like Skopje located on the borders of Europe selectively adopted and adapted only certain aspects of the EDM world. Macedonia's historical position towards Western cultural products (e.g., pop music in general and electronic music in particular) can be broadly understood in the context of its Yugoslav heritage. In contrast to Soviet-aligned Eastern bloc states of the communist era, Yugoslavia's cultural policy was significantly more liberal in its implementation of socialist ideas. It was always more open to Western products and ideas, which became especially evident with the establishment of popular cultural production (including music) in the mid-1960s. With the growth of the local record industry, popular music produced in Yugoslavia yielded imitations of Western pop and rock, albeit with Yugoslav sensibilities usually lagging behind the trends in American and Western European pop by several years (see Hofman 2011:112, Pogačar 2008:820, Vuletic 2008:862). Access to not only the music, but also the cultural practices of turntable-based electronic dance music and hip-hop did not reach a critical mass, at least in Macedonia, until the early 1990s.

In contrast to the five or six other clubs (I use club for *diskoteka* or *disko*) operating in Skopje at the time of my field research, Sektor was decidedly non-commercial, never playing American or global top-40 or dance music, or local and regional genres, such as *turbofolk* (a pop-folk hybrid, see Chapter 9), typical in nightclubs. Even though Sektor itself was not exclusively a

techno club—Thursday nights, for example featured a long-running residency of Macedonia’s most well known hip-hop DJ, DJ Goce, while Friday and Saturday nights featured electronic music grounded in, but not limited to, techno—I ground my analysis of the scene in Detroit techno and the ways that its philosophies, ideologies, and histories have been adopted by the Sektor 909 scene and become ontologically interwoven into its social fabric. Through their Detroit techno-inspired musical, spatial, economic, and political practices, scene participants (DJs, promoters, club owners, and scenesters) make spaces at Sektor and related locales for alternative belongings—belongings that have more to do with being “urban” (*urbanski*) or “of the city” (*gradski*) than with rigid and hegemonically-constructed categories of domination and separation such as ethnicity or sexuality.¹⁰⁰ These actors demonstrate sociovirtuosity in their navigation of power through seemingly contradictory deployments of a sense of “virtue” that is self-defined and varies by social context. As they make the sonic social environments that constitute their scene, the scene is imbued with variegated and shifting virtues with regard to ethnicity, heteronormativity, conceptions of blackness, ambivalence to politics, and proclivities for amassing profits.

This variegated and shifting virtue and actors’ corresponding sociovirtuosity is especially significant in a post-Yugoslav context where concepts of morality themselves have taken on new meanings—or lost meaning altogether. In dealing with questions of the salience or even

¹⁰⁰ Though *gradski* has long existed generally as a dominant category over *selski* (village, implying backwardness, characteristics of a “hick,” and simple-mindedness), I situate it here as characteristic of the alternative belonging of Sektor 909 because those who would typically be marginalized because of their ethnicity and sexuality can belong to (i.e., identify with and participate in) something characterized as *gradski*. This is alternative to the dominant party/state network not only because the party/state largely represents and embodies monoethnic and patriarchal norms, but also because those in the upper echelons of power are not from families that have been long time Skopje residents (*skopjani*), but rather come from regional towns such as Štip. This allows for the powerful to be labeled as *selski*, making *gradski* a category that can be embraced by those pursuing both oppositional and alternative ends.

existence of morality in the related case of post-Yugoslav Serbia, Jessica Greenberg shows that the inability of individuals to perceive themselves as “capable of agentive action or moral interiority” significantly influences their attitude towards the society in which they live (2011:89). Tanja Petrović, following Greenberg in an article on parody news websites in Serbia, describes social subjects who: “*perceive* themselves as involuntary actors in a political farce, or, on the other hand, [...] *perceive* themselves as not being actors in social and political life at all” (Petrović 2015:301, emphasis mine). She suggests that it is not a lack of agency, but rather the perception by subjects of whether agency is possible that is a useful lens to look through. This lens situates these subjects in the global neoliberal paradigm in which they unwittingly participate, a context where ideologically-based temporal and geographical divisions such as socialist/postsocialist, socialism/democracy, Western/Eastern Europe, and perhaps even Europe/Balkans do not make much sense.

The participants in the Sektor 909 scene are not, then, taking any sort of action with regard to some agreed-upon or universal moral compass, and they continue to operate outside of such dichotomies. But I take a more optimistic view than Petrović and suggest that the perception of agency is situational and contingent, and that it takes on new and different life in the context of a scene that allows at least a degree of freedom from old paradigms for subjects and the possibility of sociovirtuosic agency. The alternative belongings that are made in the Sektor scene have their own boundaries and standards, polymorphous, elastic, and effervescent as they may be. While existing as an alternative, the scene necessarily—though selectively—engages with dominant institutions of Macedonian society, as it is an alternative formation that is partially constituent of the hegemony of the dominant partyocratic state. This scene is reminiscent of Antonio Melechi’s (1993) idea that electronic music parties are a form of

collective disappearance, neither subversive nor conformist but somehow more than both—though disappearance is too strong a word for the intentional space- and music-making practices of the Sektor scene. Graham St John, in his work on what he calls “global techno-countercultures,” challenges the perception that electronic dance music cultures are devoid of politics, suggesting rather that they constitute “variegated acts of resistance” and are “variously political” (St John 2009b:16). Though the Sektor scene is by no means a counterculture, its musical and ephemeral making of alternative belongings is an exemplary case of something that seems apolitical (in its apoliticality it is necessarily political, cf. J. Greenberg 2010) and is an exemplary case of what St John shows to be possible in electronic music scenes.¹⁰¹

As I proceed, it is important to make a note about the concept of genre. Electronic dance music has always been known for its broad proliferation of genres and sub-genres, numbering in the hundreds.¹⁰² Genres have long been of great utility to record companies for marketing and sales, but are also useful to set boundaries for shared social understandings (Fabbri 1982; Negus 1999; McLeod 2001; Brackett 2002; Holt 2007) and, not incidentally, belonging. But DJs and other influential figures in the Sektor scene consistently resisted categorizing music or their style by genre. In countless conversations in interviews, my questions about genre would be often met with a line such as “I don’t categorize music by genre, I categorize it as either good music or bad music,” followed by examples of “good music” from both within and beyond the scope of electronic dance music. There would sometimes be confusion as to why I would even want to ask about genre, and an explanation that focused on a DJ’s improvisatory skill in not only

¹⁰¹ Jessica Greenberg (2010) discusses political “nonparticipation” in postsocialist Serbia, situating it not as apathy but as a decidedly political stance vis-à-vis conceptualizations of democracy and related democratization programs.

¹⁰² Some genres include trance, dubstep, downtempo, and drum & bass; sub-genres of house include deep house, acid house, jazz house, tribal house, disco house, electro house, tech house, and swing house, among others.

knowing which type of music suited a certain venue, a certain crowd, or a certain moment, but also flowing with “the atmosphere” and putting together a set that spontaneously and synergistically built energy with the crowd. My experience echoes that of Denise Dalphond in her ethnography of the Detroit electronic music scene, conducted from 2008 to 2010. She notes that a DJ, producer, or promoter would explain to her

the reasons why genre is a useless concept, and then we would inevitably begin to use genre categories when discussing another topic. While resisting codification, this music is built on a foundation of specificity, categorization, and intensive cataloguing of data. (2015:338)

The participants in the Sektor scene also built on this foundation, with its own adaptations of what types of sonic and social knowledge required specificity, categorization, and cataloguing. The Sektor scene is firmly grounded in the music, history, and values of Detroit techno and its practitioners. The story of those at the center of the scene is one in which they have actively intertwined their history with the lives and music of the Detroit techno DJs who spawned the genre, especially Derrick May, known as one of the originators of the genre.

The sound of Detroit techno can be generally characterized by a tempo ranging from 120 to 150 bpm (beats per minute), a meter in 4/4 with emphasis on beats two and four, electronic instruments such as drum machines and samplers, and polyrhythms resulting from a complex layering of sounds, which give the music a distinctive “funkiness.” This points to its relationship not only to Parliament-Funkadelic, but to “electro funk” or “electro,” a genre that exaggerated the electronic sounds of funk, first appearing in the 1982 release of the song “Planet Rock” by

New York group Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force.¹⁰³ These features, as argued by Dalphond, are part of what defines Detroit techno as African American music, especially in contrast to European techno, which typically contains less layering of rhythmic patterns and equal emphasis on all four beats (Dalphond 2015:335).¹⁰⁴

In reference to the music of the Sektor 909 scene, I have decided to use the term “electronic music” in lieu of “electronic dance music” (EDM). This is primarily because the key participants in the scene (DJs, Sektor’s owners) favor “electronic music” over “EDM” as a term to describe the music of the scene. For them, EDM’s rise to global commercial popularity as a genre of pop music is associated with well-known artists such as David Guetta, Tiesto, Avicii, and Skrillex. As I will describe below, the Sektor 909 scene places primacy on the DJs and aesthetics of the earlier years of electronic music of 1980s Detroit and, to a lesser extent, Chicago.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ As journalist Dan Sicko notes, “Planet Rock” is based on two Kraftwerk tracks. Its drum pattern is similar to that in “Numbers” (from *Computer World*, 1981) and the track itself built on the melody of “Trans-Europe Express” (from *Trans-Europe Express*, 1977) (Sicko 2010:46).

¹⁰⁴ The sound of Chicago house shares much in common with Detroit techno, but is usually distinguished by slower tempos, equal accentuation on all four beats in 4/4, warmer timbres, and a greater tendency to feature melody and female gospel/soul vocal samples. Detroit DJ Mike Clark argues that the distinction between Detroit techno and Chicago house is an artificial one, that the electronic music of the 1980s in these two cities was really the same thing, and that these labels were added later (Dalphond 2015:340).

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps not incidentally, ethnographic studies of techno and related genres in Detroit (Vecchiola 2006; Dalphond 2015) also use “electronic music,” noting that it is the preferred term for house and techno music in Detroit. My avoidance of the term “EDM” notwithstanding, I situate my discussion of the Sektor 909 scene in the discourse approaching Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC), as defined by Graham St John in the journal *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* (St John 2009a).

A History of Electronic Music and Techno

In providing historical context here, my aim is not to construct a comprehensive narrative but rather to highlight significant moments and locales and trends that are salient to the development of the Sektor 909 scene in the period of my research. The roots of what I am calling electronic music can be traced to the interrelated geneses of techno music in Detroit and house music in Chicago in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This history will focus on techno and the ways that its Detroit originators are intertwined with the development of the Sektor 909 scene, though references to Chicago house and other issues of genre will also appear as relevant.

The emergence of Detroit techno is most commonly associated with a suburban, African American, middle class scene that arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s around a network of exclusive “social clubs.” These social clubs organized a circuit of competing dance parties and were named after high-end European fashion houses such as Giavante, Schiaperelli, Courtier, among others. Three high school friends from Detroit suburb Belleville—Derrick May, Juan Atkins, and Kevin Saunderson—entered the scene and became known as the Belleville Three. Their shared musical interests included European synth pop groups like Kraftwerk, funk music such as George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic, and Sly and the Family Stone and other soul-influenced bands, among myriad other influences.

They also had a penchant for futurism. This was inspired, in part, by exposure to the ideas of futurists like Alvin Toffler, whose book *The Third Wave* (1980) suggests impending challenges inherent in what he calls the post-industrial age or information age. As part of Detroit’s sizable black middle class linked to the automotive industry, May, Atkins, and Saunderson (born in 1963, 1962, and 1964, respectively) witnessed first-hand the decline of Detroit’s economy resulting from successful efforts by Japanese and German auto manufacturers

to forge a presence the American market in the 1970s. The post-industrial condition of Detroit gave Toffler's ideas particular relevance; Atkins cites his concept of "techno rebels"—those who are engaged in "humanizing the technological thrust" (Toffler 1980:153)—as inspiring the genre label of techno itself (see Sicko 2010 and Reynolds 2012 for detailed histories of techno).¹⁰⁶

The middle-class suburban social context for Detroit techno is often discussed in contrast with Chicago house, which emerged slightly earlier among an urban, African American, working class, gay scene (see Fikentscher 2015 for a succinct history of house and its relationship to disco; and again Reynolds 2012 for a more comprehensive history). Ethnomusicologist Luis-Manuel Garcia, however, notes that the sexual diversity of Detroit techno has often been glazed over or masked in narratives of its roots. Histories of both Detroit techno and Chicago house approach concerns of race, especially in light of the fact that electronic music became adopted globally by white, middle class audiences on a massive scale beginning in the late 1980s. But Garcia suggests that in addition to concerns of race, marginalized sexuality played a significant role in the development of techno in Detroit. Garcia, drawing on the work of Detroit scholar and activist Carleton Gholz, traces the roots of techno back to 1971. That is when DJs Morris Mitchell and later Ken Collier (frequently mentioned as a "godfather" or mentor to the first techno DJs) began spinning disco and bringing DJ sounds and techniques from New York and Chicago to a Detroit scene that was predominantly gay and black. Early techno pioneers got their

¹⁰⁶ Toffler defines techno rebels as participants in post-industrial technology, but participants who are disturbed by imbalances brought on by this technology and cautious of the speed of technology's development and its effects on the world. Derrick May illustrated this perspective in a video media interview conducted in Macedonia in 2014, saying "I'm afraid that in 20 years the EU is going to be here for sure. They're going to change this country, I don't really wanna see it happen, it's gonna happen. I guarantee you. You have too many resources. You have all the fish, you have fresh water. Fresh water is huge. In the future fresh water is oil. The wars of the future will be fought over water, they won't be fought over oil. And this place is prime real estate for fresh water you know? [referring to freshwater Lake Ohrid, which he was sitting next to for the interview]." From <http://republika.mk/?p=304467> (accessed August 23, 2014).

start not only by taking trips to Chicago to check out the already vibrant house scene, but also by frequenting venues where this older generation of black, gay DJs was already fusing disco with house and other newer styles. According to Garcia, the Detroit dance scene of the 1970s was divided along racial and sexual lines, and it was individuals like May, Atkins, and Saunderson who were crossing these boundaries—at least the ones set with regard to sexuality—as they sought out music and musical practice that ended up serving as inspiration for what would become techno (Garcia 2014).

A key early techno track was “Strings of Life” by Derrick May under the moniker “Rhythim is Rhythim” (1987). This became May’s best-known track not only in Detroit, but also in electronic music scenes throughout the world, including—later on—in the Sektor scene in Macedonia. Its renown, and the renown of Detroit techno in general, in Europe was initiated by British dance music entrepreneur and record collector Neil Rushton. Rushton visited Chicago and Detroit, where May helped him put together the compilation CD *Techno!: The New Dance Sound of Detroit* (1988) on 10 Records. Subsequent releases on Rushton’s label Kool Kat Music (which later became Network Records) followed, including a vinyl issue of “Strings of Life” in 1989. With the 1988 compilation, the word “techno” was officially attached to the electronic music of Detroit for the first time.¹⁰⁷ The sound of these tracks and their labeling as “techno” also came to define the Detroit techno sound. It was considered “mechanical” because the contour of the lines could be disjunct and machine-like, “hard” because of the heavy accents on the sounds; “cold” because of its timbres, simple textures, and occasional rhythmic sparseness;

¹⁰⁷ Previous to this compilation, the music of these Detroit DJs would most likely have been labeled as “progressive.” Atkins, in the documentary *High Tech Soul* (2006), tells of how the compilation was originally going to be titled *The New House Sound of Detroit*. According to him, his track on the compilation, “Techno Music,” was the inspiration for titling the album *Techno*.

and “funky” because of its syncopations and polyrhythms. Because of the attachment of the word “techno” to these sounds, the music began to be imagined as soulless and computer-driven.

This understanding of “techno” as computer-driven birthed in the UK was quite a step away from the “techno rebels” concept that emphasized the humanization of technology subscribed to by Atkins and the others and from which they drew the label “techno.” This was only part of a larger shift that happened in 1988 in the UK, when London quickly joined a scene that had already been developing around house music in Manchester and other northern cities since 1986. Alongside techno, the music that rose to prominence in London was known as “acid house” (with its “acidity” related not to the drug LSD, but to the digitized, distorted “squelch” sound of the Roland TR-303 drum machine). In this time period, the massive parties featuring techno and acid house were described, for the very first time, using the word “rave” (Dalphond 2015:345).

A rave can be defined as an all-night party on a very large scale, featuring electronic music, specifically house and techno.¹⁰⁸ The first raves in the UK were first held at warehouses and in open fields on the periphery of London, and are not unrelated to the first exposure of UK DJs to MDMA (or “ecstasy”) in Ibiza during the summer of 1987. The effects of MDMA—inducing a sense of euphoria and empathy, heightening sensory perception, increased sociability, and mild hallucination—greatly enhanced the sonic and visual experience of being at a party or club, and ecstasy has been linked with rave culture and electronic music ever since this introduction.¹⁰⁹ British youth built a new culture around the musical experience, encompassing

¹⁰⁸ Raves and their associated subcultures have stimulated numerous studies and histories (e.g, Thornton 1996; Shapiro 2000; St John 2004, 2009b; Green 2005; Sylvan 2005, D’Andrea 2007; T. Anderson 2009; Farrugia 2012)

¹⁰⁹ Drug use is part of virtually every club culture and electronic music scene in the world. On the one hand, approaching that aspect as an ethnographer carries with it a set of complex ethical

fashion, dance, and their own set of rituals. MDMA use began to influence the music itself, as sonic elements that enhanced drug sensations began to be added to tracks, including the trippy bass-patterns of the Roland 303 from acid house, as well as a whole set of effects that primarily modify timbre and, to a lesser extent, texture (see Reynolds 2012:54–66; also Reynolds 2011:317–318).¹¹⁰ These UK raves inspired similar raves all around the world, including back in Detroit and Chicago. This proliferation of rave culture occurred mainly among middle-class youth, and by the early 1990s, techno and raving were being experienced in Detroit and throughout the US primarily by suburban, white, college-bound teenagers.

quandaries with regard to confidentiality, trust, and the law. On the other, omitting this element of the nightlife experience may seem to paint an incomplete picture of musical perception its significance to scene participants. Garcia (2013) examines this and other methodological challenges particular to nightlife in his thoughtful introduction to a special issue of *Dancecult* dedicated to EMDC fieldwork. For the Sektor scene, I have chosen not to highlight drug use in my analysis, at least in part because the DJs I spoke to sought to foreground the music itself and not suggest that the experience at a club or party was dependent on drugs or certain drugs. In an interview, one DJ told me: “It [drug use] is an unavoidable part of the process, but also not definitive or decisive either. You know, people had this preconception that if you’re not on drugs, then you can’t listen to this music. For me that’s pure nonsense. It’s up to you to deepen your ear, to fine-tune it. To this day, no matter what track a DJ puts on, anything, even right now if you and me took some drugs, popped a pill for example, and even if I put on some Macedonian rural village music, we’d get up and dancing right here, right? What else would we do? We’d be dancing *oro* (traditional line dance), right? And we’d be having the time of our lives.” This DJ seems to be suggesting that drugs actually inhibit the “deepening” or “fine-tuning” of the ears, and give people an “ecstatic” experience regardless of the music that they are listening to.

¹¹⁰ Among these effects are changing the EQ (the equalization or balance between frequency components), filtering out and/or amplifying certain frequencies, panning sounds between left and right channels, and applying a phasing effect. All of these relate to timbre or texture, as the primary physical effects (including synaesthetic ones) of ecstasy are amplified when frequencies are manipulated to create, for example “shimmering” sounds (when high frequencies are emphasized) or “sweeping” sounds (when a filter moves gradually from emphasizing low frequencies to emphasizing high ones, progressing through the whole range over time) (see Reynolds 2012:xxx–xxxiii). In the early 1990s, ecstasy and amphetamines contributed to an increase in techno tempos and the birth of styles defined by hyper-fast tempos such as jungle and gabba (Reynolds 2011:317).

Detroit techno DJs responded variously to the British transformation of black American techno and house. Atkins highlights a racial element in describing the experience of being embraced by a white audience: “If you’re a kid in Detroit, [you might] never even have to *see* a white person, unless they’re on TV. The closest association I had with people outside my own race was when I started travelling to Europe . . . it really expanded my horizons” (quoted in Reynolds 2012:56). In the early nineties, May expressed discontent for the British rave subculture: “I don’t even like to use the word ‘techno’ because it’s been bastardized and prostituted in every form you can possibly imagine . . . To me, the form and philosophy of it is nothing to do with what we originally intended it to be” (ibid.). Eddie Fowlkes, who, with the Belleville Three, constitutes the “first generation” of techno DJs, also disparaged the European rave concept: “Techno was a *musical* thing . . . There wasn’t no *culture*—no whistles, no E’s or throwing parties at old warehouses. A warehouse party in Detroit—it was swept clean, painted, mirrors on the wall, a nice sound-system. It wasn’t dirty and raunchy” (ibid., emphasis in original).

The Rise of Electronic Music in Macedonia

These highlights from the history of Detroit techno are not incidental, but rather highly relevant to the general development of the electronic music scene in Macedonia and the specific development of the Sektor scene. In particular, the embracing of electronic music by primarily middle-class ethnic Macedonians happened following the same pattern of adoption of it by middle-class youth who were members of majority groups around the world. And yet the ideologies of those at the center of the Sektor scene prove to be more aligned with those of the Belleville Three, ideologies that are grounded in sound and speak to issues of race, ethnicity, and

sexuality, as well as to scene participants' musical response to the political and related socio-economic situation in Macedonia.

In contrast to some other Eastern European countries at the fall of socialism (e.g., Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Baltic states) Macedonia's isolation arguably increased in many ways after it declared its independence in 1991. The Yugoslav wars and the accompanying sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro had great effect on access to goods that would have normally arrived across Macedonia's northern border with Serbia. The 19-month-long Greek trade embargo placed on Macedonia in 1994 and 1995 combined with dire economic situations in Albania and Bulgaria in the 1990s resulted in a situation where access to electronic music subcultures and genres was mostly limited to individuals who would travel internationally and bring back not only records but also their memories of rave culture and the sensory experiences involving DJing, visual and lighting production, and drugs that were integral to those experiences.

During this time radio station *Kanal 103 (Stotrojka)*, with its commitment to promoting alternative music and culture, played a foundational role in the fostering of an electronic music scene (see Chapter 1 for a more complete description; see also Ivanova 2011). Kanal 103's program was the first place electronic music was heard in Macedonia, through radio DJs such as Mirko Popov (founder of PMG Recordings). Popov states,

I had a program called 'Elektro Nova' ['Electro New'] when electronic music was experiencing some sort of promotion in Skopje. That was something distant, something unknown. Some people even wanted to beat me up when I played that kind of music. But at that time, Kanal 103 completely stood behind that culture, which I think was completely justified. (quoted in Ivanova 2011:52)

Between 1992 and 1995, Kanal 103 hosted a run of legendary parties in several venues, some of which were the seeds of the broader electronic music scene in Macedonia.¹¹¹

The geography of Skopje is an important element in understanding the spread of electronic music in the city. Before I get into the Kanal 103 parties and the other early venues for electronic music in Skopje, I need to provide some brief words on some of the geography of Skopje before it began undergoing change with the construction of the buildings and monuments of the Skopje 2014 project. The Vardar River runs east to west and bisects the city, with the fifteenth century Stone Bridge crossing the river. On the south side is the city's center square from which the Stone Bridge leads to the *stara čaršija* (old bazaar), referred to locally as simply "čaršija." The čaršija, in the 1990s, was dominated by shops and businesses owned by Albanians and Turks that usually closed down around four or five o'clock. Nightlife in the čaršija was distinctively "alternative" in the colloquial sense of the word, providing venues for social and creative activities of musicians and other artists outside typical commercial cultural production (e.g., pop music, state-sponsored ensembles at Macedonian Radio Television). This is especially notable because in the period before 1991, all of Skopje generally shut down at 10PM. The old Skopje bus station known as "*megjugradska*" ("inter-city") was on the north side of the Vardar at the base of *Skopsko kale* (the Skopje Fortress), and, along with the area just to the east of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet (also on the north side of the river), was a site known for gay cruising and prostitution.¹¹² The Vardar, then, formed a permeable boundary of sorts, with the

¹¹¹ In Macedonian, *žurka* (party) is the favored term for a gathering centered on electronic music, regardless of whether the crowd has 100 or 2000 members. The word "rave" is not adapted in any form, and *zabava* (the more literal term for "party") is also not used. I use "party" throughout to represent what would be called a *žurka*.

¹¹² In 1980s and 1990s Macedonia (and current Macedonia to a lesser extent), homophobia was pervasive and most male homosexual activity consisted of anonymous meet-ups at gay cruising spots or, later, semi-anonymous encounters planned in internet chat rooms (Lambeovski 1999).

city square (south) side offering space for normative social activities of ethnic Macedonians, and the čaršija (north) side being generally characterized as “other” (read: Albanian, Romani, Turkish, Muslim, sexually deviant), providing space on the margin for ethnic Macedonians to engage in activities outside of what were considered social norms.¹¹³

One venue to host Kanal 103 parties, and after 1995 some of the first electronic music parties, was located in the basement of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet. It is known today by its acronym, MOB, but in that time it was known by the acronym MNT, which stood for *Makedonski Narodni Teatar* (Macedonian National Theater). The club was adjacent to MNT’s underground parking area, and was also referred to as MNT. Participants in those parties speak of them with great fondness and nostalgia. The space has not operated as a club in many years and stands empty, but it is universally touted as an excellent venue for an electronic music party.

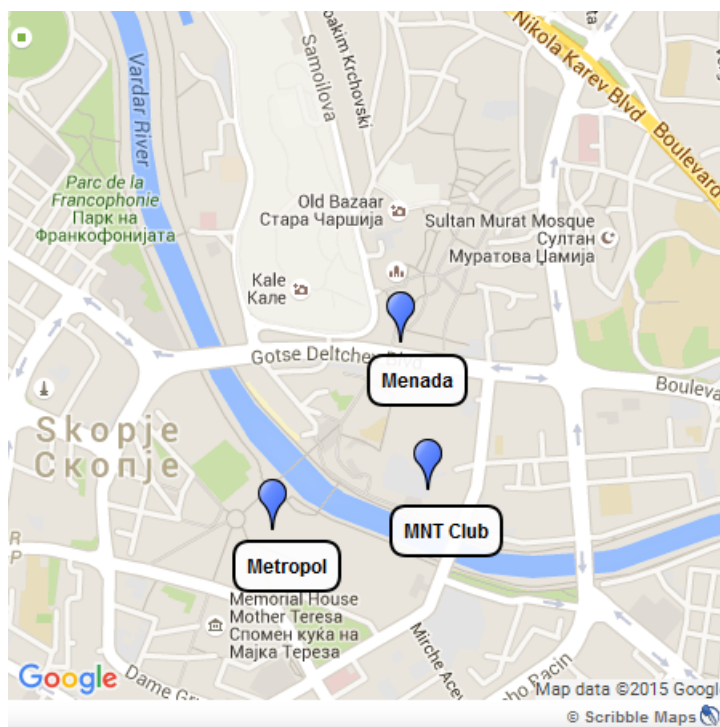


Figure 11. Locations of Menada, Metropol, and the MNT Club

¹¹³ This segregation is a post-1991 phenomenon; the central Skopje square south of the Vardar before 1991 was a gathering point for people of all nationalities.

Another location that began hosting electronic music was the basement of current café-bar Menada, located on the edge the čaršija, just as one enters from the south after crossing the Stone Bridge and the walking bridge over Goce Delčev Boulevard. Menada is the word for “maenad,” and was named for a sixth-century BCE statuette discovered in the town of Tetovo (about thirty miles to the west of Skopje) in 1932. In Greek mythology, maenads were immortal, and were the female followers of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, mystery, fertility, theater, and intoxication. The maenads indulged in great amounts of sex, violence, self-intoxication, and mutilation, and were usually depicted, as is the case with the Tetovo Menada, as dancing or involved in some sort of wild frenzy (see Figure 12). In fact, the literal translation of the word maenad is: “raving one.” In the mid- and late 1990s, through the doors of Menada walked many young Macedonians, unaware that they were embodying the very name of the locale that they were filling with their music, dance, and overall ecstasy. Both Menada and MNT were emblematic of their neighborhoods as peripheral spaces for the experience of the alternative (in all senses of the word). The areas were not well lit, the streets and structures around them were not well maintained, and, at a glance, these spaces seemed largely deserted. While MNT shut its doors and remains closed, Menada was re-opened in the mid-2000s after a period of being closed and is a well-known venue for exhibitions, poetry readings, DJ sets, jazz, and other experimental forms of performance (see Chapter 7).



Figure 12. The Tetovo Menada

One last club, Metropol, is also often mentioned in conversations about the early days of electronic music in Macedonia. It was located in the basement of a building on Skopje's center square, about 200 meters from the foot of the Stone Bridge. Though it was not situated in a space that was by any means "peripheral," its proximity to the permeable boundary line constituted by the Vardar, its location on the square—traditionally a place where people from all walks of life gathered to connect—and its operating hours, like all clubs, beginning at midnight or 1:00AM, also made Metropol an ideal location for the experience of electronic music.

These initial locales for electronic music would operate once a week or even less frequently, at first, and the music spun by DJs was usually Chicago house. Samoil Radinski, Aleksandar "Male" Malevski, Mirko Popov, and Popov's PMG Collective were among the initiators of these parties and the broader electronic music scene.¹¹⁴ In a typical example of the pathway of electronic music to Skopje, one of the early DJs on the scene, Nikola Rizov, lived in Amsterdam from 1991 to 1996. While there he heard house music at a rave where house DJ Dimitri (from Paris) was spinning, which he describes as a life-changing experience. He returned to Skopje as a novice to find the beginnings of this small scene and immediately became a contributor.

One scene participant active in the 1990s recounted the process of DJs acquiring records amidst the challenges of the time related to the Greek trade embargo and conflict in former Yugoslavia:

Samoil, and not only Samoil but all other DJs popular at the time, like Nikola

Rizov, Zoki Bejbe and Nino Flooder, they were buying vinyl even then, at a very

¹¹⁴ PMG originally denoted "Progressive Multimedia Group," but over the years the words were dropped as it became a music-only focused collective, and Popov also formed PMG Records. PMG was generally well known for being oppositional and anti-establishment for much of its history (see Chapter 2).

young age. Maci, other guys too, they would order music from Juno [Juno Records, a UK online dance music store launched in 1997] and for the most part they would wait for two or three weeks. I remember when Samoil's records would arrive, we'd go from Radišani [a village north of Skopje that is now part of the contiguous urban sprawl of the city] to the train station straight away to pick them up, and go running back to listen to the new music.

There were a few record shops that operated in those years carrying electronic music: one inside of a skateboard shop, another two or three in small storefronts, all in Skopje's center and generally not able to stay in business much more than a year each. They would only be able to order 100 to 150 records per month, and frequently local DJs would literally fight over the records. There are even stories of a local record collector who would try to buy out the order each month, listen to the electronic music records, and then attend parties where he would criticize the music and boast about what kind of music he had at home, but would never share with an audience.

In the years immediately preceding and following the 2001 conflict involving ethnic Albanians and Macedonian security forces, nightlife in the čaršija became less active, as ethnic Macedonians more rarely visited the area after dark. In my time living in Macedonia from 2002 to 2004, I had never visited the čaršija past sundown, having been warned off by my Macedonian colleagues, concerned for my safety as an American with relatively little familiarity with the Macedonian language. Though the electronic music scene had moved on to different venues at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, nightlife in the čaršija became more active sometime after 2004. Ethnic Macedonians began to open cafés and bars featuring live music and Macedonian-friendly food and drink along the walking street adjacent to Menada, side-by-side

with Turkish and Albanian establishments. Even as the city was becoming more ethnically divided, the *čaršija* retained its character as a locale where people of every ethnicity overlapped and did business in the same sphere. By the time I returned for fieldwork in 2011, the *čaršija* was the primary place where friends would invite me for drinks in the evenings and late into the night. One DJ described these various phases of the *čaršija* to me this way:

DJ: But do you remember back when the *čaršija* was dead? There wasn't anything. It was scary to walk past there at night, that's how it was at the time.

DW: As a foreigner I worked with an NGO then, a nongovernmental organization. So they told me I shouldn't go there after six.

DJ: It was dangerous, yes, dangerous.

DW: As a foreigner you don't understand either Macedonian or Albanian.

DJ: You'll get mugged or something, or . . .

DW: And the old bus station nearby was dangerous too.

DJ: Aaaaaa, terrifying! (*jezivo!*) Beirut, Beirut, Beirut [. . .] It really was, even I didn't go there, and I lived here nearby, I'm here in the center literally. As kids we went to the *čaršija* a lot, we would walk around Kale, I grew up in a different time. But there was a time when it was really scary in the *čaršija*. Like a horror film. Jack the Ripper could have been there. It was like that. But then they made it work, they tamed it. In the 1990s it used to be the most visited tourist location. Then you had that period of darkness, scary. But then the government changed parties, they started working on raising up the *čaršija* again. I think some foreigners paid for some things to be touched up here and there as well, some projects, lights, this and that, a gallery, you know, everything was done so that it

would look as it should. Now the *čaršija* is experience its best days, there are tons of Macedonians that went there to open up shop, Albanians too, and then they start mixing, there's life, it's great. Now I take all foreigners that come here to the *čaršija*. And I used to be afraid to. Now it's quite different.

This depiction of the *čaršija* generally conflates the violence of the 2001 conflict between ethnic Albanians and state security forces with Islamic areas of conflict in general, and, by extension, with Muslim Albanians who are more conservative or live a more traditional lifestyle, understood as rural. This particular invoking of Beirut is common among ethnic Macedonians when seeking to sum up urban ethnic violence (or even the threat of such violence) in a representative stereotype. It is usually said in a self-exoticizing way by which the speaker at once embraces and distances him or herself from the fact that this type of violence—though typical of the Near East in their minds—is part of the Macedonian experience. But after speaking of how the *čaršija* was made safer by government policy and domestic and foreign investment, the DJ here makes it clear that he admires and values Macedonians and Albanians living and working together. On one hand, he was looking down on ethnic violence and religious extremism as backwards and part of some traditional Albanian-Muslim culture. On the other, Albanians who worked together in harmony with ethnic Macedonians in an urban environment were to be admired for their forward-thinking and urban way of life, something characteristic of the belonging made and experienced in the Sektor scene.

In 2011, and increasingly in later years, establishments crowded the primary pedestrian street and included a wine bar (Vinoteka Temov or “Temov Wine Bar”), a beer garden (Pivnica Star Grad or “Old Town Brewery”), and Rakija Bar Kaldrma (“Rakija Bar Cobblestone,” referred to as “Rakija Bar”) which featured *rakija*, a fruit brandy common in Southeastern

Europe (in Macedonia, it is usually made from grapes). Each of these locales—including Menada—operated as a *kafič* (which I gloss as café or café-bar), meaning they were typically open during the day as well as in the evening, by law closed by midnight or 1:00AM depending on the time of year and whether it was a weekday or weekend (in the *čaršija* those laws were at times less strictly enforced), and served espresso drinks, soft drinks, beer, liquor, and sometimes food and/or wine. Clubs like Sektor began working around midnight or one, close at four, and served beer, liquor, and soft drinks only.



Figure 13. Menada exterior (in 2013)

Just a few meters down from the wine bar, a café called Damar had opened and immediately became known as the primary gay- and lesbian-friendly locale in Skopje. The word

damar is an archaic word borrowed from Turkish, meaning blood vessel, nerve, or crack—and its meaning captured its peripheral, life-giving, emotive, intense, and imperfect nature as it served the LGBTQ community in Macedonia. Though there have been various LGBTQ gathering points in Skopje (usually only one at any given time), Damar was the longest-lasting space for belonging for this community. This was in no small part due to the musical activity of DJs who spun at Damar on weekends, some of whom were connected to the Sektor 909 scene.

The Techno Roots of Sektor 909

I was introduced to Sektor 909 and began to get to know its surrounding scene during my three-month stay in Skopje in the summer of 2011. Sektor’s winter (indoor) location had opened in 2003 near the city center on the south side of the Vardar, but its original summer (outdoor) location was in its inaugural season in 2011, operating in the complex of Skopje’s summer clubs in City Park, also south of the Vardar (see Fig. 14).¹¹⁵ I met the majority owner of Sektor, Ogen “Ogi” Uzunovski, through Georgi Šareski and DJ Maci sometime during the summer of 2011, and soon realized that his passion for electronic music—especially Detroit techno—had played a significant role in fostering the broader electronic music scene in Macedonia. But more importantly, I saw that his dedication to Detroit techno and his deep beliefs in the ideologies and philosophies he associated with it existed at the core of the Sektor 909 scene, influencing virtually every aspect of the club experience and the senses of belonging for which it made space.

¹¹⁵ It was typical for nightclubs in Skopje to operate two locations. Skopje’s relatively cold winters required indoor locales, but the hot summers made those locales unbearable, even with air conditioning. The summer clubs were usually a good deal larger than their winter counterparts, and were always open-air to accommodate for the warm temperatures and near-ubiquity of smoking. In 2013 Sektor’s summer location relocated almost directly across the river from its previous location.

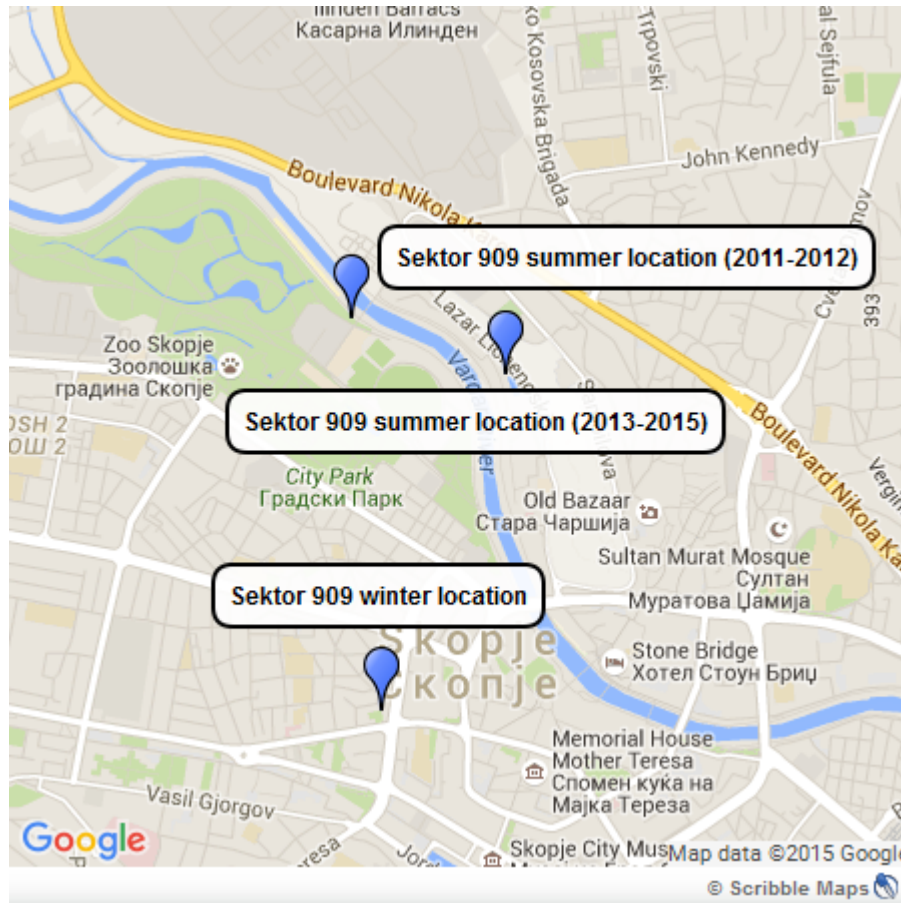


Figure 14. Locations of Sektor 909

Ogi, born in 1974, was in his late teens and early 20s when electronic music first appeared in Macedonia through Kanal 103 and the parties at MNT, Menada, and Metropol. In addition to those scenes, he cites a café named Pablo as the place where he was introduced to electronic music for the first time after its opening in 1993. “I went to Pablo because I was friends with Staniša, the owner, not for the music,” Ogi told me, emphasizing once again the primacy of personal relationships in nearly every aspect of life.

We were childhood friends [with Staniša], so we went there. But that’s where I met Samoil Radinski, now the owner of Logos Recordings, one of the founders of the electronic music scene in Macedonia. I mean, in my opinion the presenter of

the best quality electronic music. He was the first person to introduce me to this type of music. Pablo was the first café [as opposed to a club] that started organizing parties with that type of music, with electronic music. And they played everything—it was a circus in there!—there was trance, techno, house, anything and everything, but most of the music was in electronic form.

We had been going to discos [clubs] since we were kids, we've been listening to different music, you know, in our discos we could hear everything from James Brown to Depeche Mode, to I don't know, Run DMC etc. [. . .] You know, by listening to different types of electronic music at Pablo and by visiting the popular parties at the time at MNT, Metropol, Menada, different other clubs too, through Samoil, through his ear for music, I started to differentiate what was best for me, whether that was Detroit techno or Chicago house.

Through Samoil in the mid-1990s, Ogi began an intimate experience not only with electronic music, but also with the ideologies connected to it. Samoil took Ogi in for a few months in 1998 after Ogi was having what he vaguely describes as a “rough period,” a time about which Ogi speaks fondly, pointing to music as the thing that got his life on track. In 2000, along with Radinski, Ivan “Vanja” Todorovski, and Smilen Dimitrov, a member of Macedonia's best-known hip-hop group, Ogi founded *Balans* (Balance), a music promotion company.¹¹⁶ Their aim was to bring in internationally-known DJs who had already begun to hold events in neighboring Bulgaria and Serbia.

¹¹⁶ Ogi and Vanja also became co-owners of Macedonia's first Sushi restaurant, Nobu. Ogi sold his share to Orce Kamčev, one of Macedonia's richest individuals and a powerful person in the VMRO-DPMNE network, in 2006.

By that point, Ogi had already become familiar with the roots of techno music in Detroit. For him and the Balance Team, the 1996 French documentary *Universal Techno* was extremely influential in shaping his understanding of the growth and development of techno throughout the world. The film opens with shots of the 1996 Love Parade in Berlin, one million young Germans in front of the Brandenburg Gate dancing to techno, touting values of tolerance, love, and peace. But after a few minutes of focus on this relatively affluent atmosphere of euphoria in Germany, the film shifts its focus to post-industrial Detroit, depicting Derrick May and Juan Atkins and others walking through dilapidated buildings and telling the story of techno in the context of the struggles of life in Detroit. The narrative of economic and social struggle of Detroit and its funk-infused techno sound resonated in Skopje much more than the celebratory, “Europeanized” techno of Berlin. Skopje’s postsocialist struggles in the 1990s resembled postindustrial Detroit far more than they did postsocialist Berlin, where techno DJs were, according to the film, making lots of money in contrast to their Detroit forebears. This music, situated as an expression of Detroit DJs and musicians, was shown in the film to have been embraced and transformed not only in Berlin, but in Sheffield, Tokyo, Barcelona, and countless other locations around the world. Ogi and the Balance team viewed Detroit techno as birthed in a city reminiscent of Skopje by people who were open to sharing it with the world, as a universal music that was able to somehow connect with human beings no matter where they are or where they came from. The narrative of techno as a futuristic music was compelling, and they wanted to join their world with that narrative.

A few larger events had happened in Skopje as well. Nikola Rizov had brought in DJ Dimitri (from Amsterdam) in 1998. According to Maci, DJ Dimitri at this party “completely raised the standard, he simply drove the crowd wild, he made a big—how do I put this—leap. He

pushed all the boundaries of the concept that we had about this music.” The Balance team knew there was enough interest in electronic music to start promoting larger parties with the DJs they held in high regard. Their first project was “*Točka na Topenje*” (“Melting Point”), a series of three parties. The first of these would be in the summer of 2000 at Ohrid Lake, Macedonia’s primary domestic tourist destination, located in the southwest corner of the country. The lake is one of Europe’s deepest, and is known for its clear water, mountainous surroundings, summer temperatures 15 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than those in Skopje, and many picturesque churches and monasteries, some dating back to the Byzantine Era. The Albanian border bisects the lake generally north to south, and situated on the Macedonian side of the lakeshore are the towns of Struga and Ohrid, as well as numerous smaller villages and public beaches.¹¹⁷ The beaches are pebble beaches, usually no more than 50 or 100 meters wide, and tend to attract certain demographics. Gradište Beach, a relatively narrow beach surrounded by jagged rock cliffs about 10 miles south of the town of Ohrid, has long been known to be a favorite beach for the middle class youth of Skopje. In the summertime, *skopjani* (Skopje inhabitants) flee the hot temperatures of the city, many heading to Ohrid. Gradište Beach was an ideal location for a summertime electronic music party.

¹¹⁷ In Macedonian calling a locale a *plaža* (beach) usually means it is accommodated with lounge chairs, umbrellas, a café/bar/restaurant to order food and/or drinks, bathrooms, and perhaps a dock. A beach without such facilities would be considered a *diva plaža* or “wild beach.”

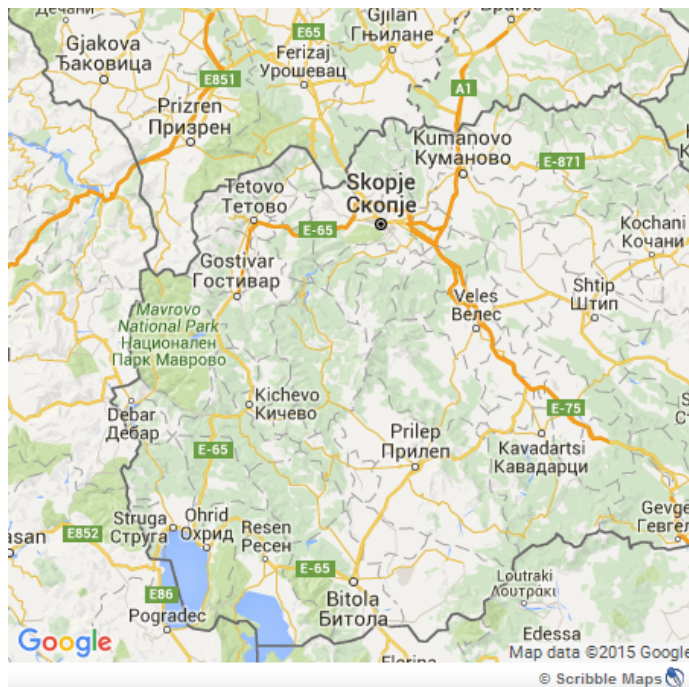


Figure 15. Map of Western Macedonia



Figure 16. Location of Gradište Beach

Many times I have heard Ogi recount the story of this first Balance party, which took place on July 15, 2000. Even without capturing the subtleties of his Skopski dialect, with its distinctive phrases, inflections, and Serbian influenced-slang that mark him as an urban, lifelong, Skopjanec (man from Skopje) who is old enough to remember Yugoslavia but young enough to have come of age in independent Macedonia, it is worth it to let him be the one telling the story. For him it begins,

We sent an email, and we didn't know which DJs we could expect to bring over, maybe some from the younger generations in Detroit, like Kenny Larkin or Stacey Pullen, and we got a reply that Derrick May is free and he can come over. For our first party!

So we, like, couldn't believe it, we asked how much it would cost, it was too expensive for us. We didn't really have much experience in finding sponsorships and things like that, so we made up our minds, Vanja and I, to pawn our cars—we had two cars, we went to a person known for that in Skopje, a real corrupt opportunist scumbag (*avantadžija, gjubre*), we parked the cars in his back yard and we paid part of Derrick's fee with the money. We arranged everything in Ohrid—the beach, the space, sound, lights, we got everything we needed, we made loads of placards, we personally put them up all over the streets of Skopje, with the help, of course, of many other younger kids who have stood behind us now for many years. The day when the party was supposed to take place—and as we're planning on having it at the beach in open air—it started to rain. 11:00AM, it started to rain, it's raining, raining, raining. It was already time for Smilen and I to get going from Ohrid, to pick up Derrick from the airport [a 2-3 hour drive].

It's still pouring, we head from Ohrid towards Skopje, to get him at the airport, we're on the phone the entire time, they say it's still raining. So this Gypsy shows up, the guy cleaning the beach at Gradište, he says at 6:30 it will stop raining—at 6:30 that evening it will stop raining, is what this Gypsy says. Šalaka. Šalaka was the nickname of this Gypsy, on his arm he had tattooed “Šalaka must die at half twelve,” from some cowboy movie. That really, really had made an impression on this Gypsy. So in Ohrid they call him Šalaka, everyone knows him. He says that about the rain at 2:30 or 3, when we were heading for Skopje. So they call us at 6:30, and they tell us it's stopped raining in Ohrid. So of course, at the end the Gypsy was rewarded very well, we rewarded him. Anyway, we arrive at the airport with Smilen, and the plane was supposed to land at 8:30 that evening, they tell us there's a delay, it will arrive at 10:30. *Lelee!* The party had already started, Samoil was playing before Derrick.

So they are already calling us, people think we've tricked them, it's the first party, where's the DJ, where's the DJ, everyone's shouting, you know, everyone's wasted left and right—dangerous stuff. So Derrick arrives, we introduce ourselves to each other right away, love at first sight, strong energies, really good ones. On the way in the car we have great conversation, in an hour we had already become close. We go to the hotel, he says, “I need five minutes,” so he really counted them down, he says five, four, three, two, one, I'm ready. He comes out, we head for the party, we come to Gradište, there's a reception office above the beach on the cliff. There are a million cars in front of the office, we can't get to it. We need to go by car all the way down to the beach. Somehow I

get to the reception office—and the gate is down! I tell the person in charge of it: “Open up, we’re with the DJ, we’re late!”

So a cop comes, from NTS [*Nedozvolena Trgovija i Shverc*, Illegal Trade and Contraband], he says: late or not, get inside the reception office. So they get us all out of the car, me, Derrick, Smilen, they bring us into the office, we go in, we see 40 people standing facing the wall, hands behind their heads, looking at the wall. “Come on,” he says, “get inside the office.” We go in, they tell Derrick, “Empty your pockets.” Derrick takes out his headphones and the hotel room key, he says “That’s it, I don’t have anything else.” They searched his records, this and that, I say – “Shame on you, come on, let us go.” (*sramota be, puštete nè!*) So they did.

We get to the party, people had gone wild, we had to approach the stage with five bodyguards, people trying to get to him so they could touch his hair with their hands, “Aaaaaaa!” everyone’s screaming, everyone’s gone wild, Samoil had prepared them well. Derrick goes in, he spins until 8:30 in the morning. An unbelievable party, I think those who were there remember it to this day, and it must be one of the best parties of their lives.

On one level, Ogi’s recounting of the story shows how he, as a young man in his 20s, was able to meet and work with one of his heroes for the first time, a hero who would later become a close friend. It also came at great personal sacrifice (selling his car) that Ogi helped create an opportunity for the youth, what he would call the truest fans of electronic music in Macedonia, were able to be exposed to an elite class of DJs who knew how to musically lead an all-night party. According to Ogi, the attendance at the party was around 700 or 800—a far cry from the

massive raves that May had DJed over the years, but possibly reminiscent of the beginnings of the Detroit scene. Ogi:

That first party with Derrick May, I took it very emotionally, I even shed tears when I was sending him off at the airport because many shocking things had happened to me, he even told us not to give him the rest of his fee because he saw that there weren't that many people there—so he gave up the rest of his fee. And he stayed three, four days in Ohrid, we took him around, we took him to the springs, at St. Naum he drank water directly from the springs. He was in awe at the beauty of Ohrid, he took it all very emotionally, as did I.

Derrick knew that this was not the Europe that had embraced techno in the late 1980s and transformed it into a lucrative enterprise centered on rave culture. In *High Tech Soul* (2006), Derrick tells one story about being in Macedonia in the early years, presumably talking about Ogi and the Balance team:

One of the happiest and most special moments of my life was when I was playing in Macedonia. We went to dinner, went to a restaurant, we sat down, the guy put four plates down for everybody. Nice guys. And I ordered, and they spoke in their language, and the food came. And it's just a dish for me. And I'm like, "where is the rest of the food?" And the guys say, they're all lookin' at me and they said, "oh, we don't have enough money to eat here, we could never eat here—we brought *you* to eat." And that was heavy.

Over the next 14 years, Ogi brought Derrick May to Macedonia a dozen times, culminating in his collaboration with the Macedonian Philharmonic in 2014, which I will discuss at the end of the chapter. Ogi has been known to describe Derrick (in English) as his "brother

from another mother” and he takes pride in how Derrick mentions Macedonia in the *Hi Tech Soul* documentary. Derrick, in a 2014 media interview in Ohrid after his performance with the Macedonian Philharmonic, describes Ogi this way:

Ogi is like a brother to me, we’ve known each other a very long time. We’ve gotten to be the best of friends, and he’s someone that I really trust and I can rely on forever. When I first came here to this country, I actually performed here, in Ohrid. And the war was coming to an end.¹¹⁸ So to be here was very very special, very emotional for everybody. And I wasn’t really aware of all the politics of this country. So when I arrived here, the people, the response was unbelievable. I couldn’t even play music because I couldn’t hear in the headphones. People were that loud, it was that powerful. But to come here, the preparation to get me here, came from Ogi in particular. And this man, he sold his car, you know he did whatever he had to do to have me come here. This was emotional stuff for me. I’d never experienced that before on the level of the artist coming to visit a country with a promoter. I’ve never seen a promoter not be able to treat themselves well in my presence, this was very special. And the way he treated me, the way they treated me, him and his friends, it will be with me the rest of my life. I think that if Ogi hadn’t sold his car, you’d be listening to a lot of folk music right now. It would be a very different country.

Ohrid was my most meaningful party here, because the war was coming to the end. And I shouldn’t have been here. I was the first DJ. I mean I should not

¹¹⁸ Though the 2001 conflict had not started yet, May is presumably referring to violence in the region, the closest in temporal and geographic proximity being the Kosovo War, and the Preševo Valley Insurgency, both of which were related to the 2001 conflict.

have been here. Nobody was coming here. Everyone was leaving! I went to the airport there was nobody there. You know it was just UN soldiers, just me. Who the fuck is this guy?

Their friendship grew out of this business partnership—an exemplary case of friendship being both mutually beneficial and centered on care for the well being of the other. The mutual sacrifice that Ogi and Derrick saw in one other for what they viewed as a greater good—the music and the experience it can provide for people—drew them together. They increasingly trusted one another in the face of uncertainty again and again.

Beyond a recounting of the foundation of his friendship with Derrick, Ogi's telling of the Gradište party can also be read as a juxtaposition of two people: Šalaka and Derrick. As in many European nations, Roms are among the most marginalized ethnic groups in Macedonia, yet highly revered for their musicality, and often have a reputation for other supposed mystical powers. Šalaka fits this latter category, reminiscent of the “Sambo” stereotype in American literary depictions of African American slaves in the antebellum south as “indolent, faithful, humorous, loyal, dishonest, superstitious, improvident, and musical” (Blassingame 1972:134), a stereotype that has persisted in American film, where the “magic negro”—a black person whose sole purpose in a story is to serve the needs of a white hero or heroine—has also become a common trope (see Jones 2005:35–37). I have heard numerous times from ethnic Macedonians that “Gypsies are our blacks” (*ciganite se naši crnci*), a statement that indicates, beyond some sort of desire to identify with a perceived American experience of race, a typically contradictory “othering” of Roms that is both prejudiced and fascinated, derogatory and respectful (see Chapter 7 for further discussion of the relationship between Roms and blackness in Macedonia).

In his narrative, Ogi describes a moment that seems subtle, but says much about Macedonian conceptions of African Americans and blackness in general: the moment when Derrick arrives at a raging party, and the people are all “trying to get to him so they could touch his hair with their hands.” Understandings of African American popular culture and music in Macedonia is most closely related to the rise of hip-hop in Macedonia, which took place in the 1990s concurrently with the rise of electronic music. Macedonia’s first hip-hop band with widespread success, SAF (*Sakam Afro Frizura*, meaning “I Want an Afro Hairstyle”), formed in 1993 and was followed by many others. Though the band now rarely performs, SAF’s DJ, Goce Trpkov, continues to spin throughout Macedonia and the Balkans—his weekly residency at Sektor on Thursday nights that has lasted several years. The club is consistently full to capacity on these nights, and it is part of the way Sektor maintains a successful business—bringing in a crowd that is different than the scene surrounding techno and house.

Since the 1990s, scholars have produced a proliferation of studies on global hip-hop, examining flows of culture, linguistic concerns, and expressions of marginality, among other themes (see, e.g., Mitchell 2001; Osumare 2007; Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009). Scholars of hip-hop consistently wrestle with the degree to which local hip-hop practitioners around the globe self-identify with particular African American concerns, adopting US hip-hop styles to local concerns of race, ethnicity, and prejudice. Adriana Helbig, in her work on hip-hop practices in Ukraine, asserts that the black body is both cultural capital and a consumer commodity that has—in some contexts such as the United States—become increasingly disposable because its desirable qualities are often imitated and replicated to an extent (citing M. White 2011:19). She argues, however, that

in countries such as Ukraine where one-on-one interaction with Africans and African Americans is limited, there is a sense the black male bodies carry a sense of authenticity regarding hip hop, an element that cannot be replicated but can be capitalized and drawn upon in terms of relational proximity. (Helbig 2014:127)

Macedonia represents a similar case, and perhaps more extreme considering the fact that, unlike Ukraine, it is not generally a destination for African migrants. In its very name, SAF articulates this distance from the African body through expressing a desire, a longing for black hair, to possess an “afro hairstyle” and all of the exotic otherness, coolness, and rebellion embodied by that hairstyle. The audience at Gradište Beach also embodies this longing—in their raving state of ecstasy, they push and shove without inhibition to have a chance of touching Derrick’s hair, exploring something exotic and unknown, and acquiring for themselves an intimate proximity to something “authentically” black.¹¹⁹

Black bodies manifested primarily in Macedonian imaginations based on mediated representations—mostly through hip-hop and American pop culture. When African American house and techno DJs billed by Ogi as high-profile (e.g., May, Atkins, Kenny Larkin, Osunlade) traveled to Skopje to spin at Balance parties and later at Sektor 909, their photographs almost always appeared on advertising materials, establishing a link between “authentic” blackness and electronic music (or at least Detroit techno and Chicago house, or perhaps with the Sektor 909 scene) (see Fig. 4). They contributed to the exoticized imagination of blackness of the participants in the scene through providing a corporeal/musical experience with an African

¹¹⁹ Discussions of the cultural perception and meanings of African American hair usually focus on women’s hair (Banks 2000; Prince 2009), other historical studies have a broader view (Byrd and Tharps 2014). Chris Rock’s documentary *Good Hair* (2009) offers a thoughtful and humorist take.

American musician.¹²⁰ Ogi and the other players at Sektor 909 demonstrate their own relational proximity to authentic blackness, which is experienced as “cool” and, perhaps more important, as transcending racial division and promoting ideals of peace, harmony, tolerance, and equality—even though the apparent white/black coding of Macedonians’ relationship to black electronic music DJs is quite different than the white/black dichotomies underlying the history of racism in the United States.

Returning to the juxtaposition between Derrick and Šalaka, Derrick’s arrival to a crowded, raving scene on the beach at first depicts great contrast to Šalaka’s mystical prophecy as he cleaned the very same beach alone amongst those setting up the stage for the party hours earlier. Both Derrick and Šalaka inhabit a space that is both “us” and “other” for the ethnic Macedonians throwing the party. Derrick is revered for his power—his masculine power—to create a transformative moment through musical sound that feeds the energy of the party. He is brought close into an intimate friendship to repeat variations of that experience again and again as Ogi and others make space for their scene. They participate together in this endeavor, mutually benefitting because of their shared musical—and acoustemological—sensibilities, but also because of the mutual othering that they enact on one another that facilitates the reciprocity and generosity characterizing the relationship. Šalaka is also revered for a mystical power—not a musical one, even though he is part of a category (“Gypsies”) that possess extraordinary musical abilities. He is rewarded financially for his contribution, but is not brought close in proximity—the divisions of ethnicity and class are untraversable in this case. He remains in a category of

¹²⁰ One example illustrates the specifically sexual exoticization of the black male in the Macedonian imagination. In August 2012, Kenny Larkin came to Skopje to spin at Sektor 909. After his set, Macedonian girls at the club were vying for the chance to go home with him, and in the end, he ended up taking two of them back to his hotel. Consensus among the Macedonian males who witnessed this scene was that this was because he was black.

people that are exotic and valued, but only when distance is kept. Respect exists, but trust is not built, and Šalaka disappears from the narrative after his brief appearance, only replaced by other Roms when their role is required or convenient to the greater goals of the dominant population.

After this first party, Ogi and the Balance team began throwing large one-off parties featuring foreign guest DJs, renting out various spaces the *Skopski Saem* (“Skopje Fair,” the city’s convention center) or other large club spaces. The second party in the three-party *Točka na Topenje* project featured Kevin Saunderson and was held in the small hall of the *Saem* for a crowd of 2000. The team had quickly refined their marketing and organizational skills, and had landed their first sponsorship through a close personal relationship, as Ogi describes it:

Macedonian Telekom helped us out with a significant amount of money, the director of the firm then was Jane Trpkov, may God rest his soul (*Bog da go prosti*), the father of Goce SAF [the DJ of the first prominent hip-hop group in Macedonia]. He helped us out quite a lot. He believed in us, he saw that we had good vision. It was one of the more successful parties organized by that time.

Over the next five years parties grew to fill the larger halls at the *Saem* with crowds of 3000 to 4000 who amassed to see Gene Farris, Carl Craig, and Underground Resistance, among other names in house and techno initially introduced to Ogi by Radinski. During this time period, in 2003, Club Sektor 909 opened under the ownership of Borche “Boro” Gonoski and Kristijan “Mase” Masevski. They named it after the Roland TR-909, a partially sample-based (cymbals) and partially synthesized sound-based (all other drums sounds) drum machine invented in 1984, well-known for having been used to produce some of the fundamental sounds of Chicago house

and Detroit techno.¹²¹ Marin “Mački” Basotov, a DJ and current co-owner of Sektor, describes Sektor’s early years this way:

There were never parties there, they had house, electronic music, but not parties with foreign DJs as we do them now. It wasn’t commercial, there was house music, but no shouting, jumping, dancing like today. It was like a cabaret, you stand by the bar, you drink, good house music, you get down and dance with a girl, have two or three drinks. People never used to stay till 5 am. They would come to Sektor at about 1:00AM, they would stay till 2:30 or 3:00, finish their drink, try meeting some girls, and continue to *Balet* and some other place like that to finish up.¹²² So Sektor wasn’t a place to see the end.

Mački began spinning music as a teenager in the mid 1990s for “junior parties” at clubs—parties of 1500-2000 people that ran from about 9:00PM until midnight and were for the under-18 crowd (alcohol consumption was technically prohibited, but the law was not strictly enforced). He spun mostly commercial music, with some house mixed in, but around 1998, as he puts it:

I got bored with all that and I started looking for direction, looking for myself, buying records. First I started with house, then for a while I started going to trance

¹²¹ Frankie Knuckles bought his first Roland TR-909 from a young Derrick May in 1984. The 909’s predecessor, the Roland TR-808, was also in use in early Chicago house and Detroit techno. For one telling of the use of these technologies with regard to the relationship between the Chicago and Detroit scenes, see <http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/6204-from-the-autobahn-to-i-94/> (accessed August 8, 2015).

¹²² At the time of my fieldwork, *Balet* (Ballet) was the longest running—and only—after-hours establishment in Skopje. On any given night (not just weekends), after the bars closed at midnight or 1:00AM, Balet would remain open late into the early hours of the morning. They usually featured “Day Off,” a cover band in existence since the 1990s boasting a repertoire of hundreds of American and British rock hits. Balet was known as a “last chance” bar of sorts, where people could somehow smoke inside (the bar was never fined by the police for breaking the no smoking indoors law), would arrive relatively intoxicated, and continue to drink and hang out as late as they possibly could.

parties—you know, when you’re young, you like aggressive music. I started with the most hardcore. Then trance got too much for me, then I started buying techno records, and as the years went on, as I was growing up, I got calmer in my music, like that.

During those years, Mački operated “The Club” (both transliterated as *d klab*, or in the diminutive *klabče*) an effectually illegal, literally underground locale located in an earthquake shelter underneath the Bunjakovec strip mall on Skopje’s main east-west thoroughfare, *Bulevar Partizanski Odredi*, known as *Partizanska*, a ten-minute walk west from the city center.

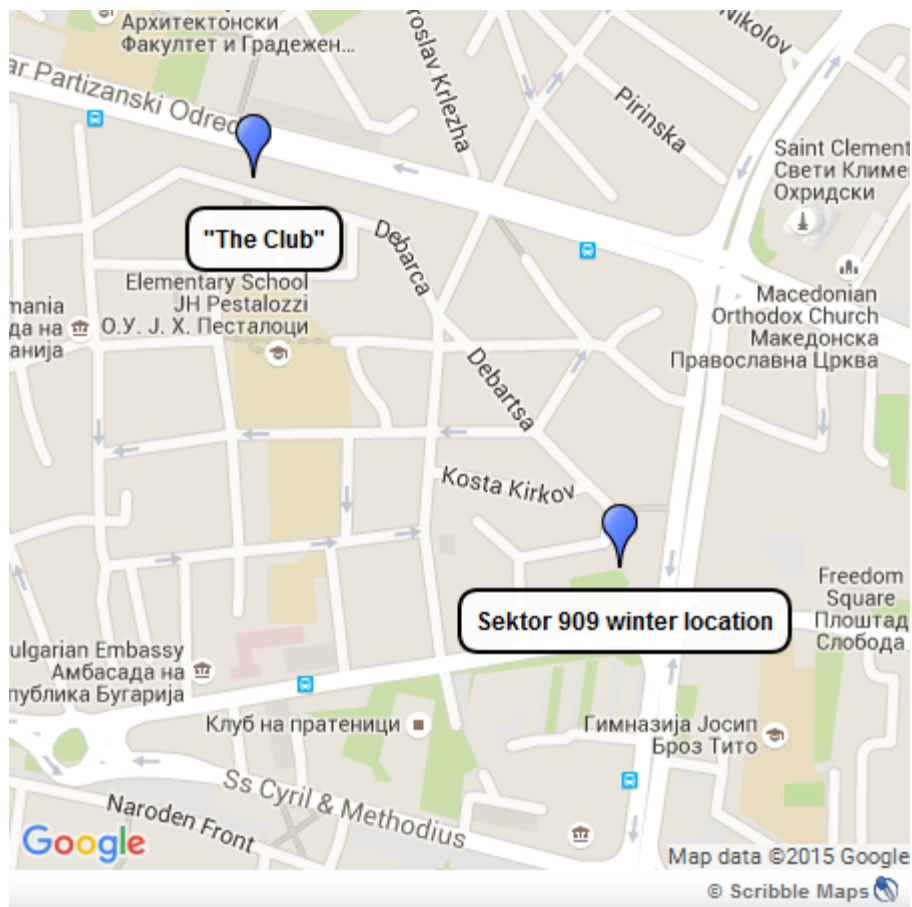


Figure 17. Location of “The Club”

As an earthquake shelter, it had iron doors and all. “*The Club*” was the name... you have no idea what was going on there! You haven’t been down there, you don’t know what it’s like. There hasn’t been such a thing before or since. The music we played really was underground—techno, techno to the bone, fast, like bam bam bam bam bam, it was really underground. If police showed up—“it’s a private party,” we’d say, with lying and this and that. We would go until eight, nine in the morning, and then I would go home from the opposite direction as usual so that my mother and father wouldn’t see me all messed up and things when they’d go to the green market.

And we used to go all over Macedonia and play music, in all the towns, you know? With the crew (*ekipa*) from there, let’s say. In that crew I count Maci, Maci played music at our place too, they all have, you know. But before, in the cities, and in every smaller town in Macedonia, there were associations and movements for electronic music, the parties were madness. Now, we haven’t been to another town in awhile. They have their own little DJs (*didžejčinja*, the diminutive of “DJs,” also implying childish or child-like) on laptops, they’ll just click on music for 500 denars [about 10 or 11 USD at the time], it’s no longer . . . everything’s really fallen apart. Actually, you know how I’ll put it? Now hip-hop and R&B have taken over what was techno in Macedonia.

Mački touches on a trend that he, Ogi, and others observed as digital and internet technologies developed, which drastically increased the ease of access to music and the ability to DJ without possessing skills in running turntables or a personal collection of vinyl records. As access to music in Macedonia increased due to increasing prevalence of high-speed internet after 2004 or

2005, the curiosity and exposure to foreign DJs that was an aspect of what inspired such large crowds declined. As Ogi (in 2008) and Mački (in 2009) joined Boro Ginoski as co-owners of Sektor (Ogi as majority owner with a 50% share, Mački and Boro splitting the other half), they responded to this change not only in their plans for transforming the club, but also in the rhetoric that they used to talk about music and the role of the DJ.

Almost all of the local DJs in the Sektor 909 scene were just that: DJs; they did not produce their own tracks (one notable exception was Alek Soltirov, a slightly younger DJ who began doing so in 2013). Among foreign DJs to frequently appear in Macedonia, Derrick May, for example, had not produced a new original track in at least ten years, but was still active spinning at parties around the world. The appeal for a party, then, could not be linked to a desire to “discover” new music of an artist; rather, it had to relate to a perception of the DJ and the DJ’s taste, as well as how well the DJ could create and build the “right” kind of energy at a party through symbiotically interacting with the crowd.¹²³ Ogi, as a promoter and later as a club owner, and those involved with Sektor (including local and foreign DJs) are “apparent cultural producers” (see Bourdieu 1993) who, by booking DJs or by actually selecting the music as a DJ, live at a party, arbitrate the taste of the scene. Arbiters of taste have been an overt part of the electronic music social structure since its very beginning, where the people throwing the parties (promoters) and starting the clubs have often been as famous as the producers and DJs. The key to getting a new electronic music scene or genre off the ground is not putting out records or putting together sets featuring the genre. It is rather throwing parties and drawing in the types of audiences that will be able to sustain interest in the music and the social activities surrounding it.

¹²³ See Finkenstscher 2000 (Chapter 3) for a discussion of such DJ practices, including a DJ’s role in making “mediated” musics “immediate.” In *Universal Techno* (1996) Derrick May calls DJing “making music with music.”

Ogi, Mački, Maci, and others involved in Sektor 909 came to realize the increased significance of their roles as arbiters of taste since access to music had ceased to be something that they could offer to audiences. Whenever they talk about DJs, including when referencing themselves, they use the term *prezenter* and *prezentira* (literally meaning “presenter” and “to present,” respectively, and often used to describe a television host and his or her activities). Ogi saw one of his roles as a club owner to present (*prezentira*) music to the public. He spoke of club owners who would book DJs of all types depending on the popular music of the day:

Now most of the club owners—which is normal—work mostly for profit and money, which for me is . . . I’m not that case, a money-lover or *bla bla*, so I believe I’ll stick to the underground and the sound that I want to present [*prezentiram*] for the rest of my life, I’ll never change for money, I’ll never change anything.

Though Ogi was primarily concerned with sound, and a sense of “underground” that a certain sound could engender, he also knew that in order to create space for that sound, he had to create a sustainable business. When the sustainability of large-scale parties came into question with the increase in access to the internet and music, he turned to Sektor as a context in which he could continue cultivating this sound.

From 2003 to 2008 Sektor, as I have described, functioned as a club featuring electronic music spun by local DJs, did not typically charge a cover, and rarely featured any guests from abroad. When they joined the ownership, Ogi and Mački initiated significant changes. They not only began to book foreign DJs at least once a month, but they changed the layout of the club, making room for a dance floor where there were previously tables, and moving the DJ booth from where it was underneath the stairs to a more prominent place, so that it functioned more

like a stage. Ogi brought his promoter skills to Sektor, and his team printed and distributed flyers in the same ways they had for the parties at the *Saem*. They began charging a cover for each night the club operated (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday), typically between 100 and 300 Macedonian denars, (between two and six dollars), about the price of one or two drinks. With a typical Macedonian salary lingering around 18,000 denars (ca. 350 dollars) per month for many years, this change transformed Sektor from a club that served as a stop along the way in the Skopje nightlife, to a featured event of the night that merited the audience stay until three or four, when the club typically closed—because a significant amount of money was spent and the quality of the experience was elevated. Throughout my time in Macedonia, Sektor successfully maintained its promotional practices, mainly operating through Facebook, the overwhelmingly central node of communication, business marketing, and event promotion in Macedonia throughout the population.

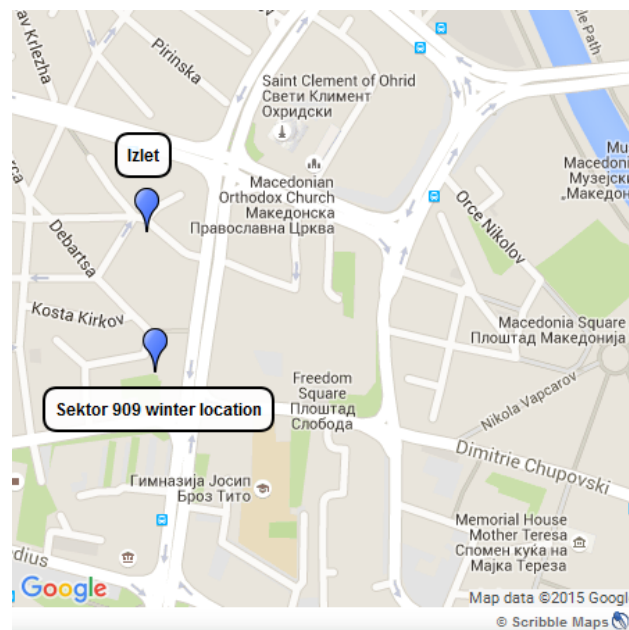


Figure 18. Location of Izlet

In 2009, Ogi also opened a café, *Izlet* (“outing,” in the sense of a short excursion into nature, or a picnic)—which became another hub of the Sektor scene. This was located in the city center about 300 meters from the winter Sektor location, and provided a place for the inner circle of the scene to hang out during the day and evening. It also provided a place for another musical outlet. In Ogi’s words:

I was completely drained by the restaurant business, all that, is the lettuce fresh, or were potatoes frozen, silly things like that, when what I really want is to work with music. So that’s when I got here to Izlet. I made a deal and took ownership of Izlet, thank God. Izlet is a cult locale in Skopje that also allows presentation of different types of music. Of course, with more of a café style, more jazz, house, punk, soul, disco, R&B.

Izlet is hidden away behind some socialist-era block apartment buildings, and its entrance is not marked by any kind of signage. Its indoor space is very small, and most patrons hang out, smoke, and drink coffee, beer, and liquor in its large courtyard covered in trees and vegetation featuring cooling fans in the summer and wood-burning heaters in the winter. Izlet and Sektor, then, functioned as the primary nodes in the Sektor 909 scene, locales where the sonic/social experience made by Ogi and the local and international DJs connected to the scene made spaces for a belonging that was, above all, about being urban, a person of Skopje. In the next chapter, I go deeper into the everyday experience of that belonging and follow the ways that the scene connects back to—and also spins and remixes—the ideologies of the Detroit techno scene.

CHAPTER FIVE

Making the Sektor 909 Scene

Club Sektor 909 is nearly empty, the lights are dim but flickering, moving, and changing colors as one of the club's co-owners, Mački, works on programming them at a computer screen on the small stage. A few waiters and bartenders are milling around making sure everything is in order for the night, and I am on the stage plugging in cables to my microphone and effects pedals, and setting up my flute and alto flute. It is 12:30 AM on a Saturday night in Skopje, Macedonia, and I am preparing to play a set with DJ Maci, a local Macedonian DJ who spins primarily house music in the Sektor scene. By this point, we have played our brand of "jazz house" together approximately twenty times in various clubs and cafés over the course of two years of knowing one another. We arrange the technical aspects on stage, and he starts the set without fanfare, putting on the first song and adjusting the sound as he goes. We exchange few words—our night started about an hour earlier with conversation over a few drinks with other friends at Izlet, and words seem quite unnecessary, as our communication throughout the set, other than toasting each other with our glasses of whiskey, will be primarily through our musical interaction. As people trickle in from the cafés and bars (they close at 1:00 AM), I notice that Maci's music is not heavy and full of low frequencies and thick textures, but light with sparse instrumentation and rather full of melodic lines. As always, he is feeding off the crowd and their energy level, and from his example, I have learned to do so as well, so I refrain from playing much, if at all. As the night progresses, Maci and I build our set as he selects and overlaps songs from his(/our) repertoire and I improvise with my playing and the effects I'm adding to my sound. We follow and lead the energy of the crowd, increasing the intensity of the bass, the volume, and the degree

of timbral experimentation. I allow Maci's repertoire and manipulation of my sound (volume, adding effects that emphasize or eliminate frequencies, change the timbre, or add reverb or delay) from his mixing board to influence and inspire my improvisation. He listens to my improvisation, allowing it to play a role in his repertoire choices and in his shaping of the dynamics, tonal spectrum, and timbre of each musical moment.

In this chapter I explore the ethnographic particularities of my participation in the Sektor 909 scene, teasing out acoustemological and sociovirtuosic practices of the scene that play roles in making space at various sites for Sektor's urban alternative belonging. First, I explore my collaboration with DJ Maci and the co-production of acoustemology in which it plays a role. Next, I describe what a typical evening in the Sektor scene involves. I then loop back, mixing and remixing the ideologies of Detroit techno with those of the Skopje Sektor scene, before closing with an example of how actors of the scene worked together with political party elites towards their own ends in producing a collaboration between Derrick May and the Macedonian Philharmonic.

Deep Collaboration with DJ Maci

Maci has long had a penchant for a sub-genre of house known as "jazz house" that is, as per its name, peppered with jazz sensibilities (e.g., saxophone or trumpet solos using bebop- and post-bop-inflected phrases, or extended harmonies played by Rhodes and other electronic keyboards). Jazz guitarist Georgi Šareski had become friends with Maci and the inner circle of the Sektor 909 scene a few years before my stay in Macedonia during the summer of 2011. I met Maci through Georgi that summer when they invited me to play a set with them, drummer Goce

Stevkovski, and Cuban percussionist Oscar Salas, who had recently relocated to Skopje from New York. Maci and I played together a few more times that summer as a duo, and then increasingly through the summer of 2012 and throughout my stay in 2013 and 2014. Maci was arguably my most frequent musical collaborator in Macedonia, and we spent countless hours performing at café-bars and clubs. Beyond that, we spent time together socializing with Maci's larger group of friends (whom I got to know as well) and his wife and son, enjoying long sessions of eating, drinking, and hanging out at the same cafés and clubs where we performed as well as at other locales.

Every other musically collaborative relationship I had in Macedonia can be viewed as a variation on my relationship with Maci, though differing degrees and types of negotiations (musical, social, economic) occurred in each case, but I will spend more time on this collaboration than on others in the chapters that follow. As I explore my collaborations as a trained jazz musician with a house DJ, I veer from the musical and social negotiations of the jazz traditions well-described by scholars such as Ingrid Monson (1996), Paul Berliner (1994), and Travis Jackson (2012), and focus on a related, though different, improvisatory context of musical collaboration. Just as in jazz, our musical practices were interactive, yet in this case a DJ cannot instantaneously respond to a soloist in quite the same way as would a member of a jazz rhythm section. Maci, as a house DJ, brought a body of musical knowledge to the collaboration that was quite distinct from mine as a jazz musician. He was highly (and perhaps primarily) engaged with responding to the crowd, following and leading its energy with his sonic choices. The DJ-soloist participant framework is related, though quite different, from the jazz rhythm section as a participant framework that Monson describes. This collaborative relationship, then, is

acoustemologically distinct from the jazz rhythm section in its content, in its intermusicality, and in the social space that it produces.

In the case of my collaboration with DJ Maci and the Sektor scene in Skopje, our primary and foundational musical texts were Chicago house and Detroit techno, as Maci (like most of the DJs involved in the Sektor scene) tended to valorize techno and house from the 1980s and early 1990s, and the producers and DJs who continued the legacy of that sound. Maci has been involved in electronic music since the mid-1990s, and has been performing as a DJ since 2000—he has a deep and intimate knowledge of many of the various types of electronic music. The musical background that I brought to our collaboration is one playing the saxophone and woodwinds primarily in jazz and some pop music settings over the last 20 years. Maci had always had an affinity for jazz, which provided the impetus for our collaboration when we met during the summer of 2011. In this case, any concept of bi-musicality or the master-student dynamic seems to break down rather quickly—Maci and I were both deeply familiar with our “own” musical traditions, and we collaborated in the context of *his* musical practice, the performance context of the EDM tradition: clubs, cafés, and parties. Our collaboration came from a mutual desire to draw on the musical tradition of the other. Maci’s desire for a live “jazz house” sound could be realized through my jazz-inflected playing; my desire to participate in and learn about electronic music could be realized through his selection of repertoire and the way he spontaneously and improvisationally shaped his set list.

At another level, Maci and I developed an informal partnership that eventually became a known brand in Macedonia during my stay there. When I was preparing to come to Skopje in 2013 for my longer fieldwork period, I decided that one way to deal with the challenge of participating in multiple scenes (at the time an uncommon practice) would be to adopt a stage

name for when I played with Maci in the electronic music scene, as is common among some DJs in electronic music around the world and in Macedonia (some examples in Macedonia include DJ Flooder, Wish.Ko, and Fecky Farris). Before one of our first times playing together after my arrival in 2013, I asked Maci how he felt about putting “D.Wil” as my name on the advertisements for our performance. His reluctant response of “if you want” gave me pause. Did he not think the name was cool? Did it mean something I didn’t intend? He ended up putting it on the advertising for that first show, but after several brief discussions of the issue, I still didn’t understand why he wasn’t excited about it, and he didn’t seem to understand why I had chosen to opt for a stage name. Soon after that I ran into Šareski, and when I asked him about the issue, he explained it to me plainly since I was clearly too dense to understand: “Dave, if you go by D.Wil, people will think that you are some local guy trying to be cool. People here already know you as Dave Wilson—that name is actually way cooler than D.Wil.” Being perceived as “cool” (Šareski explained this to me in English) was clearly of great importance; being perceived as “trying to be cool” would not fit the bill.

The mutual benefits of my friendship and collaboration with Maci then began to become much clearer to me, and I never used the stage name again. Previous to this incident, I did not realize the extent to which my Americanness really mattered to Maci because of the symbolic capital it contributed to our collaboration in the context of broader urban Skopje nightlife. The handle “Dave Wilson” made my Americanness extremely clear, whereas going by “D.Wil” would have obscured it. My decision to enter into an ongoing collaboration with Maci (and not some other DJ) was in part an act of willingly partnering with him, taking the position of an

“American musician,” which may have helped him/us book gigs more frequently.^{124,125} On the other hand, our collaboration provided me with constant access to several significant nodes in the Sektor scene, as well as to social circles of DJs and club and café owners that I would have otherwise not have had. Our commitment to one another was implicit and required trust, trust that I wouldn’t start playing with other DJs at his expense, trust that we would be honest and transparent about agreements with club owners, and trust that we would always bring our best as appropriate to whatever musical situation we found ourselves in. That trust was not only built through repeated musical performances. We would hang out in the afternoon sometimes three times a week or more, treating one another (or a whole group of friends) to drinks and food after a few hours of hanging out. Because acquiring vinyl records was rather expensive if not still impossible in Macedonia, whenever I was in a location like Chicago or Berlin between trips to Macedonia, I would go to Gramophone Records (in Chicago) or Hardwax (in Berlin) and purchase a few records Maci wanted and bring them back to Skopje. (Once I bought some

¹²⁴ I also represented some symbolic capital for Maci and the others in the scene by virtue of the fact that I was born and raised near Chicago (the birthplace of house music), even though I was not involved in the scene when I lived there as a teenager in the 1990s.

¹²⁵ My initial reluctance to go under my own name parallels another hesitation I had when beginning my extended stay in Macedonia in the fall of 2013. There were a few American ex pats who lived in Macedonia that I had known as friends during my work in non-profit from 2002 to 2004. At first, I perhaps too strongly communicated to some of that I was there to conduct musical ethnography among musicians, and that my priority was not going to be socializing with Americans in whatever free time I might have. I did this not only to try to manage any expectations they might have had for our friendships, but also to make sure I was prioritizing my time appropriately since I knew my time was relatively limited. In the course of time, however, I did begin to develop those friendships and forge new ones with some other American ex pats. When I started sharing with Maci and other collaborators and friends about these newer friendships with other Americans, they encouraged me to invite them to performances at certain cafés and clubs. For them, it presumably meant even more symbolic capital for a given event to have Americans in the crowd. A few times, some Macedonians communicated to me that it would be strange if I did not hang out with other Americans, drawing comparisons with Macedonian diasporic communities that they knew of in Australia, Canada, and the United States.

records for Ogi as well; I was always paid back immediately for the records I had purchased). In November of 2013, I bought a Butterball turkey from a contact at the US Embassy and, together with Maci and his wife Irina, prepared a Thanksgiving dinner for a group of 20 of our friends, mostly people from the electronic music scene. A few months later, Maci roasted a small pig at a friend's place in a village outside Skopje. He brought it back freshly cooked and we enjoyed a similar-sized feast with a similar group of friends.



Figure 19. The pig Maci roasted, with his turntables in the back of his car

Such was the nature of our friendship and the ways that we built trust and intimacy. This influenced our musicality significantly, as our times making music together were undergirded by a foundation of mutual respect, honor, and admiration. In making music together, Maci naturally took the lead as the DJ, selecting each track that he would spin in a way that would provide a natural transition from the previous one and move the set forward. I adapted to this format, and

learned the moments where my improvisational playing complemented certain tracks that we performed. Based on the placement of a song during a set, the engagement of the audience in the music (perceived in their movement, in their vocal response to the music through shouting and whistling, or their lack of physical or vocal response), and the time of night, I could weigh whether to play either rhythmically simple melodies, long notes, or complex melodies with fast-moving and rapidly changing rhythmic patterns, experiment more with my delay pedal or pitch adjusting/harmonizing pedal, or some combination of those and other strategies.

Maci also adapted to the practice of spinning along with a live musician improvising on a melodic instrument. If he wanted me to open up and solo more, he would never tell me to do so explicitly—we had built too much mutual respect and honor. Rather, he would play a track like “Yo House” by Deep88 and Melchior Sultana (2013) that had sections full of open space and repetitive groove and were more conducive to adding another melodic line on top of the existing song or remix. Other times he would play one of our “go-to” tracks—maybe “Sharevari”¹²⁶ by Mike Grant presents Cool Peepl (2004), “Capricorn (Essential I Mix)” by 60 Hertz Projector (2011), or “Movin’ On (Back to My Roots)” by Scott Grooves (2014)—that he knew I knew well, enjoyed playing over, and had the potential to provide what he might consider a certain type of “energy” for the room that maybe even could transform it into a space for belonging. Sometimes he would play a track that already had a saxophone line or even a solo. When Maci first played this type of track, I found myself offended, asking myself “why are we playing together if he’s just going to play a track with a saxophone already on it?” In the course of time, however, I began to align with Maci’s vision for our performances, wherein the highest priority

¹²⁶ This is a house or jazz house version of the Detroit techno classic “Sharevari” by A Number of Names (1981), which is considered by some to be the first ever recorded techno track. “Sharevari” refers to the name of one of the first “party clubs” in Detroit, Charivari, which began acquiring a following in 1980 (see Sicko 2010:16-18).

is creating an atmosphere that is enjoyable, inspiring, and positive for the audience. The choice of songs, and their inherent tempos, intensity levels, and timbres had the most influence in creating that atmosphere; if Maci decided that a certain song was the necessary next step in developing the atmosphere of the party, and that song happened to have a saxophone, it was not meant to be a personal offense to me, but rather an invitation for me to join him in his process of crafting the atmosphere of the party. Maybe that meant picking up a flute and providing a different timbre, maybe that meant playing the saxophone but with an ethereal timbral effect with long sustained tones that do not obscure the other saxophone already playing on the track, or maybe that meant taking a break for a drink or for saying hi to someone I knew in the club or café.

In these musical negotiations, Maci and I were also negotiating the social moment, which involved providing the audience with the acoustemological experience they were seeking at the club or café—a social environment that provided them with positive energy, helped them connect to others, and constituted a space for belonging where the concerns of the outside world were momentarily absent. Electronic music generally speaking traditionally favors an ideology of the collective, rather than one of the individual, and Maci and I took on the role of fostering positivity among an audience as we performed, rather than one of exalting ourselves as the artists on the bill. Thus, unlike jazz, the focus is not the improvised solo, after which the audience might typically applaud; rather, it is the moment-by-moment experience where our sonic cultural expression provides space for emotion, enjoyment, and abandon. Locales like Sektor and Izlet where Maci (and I) were relationally more connected as friends to the owners were generally considered less “mainstream” and more in tune with general ideologies of electronic music such as high value for positivity (including an overarching belief that music can bring peace and

brotherhood to the world). In these cases, we were able continue largely uninhibited by ownership, as we understood the audience specific to each locale and were trusted by the owners to sonically enhance and enrich the space for the night for those patrons.

In an interview with Maci in 2014, he shed light on the tension between the acoustemologies produced by the DJs at Sektor, the role of the owners (namely, Ogi), and questions of keeping the club in business. He highlighted a shift in Ogi's perspective that occurred when Ogi himself began spinning as a DJ from time to time.

MS: Ogi is now spinning that music [music that is a bit faster, more associated with a techno sound and more distant from a slower, more melodic house sound] . . . I'll give you a simple example. When we redid Sektor, I was still spinning music that was very fast, I was far from what I'm doing now, from the sound that I'm spinning and that I love now, that you and I working together on. So when I started spinning music, Ogi would say to me once in those early days, "bro (*brat*), could you go a bit more house, a bit of vocals, look what the crowd's like, this – that. This wasn't so far back, maybe three or four years ago, that's not too long ago, you know? So we'd go a bit more hard core (*hard kor*), but then Ogi "You know, people like a bit of vocals (*vokalče*), this and that." And now things have changed, *he's* the one spinning. This is the difference between a DJ and an owner, actually it's about livelihood (*egzistencija*), that's a very important moment, and maybe the decisive one for some things—how he looked on things then and how he does now, you know? Now he's the one spinning music—music that's "not for everyone," let's say. The music is great, don't get me wrong, but he's not thinking the same way as three years ago. [. . .] I'll say it again, techno is not music that

everyone can understand, everyone is looking for something more, I'll say softer, more flexible. Techno is loved by people that either love techno a lot, listen to that type of music, who know what they're listening to, or that are in the zone, or that are high, and those are a very small number. The others run away, so automatically...

DW: But then... what's Ogi playing now? Techno?

MS: Techno, yes. He only plays techno. And in that sense he's now in conflict with himself.

DW: What do you mean?

MS: His passion and his business, and those two things are...

DW: I don't care about the audience, I'll play what I like. That's what you mean?

MS: Yes, but on the other hand he can see that something's happening, that he's playing, he's satisfied, but it's hard for the club to make a profit, that's what I mean. Here you have a conflict of interests, you think, is this ok? Should I listen to my heart, my mind, do what I want? or should I make money? I have partners with me, what should I do now? is this music OK or isn't it? I know the music is good, but there's no money, you understand?

The acoustemologies co-produced by DJs, owners, and the crowd at Sektor were decidedly not characterized by sounds that were marked as commercial, turbofolk, or following some other trend in Macedonia's nightlife. But there still existed quite a range of significations and meanings within the boundaries of electronic music. Sound that was more associated with house would attract a bigger crowd because of its sensibilities that focused on female vocal lines, timbres that were less aggressive, tempos that were slower, and low frequencies that were less

penetrating—Maci refers to this as having more appeal because it is “softer” and “more flexible.” Techno, on the other hand, with its faster tempos, its more present bass frequencies, and its sounds indexing an industrial world driven by computers and machines with grittier textures to match, lined up with Ogi’s personal aesthetic preferences, and music that had meaning to him because of his early experiences with Detroit techno and its first practitioners.

As Ogi and others negotiated their own roles in the co-production of acoustemology, they established unarticulated sonic boundaries for what would make Sektor a space for urban belonging that remained alternative and outside of party networks, but still followed an economically sustainable model in order to stay in business. Whether in Sektor’s winter location, summer location, or elsewhere, this space was sonically made in brief moments in time—from midnight to four in the morning or so on weekends. At those times and at those places, people knew, acoustemologically, that they were entering a space for belonging that was made by the music of electronic music DJs from Macedonia and abroad that were not following commercial trends in seeking mass profits, but rather participating in a scene that pulsed to the beat of grooves that were both musical and social.



Figure 20. Maci spinning at Sektor 909 (winter location)



Figure 21. Maci and I at Izlet



Figure 22. Izlet's courtyard

A Typical Day (& Night) in the Sektor Scene

Those in the inner circle of the Sektor scene generally followed a certain social pattern—a social groove—during the period of my fieldwork in Macedonia. People would work in the morning, and, depending on when they finished up, or whether they worked at all that day, would begin congregating at Izlet around 1:00PM. Ogi, his closer friends, and any number of the DJs in the scene typically occupied the table just to the right of the door at the entrance to the covered outdoor area. It was almost always all men, men whose friendship was intertwined with some business venture—obviously the DJs are connected through working at Izlet and Sektor, but the group also included alcohol distributors, the owner of an architectural design firm, Ogi’s lawyer, past partners in Ogi’s restaurant business, and others. Their conversations covered topics such sports, travel, food, drink, sometimes sex—rarely politics—and brief moments of business discussion. Social capital carries high importance and discussions of business or money were brief, casual, and treated as if they were peripheral to the rest of the conversation. There was a related inner circle of women that would occasionally mix in but they were rarely business associates of the men. They were, for the most part, single middle-class women aged 25 to 35 whose social life centered on this group of friends and participating in the clubbing nightlife. These women were *not* what is known as *Skopski šmizli*. *Šmizla* is a usually derogatory term for a woman who is materialistic, spoiled, flirtatious, a gossip, and is overly concerned with her image and with following trends in fashion. Related to the term *sponzoruša* (loosely translated as gold-digger, or literally a woman whose livelihood is from a *sponzor* or sponsor), *šmizla* is associated with wealth (or the appearance of wealth), and likely connectedness with some element of the state’s nepotistic network. The women of the Sektor inner circle, in contrast, did not represent themselves as *šmizli*, as they were not constantly dressed up, did not always wear

high heels, and did not usually wear heavy cosmetics. Instead, they dressed more casually, wore their hair down or pulled back in ponytails, and carried on their socialization alongside the men without flirtation and sexuality taking center stage in their interactions with the men.¹²⁷

Izlet would usually be full of younger people—from approximately 16 to 25—but around 3:00 or 4:00PM, everyone would go home for *ruček*, the main meal of the day (a meal roughly equivalent to 'dinner' in its size and significance). After a post-ruček nap and some family time, people would gather again at the café around 10:00PM or 11:00PM until closing at 1:00AM when they would proceed to the club (in this case, Sektor, a five-minute walk from Izlet). The established pattern of going out—in this case meeting at Izlet for a few drinks, and then proceeding to Sektor—is described in Macedonian by the word *šema*, literally meaning “schema” or “pattern” and most often referred to as the *skopska šema*, the Skopje šema. If some café or club is *vo šema* (or *u šema*, in the Skopje dialect), it is “in šema,” or, “the thing everyone is doing,” “in,” or “in style.” Of course any šema could change, and the inner circle, the related circle of women, and the broader Sektor scene and its scenesters would from time to time frequent certain other cafés—but Izlet was always a home base of sorts, if only because of Ogi’s significant social capital.

Sektor 909’s winter location accommodates only about 250 to 300 people. After entering and taking about four steps down a narrow hallway to the right, you pass the outdoor smoking area before entering the club space and descending about fifteen stairs to a landing. Another stairway up leads to a balcony section with a small bar, while five or six steps down from the landing leads to the dance floor and the main bar, under the balcony. The DJ booth is accessed through the landing—and the socialites and inner circle (minus Ogi and partner Mački) usually

¹²⁷ Ogi’s wife was one of the women in the inner circle, but other than some casual relationships from time to time, none of the other women had romantic ties with men of the inner circle.

hang out on that landing. Mački is running the lights from the DJ booth, and Ogi can usually be found on the staircase up to the balcony or on the dance floor, engrossed in the music and enjoying himself. Because of its cover prices and musical selection avoiding top-40 commercial hits (in contrast to every other club in Skopje), Sektor attracts what might be considered an urban middle-class audience that is slightly older (mid-20s and 30s) than that the traditional nightclubs (18-25). Most of these other clubs are larger—some with room for up to 2000 guests—and are known for being intertwined with the nepotistic network of the state.

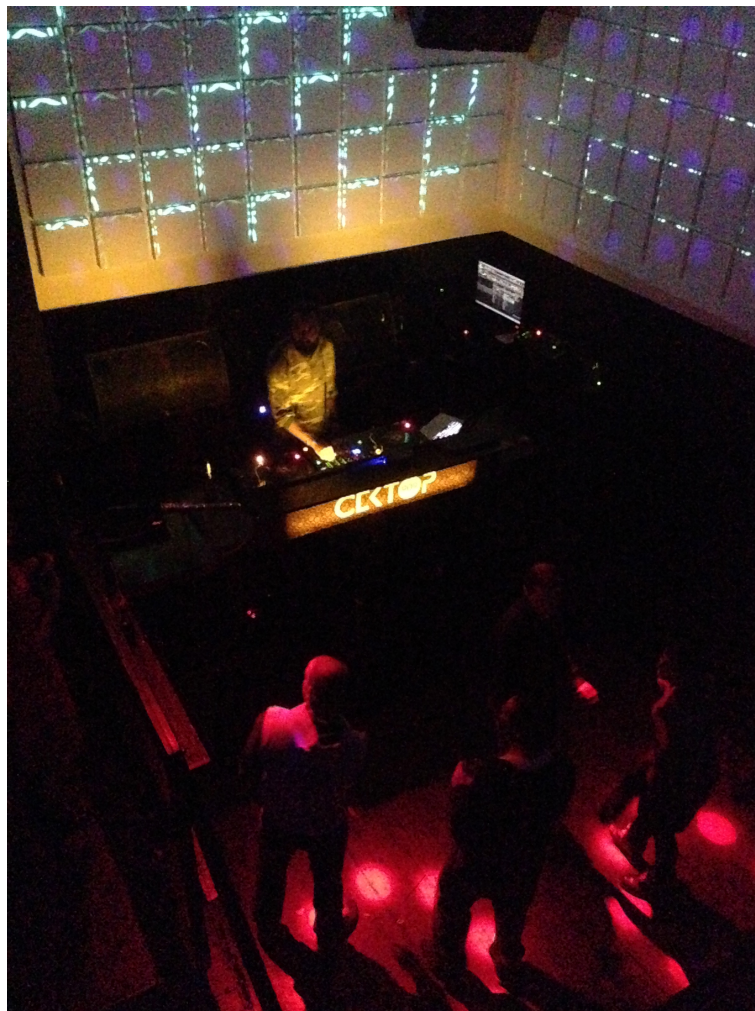


Figure 23. Ogi spinning at Sektor 909

Though Ogi does not take oppositional political stances, he frequently features local DJs who do such as Mirko Popov of PMG Collective, Darko Jordanov, Sonja Ismail, and Ivana Dragšič, the last two women. In my observations, Sektor was the only club in Macedonia to regularly feature female DJs. This not only challenges the male-dominated patriarchal nature of nightlife in Macedonia reflective of the broader society, but also the hegemonic conceptions of gender and technology that permeate electronic music and EDM throughout the world. Not incidentally, female DJs spun at cafés who were known for being more progressive, especially LGBTQ gathering point Damar (see Farrugia 2012 for a study of female DJs in EDM more broadly). Fecky Farris, an ethnic Albanian DJ, has been on the regular rotation at Sektor for many years, and he and ethnic Macedonian DJ Flooder have loyal audiences that include many ethnic Albanians. Mački summarizes the ethnic demographics of Sektor this way:

I've invited DJs from Prishtina. I have very close friends that are Greeks, would you believe that? You know the political problems that we have with the Greeks, and some of my best friends are Greeks. They help me and I help them. I invite them over every year, they invite us there every year. I have the same cooperation with Albanians too. I don't have a problem, I'm not a politician. I'm inviting someone for their music. In Greece I'm friends with a group of people that do the same thing we do. The same type of music, they promote the same artists, they have similar tastes. But you get those everywhere. More or less, they all do the same. You have them in Belgrade. Kosovo made an effort for a while, then they stopped. Otherwise, for a while they were on a very good path, they invited expensive DJs, also the Bulgarians, we, the Greeks more or less, the Serbians, the Croatians, the Slovenians, we have a similar taste. This music is everywhere more

or less. The things popular in Europe are popular here too, and in Greece and Serbia. By popular, I don't mean Michael Jackson, Britney [Spears], I mean DJs, underground DJs—not this everyday music. And this same music is listened to in Greece, in Kosovo, in Macedonia and in Bulgaria too. It's like that—it's a musical connection, don't look at it politically.

More Albanians go to Kapan An [another electronic music locale in the *čaršija* that has its own scene], otherwise there's no separation here between Albanians and Macedonians. It might exist in Tetovo or in some other town, but here we don't have that. So tons of Albanians don't come to Sektor, but a part does, the more liberal-minded [. . .] The Albanians coming to Sektor are, how should I put this, more modern, they look good, they're dressed well . . . you can't recognize them, while in Kapan An you'll notice conservative ones too. You might find some, yes. You see them sweaty, they smell bad, there's that, you can sense it.

Mački makes great efforts to indicate his tolerance and openness to Albanians and Greeks in particular, situating some kind of broader pan-Balkan scene around the particular types of electronic music with which Sektor is involved. The words “modern,” “clean,” and “urban,” are continually deployed to describe this music and participants in the scene everywhere. Thus, conservative, “backwards,” “rural” (*selski*), or “dirty/smelly,” individuals likely remained on the outside of the belonging made in the spaces of Sektor.

Some of these DJs and others who spun at Sektor had followings that include members of the LGBTQ community who are both ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian, a group highly marginalized in Macedonia and by the conservative VMRO-DPMNE government, which

consistently fails to prosecute perpetrators of hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals and associated institutions. These DJs were also integral parts of the scene at Damar, spinning there on a regular basis. One of the Sektor insiders noted that many gay Albanians were coming to Sektor during the period of my fieldwork, and followed it up with a comment: “it doesn’t bother me at all, awesome (*super*), feel free.” Not coincidental is the legacy of house music as birthed in a black, gay scene in Chicago, a legacy well-known to Ogi and the insider local DJs of the Sektor scene (the gay scene behind Detroit techno was less well known). Providing space for ethnic Macedonians and Albanians to socialize in the same space, not to mention those outside of the hegemonic heteronormative patriarchal value system was a significant aspect of what made the belonging at Sektor particularly “alternative.”¹²⁸

As a club outside of the nepotistic party network, Sektor had what seems like a slightly precarious existence. Over the years, the government had raised the tax on clubs, so that only the largest clubs (i.e., those owned by the party-connected) could afford to stay in business and legally stay open until 4:00AM. Not incidentally, these were the same clubs Ogi referred to as allowing desire for profits to dictate their musical taste, instead of being guided by musical ideals as he was. Another strategy enacted by the government was the frequent fining and closing of clubs due to the violation of a law—most commonly enforced by way of an inspector’s visit to a club a few minutes after 4:00AM. If the club was not completely closed by this time, it received a sizable fine and was forced to close for a period of at least two weeks. Sektor was subject to such penalties at least twice in the years of my research—penalties that put pressure financially

¹²⁸ This was in contrast to other clubs that are known for playing mostly commercial hits (from American and European top-40 as well as popular music of Macedonia and sometimes Bulgaria or other former Yugoslav republics). These clubs (among them Midnight, Havana, and Coliseum) played host to the nightlife for a primarily straight, ethnic Macedonian crowd and lay outside of possible socializing options for ethnic Albanians or individuals identifying as LGBTQ.

on Ogi and the team to keep the club in business, but also served as a confirmation that Sektor was decidedly a space where senses of belonging outside of the ethno- and partyocentric nationalist belonging of the dominant state and its network could be experienced.

DJs mixing Detroit and Skopje Techno Ideologies

So far in this chapter and the previous one, I have discussed the histories and practices of the Sektor scene as intertwined with those of the Detroit techno scene. In this section, I explore some of the ideologies of the Detroit techno scene as articulated by scholars, and how those ideologies have been employed and adapted among techno DJs in the scene surrounding Sektor. As Dalphond describes it,

A primary tenet in Detroit's music culture is a strong belief in the power and universality of music. According to this pervasive philosophy, music can communicate an eternal embrace to anyone, regardless of one's identity. This principle represented the ideology of underground dance music in the 1970s, and it characterizes contemporary Detroit as well. This is not to say that an idealized universal acceptance is always generated in Detroit, but the ideology is pervasive and meaningful. (Dalphond 2015:343)

When I first encountered Dalphond's discussions of her ethnography of electronic music in Detroit, I was initially surprised to find so many close parallels to things I had seen and heard in the Sektor 909 scene, such as the above statement. But when I realized her study was conducted from 2008 to 2010 (and not in the 1980s or 1990s), it became clear that by the time I joined up with the Sektor 909 scene, they had embraced not only much of the music, but also many of the ideologies of Detroit that had been making their way to Macedonia through the close, personal

contact that Ogi and others had with Derrick May, Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson, and the later generations of electronic music DJs that they hosted at Sektor since 2009. These techno ideologies had connected with the burgeoning Sektor scene, particularly with regard to concepts of dystopia and its relationship to race.

Discourses on Detroit techno suggest at least three stances on whether it invokes a dystopic reality or a utopic vision, concepts that are, in all cases, tied to race. Journalist Dan Sicko asserts:

. . . techno’s underlying philosophy has less to do with futurism, as is commonly believed, than with the power of the individual and personal visions of Utopia. Even the most hardcore and militant-sounding techno groups, like Detroit’s Underground Resistance, have lofty ideals at heart—scenarios where race is no longer an issue, let alone a problem. (Sicko 1999:28)

Richard Pope posits that, while European adaptations of techno turned it into a euphoric utopian experience (especially at the fall of the Berlin wall, referencing Sicko 2010:38), techno is rooted in the dystopian experience of capitalism’s failures in Detroit, a music whose “productive *and critical* spirit evidently revolves around affects of dystopia and thus on a certain *hopelessness*” (Pope 2011:27, emphasis in original). He critiques Sicko’s interpretation, suggesting that “race necessarily becomes less visible in postmodern *dystopian* situations to the extent that in such situations looking past the colour of the other’s skin is less an ideal realized than an elementary requisite for survival” (ibid.:33), adding that “These are affects born of survivalism, of surviving the end of the world, of persisting within a worldless world, *now*” (ibid.).

Tobias van Veen (2013) offers a third view, rooted in techno’s elements of Afrofuturism,

highlighted and developed most prominently by Jeff Mills, one of the original members of Underground Resistance. He suggests that the Afrofuturistic subjectivities adopted by Mills (along with those of Janelle Monáe) offer

an escape hatch from paradigms for Afrodiasporic identity that are all too often restricted to the violence and capitalist bling of ghetto realism, confined to post-slavery resonances of subalternity, or entrapped within the lingering effects of the Civil Rights era, in which African American subjects had to struggle, over the course of a long century since the Emancipation Proclamation, for the right to be considered Enlightenment subjects (van Veen 2013:10).

His broader point is that Mills' Afrofuturistic transformation of himself into an intergalactic time traveller in his techno music is an example of the unhinging of the allegory of Afrofuturism, where "performance of identity shifts into a *becoming*: an exodus from raciology [referencing Gilroy 2004] in which the markers of blackness are no longer determinant nor referential" (ibid.:24).¹²⁹ Van Veen suggests that this unhinging means that, beyond mapping its meaning onto existing conditions of racism, Afrofuturism can assist in thinking through "new forms of the other" (ibid.:15).

The Sektor scene engages each of these three views in particular ways. In one sense, Sicko's techno visions of utopia "where race is no longer an issue" provide an element of how the belonging of Sektor 909 as urban and open to participation of ethnic minorities, primarily Albanians, is alternative. It also manifests itself in Ogi and the other central actors in the scene

¹²⁹ Raciology, a term coined by Paul Gilroy, is the preservation of destructive, or denigrating myths and ideas about race and racial difference (see also Gilroy 2000). Gilroy is concerned with a complete abandonment of race and raciology, which van Veen ascribes to Detroit techno-related Afrofuturism. I am not mapping this onto the Sektor scene, but rather suggesting that elements of this "exodus from raciology" enter into the Sektor scene as its participants shift the focus of their belonging away from ethnicity.

interacting with African American DJs and African American culture. They do not seem to exoticize African American culture in the same ways that occur in broader Macedonian society, even though they may benefit from that exoticization. They seem to identify African American musical expression with a sense of struggle, and in a sense they broadly apply that to the struggles of their own world—again, seeing Detroit in Skopje, Skopje in Detroit. The interior of Izlet—where patrons walk through from the entrance and use the restroom but rarely sit due to the indoor smoking ban—features framed images of Ella Fitzgerald, John Coltrane, Louis Armstrong, and Miles Davis, among other jazz greats, as well as a large photograph featuring members of the Black Panthers “Panthers on Parade – Oakland” by Stephen Shames. As part of the dominant population, Ogi would never make a parallel between his own position in society and that of a subjugated minority such as Albanians or Roms in Macedonia—who would arguably have more reason to identify with oppression of racial minorities in America. As the belonging at Sektor is not primarily defined along ethnic lines, its participants can perhaps experience a momentary glimpse of a utopia—albeit one that is not challenging the powerful. When talking about Fecky Farris, the Albanian DJ I mentioned above, part-owner Mački expressed to me that ethnicity did not divide them because Fecky is *gradski*, or “urban,” like us. They both belong in the space of Sektor 909 that they make through the music that spins off their turntables, itself joining them to one another, the scene, and those who participate in electronic music everywhere.

In a second sense aligning with Pope, this is certainly not an “ideal realized,” as the inner social circle of the scene in many ways follows heteronormative ethnic Macedonian patriarchal patterns of inclusion and interaction, with some exceptions. Indeed, the Sektor scene and its techno sensibilities affirm Pope’s concepts of techno as having a critical spirit and dealing with

the hopelessness of everyday existence, persisting as a means of survival in a “worldless world.”

In the place of the dystopian experience of capitalism’s failures in Detroit, Sektor scene participants face the dystopia of the neoliberal partyocracy of their own worldless world, the failures of that system embodied in the imposing monuments of Skopje 2014 that have, in a sense, physically replaced the world they knew previously. In bridging the two cities, Ogi connects his experience as a Skopje native directly with his perception of Detroit.¹³⁰ He says:

the Detroit sound has always been somehow, I don’t know, inspired by industry, which reminds me of Skopje with Železara [the steel factory], let’s say, when it used to work, you know, with other situations where industry been happening here around us. Even Derrick always used to say, before the Skopje 2014 project, “Skopje really reminds me of Detroit.”

In the same interview, he commented on how Detroit at the time was deteriorating, with many people leaving the city—but that the people that he associates with in the techno world were staying. In this case, the Sektor scene was viewed by Ogi and scene participants as a last vestige of what they might consider “true nightlife” in Skopje in the context of the city whose dystopic elements seemed to become more imposing every day—a nightlife that was, as Straw would have it, untainted by the collective obligation imposed by the state. And yet they, like Derrick May and the techno DJs of Detroit (and unlike many Macedonians who have moved abroad to seek out new lives) have chosen to stay in their city, surviving.

In a third sense their continuing presence, and the belonging that they make as a scene, connects to van Veen’s grounding of techno in the Afrofuturism of Jeff Mills of Underground

¹³⁰ In addition to his familiarity with mediated depictions of Detroit from visiting DJs and in documentaries and films, Ogi also developed first-hand perceptions of the city when he visited Derrick May there, along with DJ Maci and jazz musician Georgi Šareski in 2012 on a pilgrimage of sorts

Resistance. Throughout the year of my fieldwork, the large interior wall of Sektor behind the stairways was adorned with an image of the moon about three meters in diameter. It is a nod to Sektor's position as a techno club aligned with the Afrofuturistic elements of techno ideologies. It unquestionably places the space of Sektor in outer space, even as the room pulsates with the repetitive electronic sounds of techno. Ogi's preferred spot for experiencing the club was in front of it, standing, moving, and grooving on the second or third step. His personal, affective experience in Sektor is a template for that which he desires for others as they engage with the space—an experience of a futurism that is not Afro- but Balkan- where the sins of nationalism have disappeared and all of the contradictions of life can be experienced without dissonance or discord.

Ogi weighed in on the futuristic elements of techno: “For me techno is an ocean of music. Just like for jazz, you can't say there's one type of jazz, right? It's a very wide . . .” I asked him in what sense, he explained:

. . . In the sense of possibilities. In the sense of improvisation, in the sense of different open possibilities. Of experimenting with music. They, people like Jeff Mills, have achieved something that left a message of some sort. They will leave a permanent mark. That's where the future is, you know. I see the future. We're in the twenty-first century, you know, so this is the “most future” (*najfjučr*) music for me, there isn't anything “more future” (*pojfučr*).

His use of the English transliterated *fjučr* rather than the Macedonian *idnina* (n.) or *idno* (adj.) hints that he is talking about a conceptual “future” as well as an actual future—but grounded in an African American musical practice such as jazz. And I would argue, following van Veen, that the Afrofuturism that accompanies techno—unhinged from its allegorical referents—offers an

escape hatch from paradigms for Macedonian, postsocialist, and/or post-Yugoslav identity evoked in public discourse, opening possibilities for real and perceived agency of which Greenberg's and Petrović's post-Yugoslav subjects cannot conceive. These paradigms are all too often restricted to the current struggles for international recognition, confined to post-Ottoman resonances of the burden of oppression under the Turks, and entrapped within a society where ethnic divisions are increasing due to neoliberal political policies, to the frustration of those who find themselves on either side of the divide.

This becoming, this loosening from the constructs of identity and “the post-Yugoslav struggle,” comes to light at some key moments—ones where the scene demonstrates its slippery qualities of effervescence and elasticity, even while existing as a concrete space for belonging. On certain nights, especially in the summertime, the party at Sektor would continue until well past dawn (the midsummer sunrise in Skopje is around 5:00AM). If there was no fear of police inspection shutting down the club at 4:00AM, the club would stay open and the encroaching light of dawn would inspire partiers to keep pushing further into the morning hours with the DJ spurring them on and both feeding and feeding on their engagement with the music through dancing, moving, shouting, and whistling. June 27, 2014 was one of those occasions and featured Osunlade, an African American DJ and producer known for house music but also as the founder of Yoruba Records. His supporting DJ, signed to his Yoruba Records label, was Mike Steva, a young Australian whose grandparents had immigrated to Melbourne from Bitola, Macedonia. Local house DJ Aleksandar Miškoski spun to open up the night, followed by Steva and Osunlade.

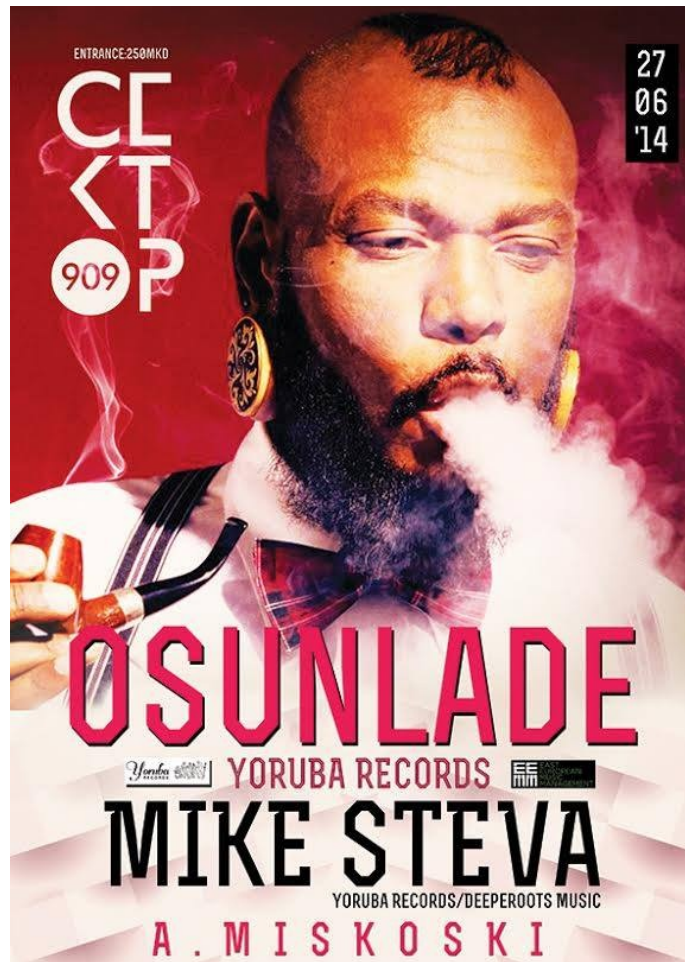


Figure 24. Bill advertising for Osunlade, Mike Steva, and Aleksandar Miškoski at Sektor 909

As the night went on and the sun came up, Steva had been taking over DJing duties and the crowd called Osunlade back to the stage to spin some more as an encore. He indulged the crowd and spun for a little while longer, closing out the set with his well-known 2009 “Osunlade Yoruba Soul Remix” of “Dentro mi Alma” (Inside my Soul) by Jazztronik. The song has a strong house-based four-on-the-floor beat, highly syncopated-but-soaring lyrics in Spanish led by a female vocal, sustained seventh chords on a mellow-timbre electronic Rhodes keyboard, and various electronic sounds adding to the polyrhythm across the sonic spectrum. It energized the crowd as they shouted and raised their hands in the air as they danced and swayed back and

forth, but also brought a gradual decrescendo to the moment with its calming effect and gradually thinning texture.

The next morning, as typical after nights like this, Facebook was abuzz with comments about the euphoria of the night, the way the energy carried over into the next day, and the way it reminded people of the scene of the early 1990s. A Serbian woman in Belgrade connected to the Sektor scene wrote a Facebook comment communicating how she could feel the energy from Skopje all the way in Belgrade. “Now that’s how you finish a night of partying,” wrote Mački as a caption to a video he posted of “Dentro mi Alma,” where Osunlade and the 200 people remaining on the dance floor were drenched in sunlight, moving their bodies together at 126 beats per minute, knowing acoustemologically that they were in a space they belonged, knowing that that same space would soon evaporate as the sun rose further. As the music faded, a great cheer rose from the crowd, and many embraces and high-fives were shared among DJs, those running the club, and the scenesters who had made it all the way to the end. Surely only they had had such an experience in Macedonia on this night, an experience that sonically made a space, a break, where they could belong in the present moment, knowing that it would not endure anywhere but in their memory of the past, but hoping that it would give them energy and vision to move into the future, even if that future still meant returning to the dystopic world they had left as they moved out of the space of Sektor 909 and began the next day.

Making Space in Ohrid: Derrick May and the Macedonian Philharmonic

I close my discussion of the Sektor scene with an example from the summer of 2014 when Ogi and the Sektor scene directly engaged with the powerful network of the party/state as they sociovirtuosically made space for their own alternative belonging. The project was a

collaboration between Derrick May and the Macedonian Philharmonic for a performance on August 2, Macedonia's largest national summer holiday celebrating the 1903 Ilinden Uprising (see Chapter 1). In partnership with Džijan Emin, a Philharmonic musician and conductor, Ogi was able to acquire funds from the Ministry of Culture (in combination with his own personal investment) and produce the enormously expensive concert at the Roman-era Antique Theater (an open-air amphitheater) in Ohrid, Macedonia's summer tourist destination. Džijan is known as a master musician in many circles in Macedonia, active not only in classical music but also an accomplished jazz pianist, having performed especially with jazz guitarist Georgi Šareski (whom he chose to be his *kum*, a role that combines that of best man and godfather and involves a lifelong family commitment). He became connected to the Sektor scene through Šareski, and had performed with DJ Maci at Sektor numerous times since around 2010. In June, a press conference announcing the event took place at Izlet, and photographs from the press conference featuring Ogi, Derrick, Džijan, the Minister of Culture, and the Director of the Philharmonic were shared across many social media platforms. This type of close association with individuals deeply embedded in and benefitting from the nepotistic network of power, and, in the case of the Minister of Culture, directly promoting the antiquization projects related to Skopje 2014, would be absolutely unthinkable for an individual or group who situates themselves as oppositional. Ogi and his sociovirtuosic team, however, realized that Džijan had significant social capital (and trust) in the field of classical music, and that he also had much to gain if the concert was successful. Through Džijan, then, they were able to connect with the state-run Philharmonic and also gather the resources they needed from the Ministry of Culture to adequately produce and market the concert without incurring a large financial loss.



Figure 25. Press conference promoting *Musica Universalis* at Izlet. (from left) Macedonian Philharmonic director Maja Čanakjevikj, a translator, Derrick May, Minister of Culture Elizabeta Kančeska-Milevska, and Ogi Uzunovski

The theme of the concert was “*Musica Universalis*” with the tagline “*idninata e vo kulturata, kulturata e idninata*” (the future is in the culture, culture is the future), a masterful turn of phrase whose meaning could be easily be bent to suit any of the involved players in quite contrasting ways. For Ogi, Derrick, and the Sektor scene, this tagline connected directly to the Detroit techno ideologies of futurism, and that *this* music is universal and able to connect to anyone, anywhere, including presumably middle- and upper-class audiences of European classical music, who assume the same about that form of musical expression. For the Ministry of Culture, the “culture is in the future” tagline supported their frequently emphasized public narrative about the distinctiveness of Macedonian culture. It also implied the relevance of this distinct Macedonian culture into the future—something ostensibly desired by all Macedonians, especially when situated alongside a European form of cultural expression (the symphony orchestra) being brought into dialogue with an electronic music DJ, even if he was not well known to the general public. The Sektor scene’s divergence from the ideologies and the type of

belonging set forth by the government did not preclude those at the center of the scene from seeking state patronage—they used its resources towards their own ends, and they demonstrate their sociovirtuosity as they simultaneously hold the powerful state in contempt and draw on its resources.

One of those ends occurred in the act of transporting the musically and socially constructed space of Sektor 909 to the space of the historically and politically constructed Ancient Theater, creating a confluence of spatial and sonic meanings that simultaneously validated alternatives to state ideologies and drew on the resources of the powerful that maintain those ideologies. The sonic re-making of the space of the Sektor scene began in the afternoon before the show at the café at Saraište, an Ohrid beach in the old city just a short walk from the Ancient Theater (see Figure 26). Saraište was not a place where DJs usually spun, much less in the daytime, but DJ Maci had made an arrangement with Jon, the Vlah owner of the café for him and me to perform together for the afternoon (Nikola Rizov spun as well). Nearly every DJ in the Sektor scene was present, along with the men and women of the inner circle and other scenesters who were regular participants in the scene. At one point, Maci decided to play “Dentro mi Alma (Osunlade Yoruba Soul Remix),” which elicited a chorus of elated whistling, shouting, and more intense body movements in the crowd, most of whom were at the Osunlade party and were brought circling back to their embodied memory of the best night of the summer so far, reliving it in anticipation of the concert at the Ancient Theater. One of those scenesters—who had spend a lot of time with Mački, Steva, and myself during Steva’s stay in Macedonia—came up to me with great joy and excitement and said “Dave, it’s like we have brought Izlet all the way here from 200km away!” The significance of the space as socially and acoustemologically made here

is clear, as the Sektor scenesters of Skopje recreated their alternative belonging for just a few hours in the Ohrid place of Saraište, setting up the *šema* for the day.



Figure 26. The Ancient Theater being set up for the Derrick May concert.

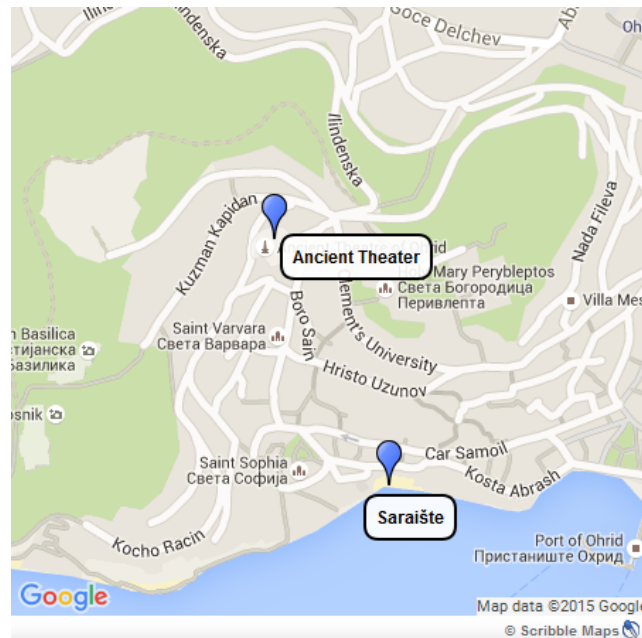


Figure 27. Locations of the Ancient Theater and Saraište

In a similar manner, these scenesters recreated a night at Sektor in the standing room only floor section of the Ancient Theater—adding an orchestral voice to some of the earliest techno tracks in the space of a 2000-year old amphitheater. The amphitheater has an open floor section that is usually filled with chairs for orchestral and other sit down concerts, but for this concert, it was set up as a general admission standing room only “pit,” with no seats and a bar selling beer—this is where the Sektor scene gathered to experience the concert, forming a crowd of about 500. Above a twenty-foot wall surrounding the open floor section, the twelve rows of the semi-circular amphitheater were filled to their 2000-seat capacity with slightly higher-paying audience members. I wrestled with whether to join the crowd on the floor, but decided to sit in the third row of the amphitheater so that I could take some photos and videos, and get a broader view of the whole event. I spoke with a retired couple sitting next to me, asking them whether they knew Derrick May. They told me of course they didn’t, but that whenever a big international performance came to Macedonia, they always made sure to attend. While the crowd on the floor was filled with familiar faces and constituted the demographic of a night at Sektor, the seated audience—who had paid more for tickets—was quite diverse by age, and included young people who might have had more peripheral interest in electronic music, but did not want to miss an event that was of a scope and type rarely seen in Macedonia.

Derrick took his place next to Džijan’s conductor platform in a DJ booth with an LCD display on the front. Of course, he would not be DJing—spinning and mixing records per se—as the orchestra parts were scored and impossible to sync up with an improvising DJ. Instead, he had a keyboard set to trigger various samples that he played improvisationally throughout the concert. Derrick leaned in, grooving to the music as he would if he were DJing; Džijan’s energetic, dance-like movements were somewhere between those of a conductor and those of the

people on the floor. From time to time he would turn around, face the crowd with an enormous smile, and invite them to give their own support to the moment through their voices and moving their bodies along with him. As I sat watching the Sektor crowd on the floor respond enthusiastically to Derrick's hits (and two original compositions by Džijan), I found myself wanting to do the same, having experienced this music in this scene so many times before. But I couldn't shout or whistle too much, not without disturbing those around me; I couldn't jump to my feet, not without blocking the view of those behind me. We in the seated section were there participating in this at a greater distance than those on the floor physically, sonically, and socially; we were experiencing a different space, a different sense of belonging. That distance constrained my body, and separated me from those on the floor, who were having a musically intimate moment with Derrick, Džijan, the orchestra, and perhaps most importantly, each other.



Figure 28. Derrick May and the Macedonian Philharmonic



Figure 29. The standing-room-only area of the Ancient Theater.

Towards the end of the concert, when “Strings of Life” began with its unforgettable syncopated solo piano introduction, the crowd on the floor roared, whistled, and raised their hands in the air in celebration; at each section of increasing musical intensity created by Džijan’s orchestration and the lighting and video production by Igor “Izi” Ivanov, they shouted some more, and moved and grooved harder and with greater intensity. This was not the early morning alternative space for belonging, providing a release from the constraints of identity politics and the struggles of everyday life in a partyocratic society. It was a variation on that belonging, experienced in the act of standing and moving together to a musical sound that was a variation of the sounds that they had injected into the spaces of Pablo, MNT, Menada, Metropol, the *Saem*, and Sektor 909 over the past two decades. And in reality, those sounds had never been the same twice, each party being set in its own time and place, each track playing a unique role in

transforming that place into social space depending on how the DJ situated it in the set and finessed its timbres, tempos, and frequencies to energize and draw energy from the crowd.

Conclusion

Ogi and others at the core of the Sektor 909 scene clearly saw the challenges of increasing partyocracy in Macedonia as those challenges began to increase, especially since 2008. This scene was not about resistance or opposition, nor was it about apathy or nonparticipation. Rather, it was about making an alternative space, a space where belongings were available for more than the politically-connected, and more than a heteronormative ethnic Macedonian homogeneity that so much of Macedonian night life (and broader society) seemed to privilege. The sounds and social ideals of Detroit techno formed the foundation for a musical making of this space in places as private and intimate as the Sektor 909 winter club, and as public and open as Ohrid's Ancient Theater. Especially as they transformed the open floor of the Ancient Theater into their space for belonging, they demonstrated how the intersubjective sonic-social act of making music can produce an acoustemology that makes space out of a place, imbuing it with their own meaning and experiencing that meaning intimately together with others. Instead of reconstructing Macedonian identity through antiquization that involves constructing new objects and meanings that seem ancient, these scenesters brought their alternative space for belonging to sonically transform an ancient place. Unlike state-supported narratives, they did not conflate the Roman history of the amphitheater with some modification of an ethno-national Macedonian history. Rather, they faced the dystopic elements of their current world and transported a conceived future into it, claiming an ancient place not as the property of an ethnicity or of a nation from whose ideals they increasingly distance themselves,

but as a space where human beings have gathered in the distant past and will gather again perhaps into the distant future. They gathered there in the present, as they did at Sektor 909, experiencing the history of techno anew through its adapted musical sounds, contributing to Macedonia's musical history and future, and belonging there, together, surviving and perhaps even thriving.

PART III

The Space of Transnational Jazz Pathways and their Narratives

CHAPTER SIX

Dragan “Špato” Gjakonovski and Jazz in Yugoslav-Era Macedonia

When I was at Berkeley in the 90s, I studied with Herb Pomeroy. You know him? No? Well he was this genius arranger, a real *motherfucker*, worked with Duke Ellington forever, and he told me that Duke used to say “I don’t call it jazz, I call it the music of humankind.” That’s when I realized that everyone can play it, it’s not just for Americans.

The first time I met Toni Kitanovski (b. 1964) in 2011, he told me that story—among many others—as we drank beer and ate *kebaps* in the *čaršija* just behind Menada.¹³¹ A guitarist, composer, and director of Macedonia’s only university jazz program, Toni is one of the central figures of the jazz scene in Macedonia, and we have shared countless beers, untold glasses of *rakija*, and innumerable stories since then as we’ve played, recorded, taught, and hosted guest musicians together. He tends to tell this particular story when he meets a new musician from abroad who he knows is a jazz musician—I’ve heard it a number of times—and it always elicits a smile and moves the conversation forward to some common ground about Duke, about Toni’s or the other person’s musical journey, about concepts of the jazz tradition, about the African roots of jazz.

Like those at the core of the Sektor scene, so passionate about the universality of Detroit techno, Toni is hyper-aware that he is part of a musical tradition with which he does not share a common heritage, allowing Duke (positioned as an authority on what jazz is or is not if there

¹³¹ *Kebaps* are grilled, skinless sausages made of minced meat, common throughout Southeastern Europe. They are usually served with raw onions, bread, and maybe a small salad, and consumed along with a soft drink or a beer.

ever was one) to open that door to him, and indeed to the whole world. Paul Austerlitz deals with this purported “universality” of jazz in *Jazz Consciousness* (2005), following Judith Becker’s challenge for ethnomusicologists to transcend an either/or perspective on scientific universalism vs. humanistic particularity and paradoxically accept both (Becker 2004:73). Austerlitz situates the universalism often invoked by jazz musicians as part of a legacy of a “strategic universalism” (referencing Gilroy 2000) that is not ignorant of cultural relativism, but rather is strategic in counteracting racism and its dehumanization. Austerlitz concludes that this “holistic aesthetic of jazz and its propensity to incorporate any and all outside elements is a musical manifestation of this utopian universalism,” and he argues that “jazz creates a virtual space where we can confront, learn from, and heal the contradictions resulting from social rupture” (Austerlitz 2005:xvi).

The universalism communicated by Toni and others in Macedonia, however, is not overtly counteracting some dehumanizing struggle. It primarily serves as a doorway into participation in what I call “transnational jazz narratives” for musicians mostly (as Austerlitz also recognizes) from dominant middle and upper classes. These mostly ethnic Macedonian jazz musicians can bring other musicians from groups who are typically racially and ethnically dehumanized in Macedonia (e.g., Albanians, but especially Roms) into transnational jazz narratives. They do so as they make music in ways that are consistent with the universalism that has allowed for their own participation these narratives. In addition, space made by jazz musicians in Macedonia is not “virtual” as suggested by Austerlitz—it is actual physical, social space. That space, instead of enabling people to confront, learn from, or heal the contradictions of social rupture, allows musicians and those in the ephemeral scene around them to live *in* those

contradictions, to embrace them for even a fleeting moment, conceding that such contradictions may never be resolved and wondering whether they should be.

The contradictions for which jazz performance makes space can be partially captured in a saying in Macedonia that is often uttered with some combination of romanticized sincerity and exasperated irony: *eh, ova moja čudesna zemja Makedonija* (eh, this, my wonderful/exceptional/miraculous country, Macedonia). This saying almost always frames some story, some incident from everyday life that is full of contradictions, and is spoken in a way that admires and takes pride in the way things are, but also in disappointment and shame that something like this could happen.¹³² Conceiving of their world as both exceptionally wonderful and strange, and as miraculously delightful and disappointing, is part of the everyday Macedonian experience for many. Participating in a musical practice described as “jazz” does not free anyone from those contradictions; rather, jazz is a practice quite well-suited for the sociovirtuosic and their seemingly contradictory ways of being in the world, as it is rife with contradictions in the ways it has multifariously been deployed and defined.

¹³² Examples of this have popped up on the internet through media websites and social media. One shows a sign in the national library (the most prestigious research library in the country), that it is forbidden to wash one’s feet in the bathroom, the consequences being the revoking of library membership and privileges; another shows a small car (a 1980s Yugo) in Skopje with a full-grown pig sticking its head out of the trunk; another is a screen shot of a text message sent to government employees that their attendance (and the attendance of their friends and relatives) at a pro-government counter-protest was required. See <http://off.net.mk/lokalno/makedonshtina/taa-moja-chudesna-zemja>, <http://press24.mk/node/6601>, <https://twitter.com/cudesno/status/600267886448529408> (all accessed August 14, 2015).

Transnational Jazz Pathways and their Narratives

The use and definition of the word “jazz” are highly contested and its boundaries vary depending on who is deploying the term, where, and to whom.¹³³ The so-called “new jazz studies” that has emerged since around 1990 has challenged jazz historiographies and deconstructed conceptualizations of the boundaries of music labeled “jazz,” with Scott DeVeaux’s essay “Constructing the Jazz Tradition” (1991) serving as a not insignificant jumping off point.¹³⁴ The edited collection *Jazz/Not Jazz* (Ake, Garrett, and Goldmark 2012) presents a number of cases of boundary making in both jazz practice and scholarship. In particular, Sherrie Tucker picks up DeVeaux’s challenge to the narrative constructed as jazz, asking questions about what counts as jazz, what doesn’t, and why particular narratives exclude which individuals, which discourses, and which styles. She situates jazz as an “unstable object” and explores the varied approaches of new jazz studies scholars, encouraging an engagement with dissonances between theory and practice, dissonances among “scholarly desires for jazz,” which include

the desires for jazz held by the cohorts that preceded us [as jazz studies scholars] (those we carry dear to our hearts and those we vigorously try to shake off); the desires that brought us to jazz studies (and how these may have changed through practice); the desires stimulated by representations of jazz in advertising and films; and the desires our students bring when they sign up for our courses.

(Tucker 2012:278)

¹³³ Saxophonist and composer Steve Coleman is one of a number of prominent musicians usually falling in the “jazz” category, but known to avoid the word “jazz” when describing his own music. He is keenly aware that whoever he is communicating with will likely hold a definition of jazz that is not exactly representative of the music he makes, if not quite distant.

¹³⁴ See Gabbard 1995, Walser 1998, and Porter 2002 for other examples.

While Tucker discusses these dissonances as present for jazz studies scholars, I suggest that these sorts of dissonances matter for the musicians of the jazz scene in Macedonia, especially as they seek to situate themselves—and belong—in the transnational narratives for which they themselves, at least in part, are setting the boundaries.

Despite the small size of the jazz scene in Macedonia (I am talking about approximately thirty to forty musicians involved in the performance and production of some form of music defined as jazz), this particular scene is the locus of a collision of a number of these transnational jazz narratives, competing musical and discursive assertions of what jazz is (and is not), or what it should (and should not) be as a sonic, social, and affective practice. Here, I build on Travis Jackson's use of the concept of the "pathways" of musicians, though with a slight variation. He argues that "the pathways that musicians traverse in coming to it [jazz] and continuing to develop [it] necessitate engagement with more than the technical aspects of jazz performance" (Jackson 2012:47-48). His approach draws on Ruth Finnegan's *The Hidden Musicians* (1989), which examines people across many genres of music making in an urban setting. She discusses musical pathways as the routes musicians choose and are led into in their musical lives (i.e., developing skill and knowledge in a certain genre) that also have symbolic depth providing "a framework for people's participation in urban life, something overlapping with, but more permanent and structured than, the personal networks in which individuals also participate" (Finnegan 1989:323, as quoted in Jackson 2012:38).

In the case of many of the Macedonian jazz musicians of this study, their various musical pathways to jazz—as defined by Jackson and Finnegan—led them either to develop their skills in institutions of higher education abroad, or to interact with institutions that brought jazz to Macedonia. In the course of their musical growth in those contexts, they adopt specific

interpretations of jazz history, draw boundaries that define what jazz is (and is not), and develop strong preferences for specific types of jazz aesthetics. These three components—history, boundaries for jazz, and aesthetic preferences—constitute what I am calling a “jazz narrative.” As jazz musicians carry these narratives transnationally, and as they carry their pathways forward in time and across geographical space, the narratives themselves travel along these transnational pathways to local scenes where their meanings and sonic expressions are fleshed out in encounters and negotiations with other jazz narratives. As Taylor Atkins has it, jazz is certainly a “transgressor of the idea of the nation” (Atkins 2003:xiii), but not in the sense of jazz existing as some essentialist expression of American nationalism, traversing international borders with cultural imperialism masquerading as romanticized charm. The Macedonian case is one of many examples of not only jazz’s status as a transnational musical practice with flows in many directions, but also the consequences that come with such transnational-ness on a local level.

This third part of the dissertation, then, is an ethnographic account of how the jazz scene in Macedonia is organized by these pathways and articulated by these narratives. A number of transnational pathways (and the jazz narratives traveling along them) converge in Macedonia’s small jazz scene, where they intersect and interact, shaping one another and interlocking to form a polymorphous web, a precarious network where dormant pathways and their narratives can be awakened and new ones can emerge. I suggest that this is part of the nature of scenes, that they—even in their ephemerality—are constituted by an elastic convergence of flexible pathways. These flexible pathways carry the narratives which participants situate themselves within or against (or both). In this jazz scene, the pathways are transnational and their narratives are embedded in the meanings and practices of the people making music and moving along them.

Certain pathways become more well-travelled and more fixed over time and certain narratives become privileged over others, but both pathways and their narratives are always flexible, never fully permanent. In the time of my fieldwork, several pathways were present, carrying often conflicting narratives and actively moving through and constituting the jazz scene: (1) the Yugoslav heritage of popular music and definitions of jazz in that context, (2) the participation of Macedonian musicians in jazz programs at foreign institutions of higher education and their surrounding scenes, (3) the influence of the prestigious Skopje Jazz Festival since the early 1980s, (4) the independent Skopje radio station Jazz FM, and (5) more recent sources adopted through increased internet access over the last ten years.

In the three chapters constituting this third part of the dissertation, I focus primarily on the first two pathways, though the others make appearances as well. In this chapter, I discuss the pathways of jazz to Macedonia during the Yugoslav era, which primarily came through Radio Skopje and its associated ensembles, featuring the music and musical leadership of Dragan “Špato” Gjakonovski, considered the “father of Macedonian jazz.” In Chapter 7, I consider Toni Kitanovski, arguably the most prominent musician in the Macedonian jazz scene today, and the pathway that took him to the Berklee College Music in the 1990s where he encountered avant-garde jazz. In Chapter 8, I examine a younger generation of musicians who studied jazz at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria, in the period roughly between 2005 and 2011. There, they developed an affinity for straight-ahead jazz and returned to Macedonia, negotiating that affinity with the challenging realities of employment and subsistence. I conclude my discussion of jazz by approaching in Chapter 8 an event that assembled a great number of the people involved in facilitating transnational jazz pathways to Macedonia, the “jazz party” that took place at the residence of the president of the Republic of Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov in the

fall of 2014. This event, an example of what I call “apparent political patronage,” affirmed the various jazz narratives that have made their way to Macedonia, revealing the implications of those narratives as well as their convergences and divergences with one another. My discussion is loosely chronological, but sometimes follows a haphazard path, just like the transnational pathways of jazz, which rarely present jazz narratives chronologically. Rather, jazz narratives are encountered as musicians happen upon them along their pathway; they are always present, and available for musicians to shape and to be shaped by them. In this mutual act of shaping, musicians make space for their scene, the scene that they belong to, with its transnational pathways that are always reaching over borders and bringing new narratives into the mix.

My discussion of these pathways is based on the underlying assertion that jazz in Macedonia is not unique, but that similar pathways (linked to and reinforced by institutions like government ministries, festivals, universities, and media such as record labels and radio) exist for jazz scenes everywhere. In addition, there are two interrelated threads that will run throughout the chapter that are crucial to understanding these pathways in Macedonia and the ways they carry conflicting narratives of jazz and its history. The first concerns employment for musicians and its relationship to aesthetic privileging and affective labor. I highlight this in my discussion of the Graz musicians, but increasing economic precarity and questions of subsistence are concerns for all of the musicians and speak to the broader everyday experience in Macedonia in the new neoliberal, partyocratic era. The second concerns the ways and extent to which jazz musicians align themselves with state institutions such as universities, the Ministry of Culture, and the state-run television network. The jazz scene overlaps with these institutions on their peripheries, and musicians, not surprisingly, deploy multiple and seemingly contradictory strategies as they negotiate the positions they are taking.

Yugoslav Roots: It All Comes Back to Špato

When I started asking musicians to tell me about the “history of jazz in Macedonia,” nearly everyone I spoke to wanted me to know that “it all started with Špato.” Špato, I learned, was the nickname of Dragan Gjakonovski (1931-1987), a composer, arranger, conductor and musician active at Radio Skopje (which became Macedonian Radio Television in 1964) throughout nearly the entire period of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in Macedonia until his passing. He led various ensembles at the Radio, including: the *Ritmički Sekstet* (Rhythmic Sextet, established in 1951), which consisted of a pianist, an upright bassist, a guitarist, an accordionist, a trumpet player, and a saxophonist/clarinetist; the *Zabaven Ansambl* (“Entertainment” Ensemble, established in 1956), which consisted of a pianist, a bassist, a drummer, a guitarist, a trombonist, a trumpet player, and a saxophonist/clarinetist; and the *Tancov Orkestar* (Dance Orchestra, established in 1961), known colloquially as the *Radio Big-bend* (Radio Big Band) and consisting of traditional big band instrumentation: five saxophones, four trombones, four trumpets, and a four-piece rhythm section. Each of these ensembles was defined as part of the *zabavna muzika* genre, part of a broader Yugoslav popular music industry that first emerged in the 1950s.¹³⁵ The term *zabavna muzika*, literally meaning “entertainment music,” was originally used in reference to most types of popular music (i.e., not folk music and not classical or “serious” music), and

¹³⁵ The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) split with the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites in 1948. Soon after, the CPY rejected Soviet-model cultural politics that viewed popular music as a cultural and political threat from the West. Renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in 1952, the party increased openness to Western cultural influences (Špato’s Rhythmic Sextet had begun playing *zabavna muzika* in 1951). By 1957, it began to recognize the importance of popular music as a form of entertainment, making clearer statements as to its place in cultural politics (Špato’s *Zabaven Ansambl* was formed in 1956, and its members were permanent employees of the Radio). A five-year plan was instituted in that year, urging further development of cultural production, including radio in each of the Yugoslav republics. The goal was not only to assert openness to the West, but also to forge closer bonds and a supra-nationalism across the nationalities in the five Yugoslav republics (see Ramet 1994, 2002:127-50; Vuletic 2008, 2011:271; on rock music in Yugoslavia).

later differentiated from jazz, rock, and other popular styles.

Though jazz bands in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana have been documented as early as the 1920s (see Kovačević 1966:88-89, 1984:216-17; Tomc 1989:51-53; Blam 2011), no such history is part of the jazz historiography of Skopje or Macedonia. That the history of jazz in Macedonia as told today begins with Špato is likely related to his association with state institutions of cultural production, namely Radio Skopje. In the broader musical context, the establishment of the Radio Big Band as a legitimizing musical institution is connected to the establishment of other national musical institutions that promoted European-derived classical music as part of a national “high culture,” part of the building of a Macedonian nation that was officially tied to a distinct ethnicity, culture, and language for the first time (see Chapter 1). These institutions included the Macedonian Philharmonic (1944), the Macedonian Opera and Ballet (1947), the High School for Music and Ballet (later named for composer and pedagogue Ilija “Luj” Nikolovski) in Skopje (1945), and later the Faculty of Musical Arts (1966).

Official Yugoslav policies towards jazz were in flux in the early years of SFRY. In the late 1940s, jazz was stigmatized for its association with American culture, as Yugoslav relations with the US were strained not only because of the developing Cold War but also because of other issues such as Yugoslav involvement in the Greek Civil War and its claims on Trieste. Milovan Djilas, the head of the party’s agitprop department, stated: “America is our sworn enemy, and jazz, likewise, as the product [of American culture]” (quoted in Vuletic 2008:866). But official attitudes towards jazz became increasingly ambiguous and contradictory beginning in the early 1950s, especially after the agitprop apparatus was dismantled and decision making in cultural affairs began to take place at the local level (though cultural production was still to occur within the constraints of the party’s ideology and program) (ibid.:868). While authorities approved the

establishment of the Association of Jazz Musicians in Belgrade in 1953, in the same year Tito had harsh words about jazz at the Second Congress of the Federation of Musicians of Yugoslavia. He stated: “Today, you see, jazz is more and more prevalent. That angers me very much, because jazz music does not suit our character and our reality” and that, when foreign influences dominate musical culture, and because of and the “low” cultural value of popular music, “people can become deformed and, in fateful moments of history, that can be fatal” (quoted in Marković 1996:471). Though the characteristics and boundaries of what Tito and/or the Association of Jazz Musicians considered “jazz” are not well-defined, the seemingly paradoxical official policy towards jazz as a musical practice and cultural product not only point to the multilayered nature of state censorship (see Hofman 2013), but also how well-suited the flexible concept “jazz” was to the socialist Yugoslav context and the many contradictions that context embodied.¹³⁶

In narratives of Špato’s life, notably a 2010 monograph by Vančo Dimitrov, he is situated as the most important figure in Macedonian *zabavna muzika* and jazz. Rarely are those terms differentiated in these descriptions. Špato’s catalogue, part of which is published in the appendix of Dimitrov’s monograph, includes mostly compositions and arrangements for the MRTV Big Band or a larger version of the big band known as the *Reviski Orkestar* (Revue Orchestra), which included added strings, and orchestral brass, woodwinds, and percussion. The orchestration, and the overall style, is comparable to that of the jazz-with-strings and big-band-plus-strings

¹³⁶ From 1956 to 1978, US diplomatic policy involved the export of jazz in an effort to increase sympathies for the US and its Cold War struggles. Its first tour featured Dizzy Gillespie’s twenty-two-piece band that was racially integrated and included black female trombonist Melba Liston (Von Eschen 2004:32–33). The US took advantage of Yugoslavia’s more open policy and performed in Belgrade at Kolarac Hall on May 9, 1956, and many praised the band for its performance, going especially “wild” for Liston’s playing (Davenport 2009:51). No other Eastern European or Soviet Bloc countries were visited on the tour. See Hixon 1997 for more on jazz and American policy in the Cold War; for contrast to the Yugoslav case, see Starr 1983 for an assessment of jazz’s status in Cold War Soviet Union.

arranging conventions that began in America in the early 1940s, but whose roots are in the “symphonic jazz” of Paul Whiteman (the most famous example of which is Whiteman’s 1924 debut of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*). John Howland (2012) examines the development of this 1940s and 1950s trend into a commercial aspect of the jazz canon sometimes referred to today as “traditional pop music” or “the Great American Songbook.” Howland considers issues of race and class in the popularizing of the music, as well as the position of this type of “commercial jazz” on the boundaries of the jazz canon, which, for music beyond 1930, has typically has been established by jazz historiography as “art music.” He points out that “jazz” was first used as a marketing category separate from popular music in the 1950s, only after jazz itself was no longer a popular music that young people danced and listened to. Špato and his Yugoslav-era colleagues (and cultural arbiters in the Tito regime) were slightly removed from the significance of distinctions between jazz as art music or jazz as commercial music, and their narrative of jazz continued from Duke Ellington to Harry James to the music of singers such as Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Dean Martin, and Dinah Shore.¹³⁷

From a young age, Špato was known to listen to the radio (such as the Voice of America program “Music USA” also known as “the Jazz Hour”) or to records he received during his education at Skopje’s High School for Music and Ballet (he enrolled in 1948), copy the arrangements by ear, and make his own adaptations for his ensembles.¹³⁸ He is widely praised for his excellent ability to hear and transcribe arrangements, and names Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Ari Barozo (Brazil), Kurt Weill, and Stan

¹³⁷ Other artists who continued in this genre past the 1950s include Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis, Jr., Natalie Cole, Etta James, Tom Jones, and Engelbert Humperdinck, as well as later artists such as Michael Bublé and Harry Connick, Jr.

¹³⁸ “Music USA” was a nightly hour-long broadcast led by Willis Conover beginning in 1955. See Ritter 2013.

Kenton among composers whose works he first transcribed (Dimitrov 2010:67).

Špato cites the 1944 American film-musical *Bathing Beauty* (known in Macedonia as *Balna Voda* or “Ball on the Water”) featuring Esther Williams as one of his most significant early musical influences. After viewing the film in Belgrade in 1950 and then dozens of times in Skopje in 1951 (it was a hit in both cities), he transcribed and arranged much of the score. The film featured many onscreen performances of big band stars of the era, including trumpet player Harry James and organist Ethel Smith, who performed her Brazilian choro song-turned American pop hit “Tico-Tico no Fubá” (“Sparrow in the Cornmeal,” an archaic Brazilian Portuguese euphemism for extra-marital sex) in the film. In addition, Spanish-Cuban bandleader Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra performed the Noro Morales composition “Bim-Bam-Bum” with singer Lina Romay. The Smith and Cugat performances are classic examples of the commercialization of Cuban, Brazilian, and other Latin American musical styles for mass appeal, something Cugat had mastered beginning in the 1930s, and what singer Carmen Miranda brought to the world through her performances of Brazilian samba in Hollywood films beginning in 1940. Though much of the music in *Bathing Beauty* featured the sounds of big band and traditional pop orchestras, these and other examples of commercialized Latin American music featured prominently in the film, and were brought into the repertoire of Špato’s ensembles throughout his career along with other compositions and arrangements drawing on rumba, salsa, cha-cha-cha, and other Latin styles.¹³⁹ With regard to the globalization of salsa in a slightly later period, Lise Waxer notes that “salsa has provided an alternative transnational popular style to the hegemony of US/British rock music and its association with US political and economic domination”

¹³⁹ One of Špato’s notable compositions in this style is “Kje Dojdeš li na Randevu” (Will You Come to Our Rendez-vous, 1964), performed by Katica Gjakonovska (Špato’s second wife) with lyrics by Gjoko Georgiev.

(Waxer 2002:7-8). I suspect that various Latin American musical styles employed by Špato and others in Yugoslavia similarly signified transnationality without privileging American musical styles that were disparaged by Tito and Yugoslav policy.¹⁴⁰

Jazz also made an appearance in Macedonia in the 1950s through the activities of the KUD (*Kulturno-Umetničko Društvo* or Cultural-Artistic Society) “Makedonka,” located in the town of Štip. KUDs were local state-supported clubs scattered throughout Yugoslavia that were usually constituted by amateur traditional music and dance groups. Makedonka, which was started in 1952 by workers of the Makedonka textile factory in Štip (its namesake), is no exception, but it is also known for establishing the first big band in Macedonia in 1960, the *Golem Zabaven Orkestar* (Large *Zabaven* Orchestra). For this big band, alternatively known as the *Golem Tancov Orkestar* (Large Dance Orchestra), KUD Makedonka engaged Špato to write arrangements and lead the ensemble.¹⁴¹ The Makedonka big band would become known for its high level of performance, recording and holding prestigious concerts in Skopje and abroad. Similar to the Radio Big Band, *zabavna* music and jazz were often conflated for the Makedonka big band. Repertoires of both ensembles included compositions by George Gershwin, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Perez Prado, Xavier Cugat, and Harry James, all labeled “jazz,” as well as other music from among “the most famous world-renown classics of *zabavna* music” (Dimitrov 2010:97–98; see also Samonikov 2008:14–15).¹⁴² In descriptions of the music of these bands and other smaller ensembles of the Radio and Makedonka, little

¹⁴⁰ I am grateful to Alyssa Mathias for this insight and for directing me to this source.

¹⁴¹ I express my gratitude here to Metodi Trpkov for sharing so generously with me not only the Makedonka photo-monograph (Samonikov 2008), but so much about his life, his great love for music, and his experiences in Makedonka as a young alto saxophone player.

¹⁴² “*Najpoznatite svetski evergrini vo zabavnata muzika*,” literally “the most famous global evergreens in *zabavna* music.” In Macedonia the Anglicism “evergreen” is used in reference to songs that are ever popular, and might be called “classic songs” or “oldies.”

mention is given to improvisation, or to adaptations of stylistic developments in jazz that occurred beyond the large big bands and orchestras 1930s and early 1940s. Their catalogues of recordings include short solos (ostensibly some if not many of those are improvised) in big band compositions, but improvisation does not feature particularly prominently.

Though jazz and *zabavna* music seem to have quite a bit of overlap in the music of Špato and the first Macedonian big bands, it seems that when using the word “jazz” about the legacy of Špato and these bands, it for the most part designates music from the American big band repertoire (e.g., from the Ellington, Kenton, Miller, or Basie bands), or music by Špato or other Yugoslav composers that followed big band music in form and style. This corroborates Yugoslav policy encouraging the development of institutional popular music beginning in 1957, with the end of promoting homegrown Yugoslav alternatives to American and other Western popular music products. Two examples of Špato compositions that demonstrate this trend are “Garača” (1948), a bossa nova-style instrumental composition in 32-bar AABA form, and “Leni” (1964), a lush ballad dedicated to an unrequited love of Špato, a woman named Valentina (only Špato abbreviated her name to “Leni” according to her retelling of their acquaintance in Dimitrov’s monograph).¹⁴³ Both of these songs were well-known by Macedonian jazz musicians during the time of my research, though it is difficult to say whether they have been known since their original release, or if their renown was extended due to greater public visibility of Špato and his music with the publication of the 2010 monograph and its surrounding events.

In 2011, coinciding with the release of the Dimitrov monograph about Špato and its accompanying compilation CD, the Society of Composers of Macedonia (SOKOM) opened their

¹⁴³ “Garača” was dedicated to his close friend, pianist Nino (Nikola) Cipušev. It is presumably named after “guaracha,” a genre of Cuban popular music, though the song is in a Brazilian bossa nova style.

annual Days of Macedonian Music (DMM) festival with a concert at the Macedonian Opera and Ballet featuring the *Reviski Orkestar* of MRTV and some of the Macedonia's most popular pop singers including Karolina Gočeva, Kaliopi, and Tamara Todevska. This concert and its associated publications participated in a canonization of Špato as a legendary Macedonian composer and the founder of "Macedonian jazz." While SOKOM is an independent organization, most of its activities including the DMM festival are generously supported by the Ministry of Culture. While Špato and his music carved out a place for something called "jazz" that was congruous with Yugoslav cultural policy, his work has also served a legitimizing role in the post-Yugoslav era as it demonstrated Macedonian participation in the transnational cultural practice known as "jazz" from the earliest days of Yugoslavia. Though Špato, to my knowledge, does not yet have a statue in Skopje as part of Skopje 2014, he has been valorized as an important figure in the canon of Macedonian music broadly speaking (a small street in the neighborhood adjacent to Skopje's city park bears his name, see Figure 29). His music illustrates a transnational pathway—through radio, records, and films—of jazz in Yugoslavia, a pathway carrying, in his case, mostly the music of the big band era and the traditional pop that it spawned. But Špato's influence did not begin and end with big band jazz.



Figure 30. Location of the street “Dragan Gjakonovski—Špato”

Špato Beyond the Big Band

Many of Špato’s collaborators are quoted at length in the Dimitrov monograph, and most of them were his colleagues at MRTV, working with the big band as composers, arrangers, and musicians both before and after his death. These include, among many others, Kire Kostov and Ilija Pejovski, who have both led the MRTV big band and long been active in popular and big band music as composers and arrangers. A notable exception is Toni Kitanovski, who had a personal connection with Špato but was never employed by the MRTV big band. When Toni was a teenager, he began regularly going to Špato’s home and learning from him in an informal and very close mentorship. In the monograph, he describes his experiences with Špato, which he

differentiates from experiences of those who worked with Špato in the big band (Dimitrov 2010:228–232). He and Špato became very close, developing a father-son relationship of sorts, which was especially significant after Toni’s father passed away during his youth. Here are some the words Toni shared about Špato with me:

Špato did so many incredible things, things that were substantial and very real. He taught everybody to write music, to sing, to play, and to improvise, every last one was taught by him. And for him as a musician, what fascinates me the most is that his music has an incredible integrity. You know when you hear some of his stuff, his arrangements, every note is in its place. [. . .]

The most valuable thing I learned from him—you know how when you are young and you hear something new and it fascinates you—I learned from him what good music is. Not because I believed blindly in every word he said, but because I understood him. I remember when *Friday Night in San Francisco* came out, it was the first time I heard something like that—Paco and McLaughlin.¹⁴⁴ “*What the fuck is this?*” I got the record and took it to Špato. “Špato you must listen to this.” He says “What is this garbage? Listen to this other one. Anyone can play fast.” And as I figured out, they were using cheesy chords. But if he hadn’t told me, I might have gone in that direction. It was also from him that I heard “Keith Jarrett—he is great but he’s boring, come on let’s listen to Hank Jones.” I believe that was the most valuable thing, he never messed with my taste in music, he just gave me his own thoughts, and I had the capacity to understand

¹⁴⁴ Toni is referencing *Friday Night in San Francisco*, the 1981 live album featuring Al Di Meola, Paco de Lucía, and John McLaughlin all playing acoustic guitar in rather virtuosic fashion.

what he was saying. A lot of my friends would pester him to show them something, but they couldn't understand him. He was perfectly logical to me, and he always he put it very elegantly. "Well, you know Tonči these guys are good, but this is not real music. There is something better. Let me play you this. Look, this guy plays with only his thumb, but listen to his ideas, listen to the drummer, listen." He would do this constantly. That's how I was taught to listen to music, to pay attention to the slightest details. Eight years all day every day I listened to music and he would say, "Pay attention to the flute, what Claus Ogerman is doing, listen to the trombones," and he would play that part or write it down for me.¹⁴⁵ [. . .]

I realized that if he wanted to tell me something, one day he would tell me one thing, and the next day the opposite thing. And I had to figure out on my own which of the two is the correct one, and I was supposed to do something, write something to prove myself, to show that I was right. I think that was his main trick. He bothered me with that a lot. Once he told me to write something for the Big Band to get in on a record. And I wrote something and brought it. He checked it, made some corrections. Then, because I wanted to be Špato I started to make arrangements. I took my first arrangement to him. "Oh, this doesn't work." I had messed up the octaves. I had written it too high for the ranges of the instruments. "Lele, this is bad, Tonči don't be mad at me but you are a genius for the guitar but for writing you are no good. Don't be mad at me." So I said "How can I be mad at

¹⁴⁵ Claus Ogerman is an arranger, orchestrator, and composer best known for his collaborations with Antonio Carlos Jobim, Frank Sinatra, and later, Diana Krall. He is an example of an arranger at the intersection of traditional pop and commercial jazz as differentiated from jazz as art music.

you? You could kill me and I wouldn't be mad at you." [. . .]

He might have really thought that I was no good, but that compelled me to write music. In our relationship I never blindly followed his lead, but he is my hero. He was himself and I was myself. And I was this boring, annoying type of a teenager who hung around at his place non-stop. His kids couldn't watch TV because of me. His whole family, his wife is like "Come on kids go to your room, Daddy and Toni are listening to music." But we were listening until midnight. The children had to behave, not to bother him. Incredible. Everything that I had to learn I learned from him that this is hard work; it takes a lot of effort, what it means to practice the whole time. Although he was an elderly man and I was a teenager, we were always equal. [. . .]

The main thing he did is he in fact created the entire culture here, everything that is jazz, and not only that, all popular music (*popularna muzika*) also. Everything is due to Špato. All that is done here and all the stuff people are doing, even if they haven't heard about him, everything is due to Špato.

In one sense, Toni affirms and validates the canonization of Špato, valorizing him as a foundational figure above any other musician in the jazz or popular music realm in Macedonia. Špato, then, is the face of the transnational pathway of jazz to Yugoslav Macedonia through Western media (recordings, radio, films) and his own arrangements and compositions that enabled Macedonian musicians to participate in jazz music making. The narrative of jazz in this case focuses on the big band tradition and its stylistic features that blurred into *zabavna muzika*. The lasting impression Špato left, at least for Toni, was not about instrumental virtuosity, but prioritized participating in a musical lineage. Instead of the extended improvised solo piano

efforts of Keith Jarrett (which he found not adventurous but “boring”), Špato exhibited preference for a pianist like Hank Jones, drawn to and, I suspect, identifying with Jones’ wide range of collaborations with the likes of Charlie Parker, Kenny Burrell, Tony Williams, and Marilyn Monroe, not to mention his work as staff pianist for CBS studios.

But in another sense, Toni situates the jazz narrative carried by Špato as the foundation for his own musical freedom of expression—to have his own individual taste and aesthetic preference, beyond something communicated to him by some official institution. The “official” narrative about Špato is linked to the Yugoslav institutions that supported and directed his music making, most prominently the Radio Big Band. Throughout Špato’s life, the state controlled virtually all recording, media, and distribution of domestically-recorded music, so any of Špato’s music produced and distributed through those channels was indicative of the ideologies of the Yugoslav state with regard to jazz and popular music as I have described above. These Yugoslav jazz pathways have continued well past 1991, especially as institutions and individuals have drawn on them and shaped their historiography for their own legitimization as carriers of a jazz legacy that began in Macedonia in the 1950s. But Toni paints a broader musical picture of Špato, one that seems to include improvisation and a flexibility to allow for great individuality and self-discovery. For Toni, Špato even embedded contradictory messages into his pedagogy, challenging Toni to see and hear through—and live *within*—contradiction in order to develop as a jazz musician. Improvisation, flexibility, individuality, self-discovery, and contradiction are all defining characteristics of Toni’s personal musical journey, one that, after Špato’s death, took him along a transnational jazz pathway of higher education, where he encountered a new set of jazz narratives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Toni Kitanovski, Avant-Garde Jazz, and the Čerkezi Orchestra

The second transnational jazz pathway that I discuss is associated with institutions of higher education and their surrounding scenes. Jazz in higher education has been discussed and problematized at length by scholars in new jazz studies, who have questioned institutional narratives of the history of jazz education (Prouty 2005), interrogated the changing relationship between jazz in the academy and jazz “on the street” (Ake 2012a), examined curriculum, canon, and educational lineages in university jazz programs (Ake 2002a, 2002b; Prouty 2004; Perea 2012), challenged concepts of oral and written traditions in jazz (Prouty 2006), analyzed and suggested methods of teaching improvisation (Prouty 2004, 2008; Borgo 2007; Murphy 2009), and explored what is actually constituted as the object of new jazz studies as well as new potentialities for jazz studies in higher education (Tucker 2012).¹⁴⁶

In this chapter, I will discuss Toni Kitanovski’s pathway to the Berklee College of Music in Boston in the context of his broader musical experience both before and after his time at Berklee, detailing his encounter with avant-garde jazz and its implications for his collaboration with a Romani brass band in Macedonia. In the next chapter, I approach a group of younger Macedonian jazz musicians who studied at the Jazz Institute at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz and the jazz narratives they picked up along the way. Rather than presenting my own assessment of jazz programs at Berklee, Graz, or elsewhere, I tie these pathways and the narratives that travel along them to both the local scene in Macedonia where they intersect and connect to broader discourses of jazz historiography. In my discussion of

¹⁴⁶ I summarize some of these sources, with special attention to jazz and oral tradition in higher education, for a Macedonian readership (Wilson 2014).

Toni's music, it will become clear that the pathway to and from Berklee is just one of many pathways along his musical journey, and that the narratives he encounters do not define him, but rather constitute the ingredients for the narratives that he himself promotes through his playing, his composition, and his institutional role as the director of the jazz program at the university in Štip. I will here depart from Toni's close mentorship with Špato, engaging his other early influences from African music, followed by his formative period at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, his interest in avant-garde jazz, and his collaboration with a Romani brass band in the project Toni Kitanovski and the Čerkezi Orchestra. My own musical collaboration with Toni, our co-production of acouSTEMology, enters the narrative only from time to time, but is constantly running in the background as a soundtrack that interweaves my own transnational jazz pathways with his.

African Influences from Yugoslavia to *III x III*

Toni has often told me the story of how, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he became friends with a number of African students who were studying for free at the university in Skopje and living at the student dorms.¹⁴⁷ He would play soccer with them in the streets, and he would borrow the records they had brought from home. "They were from everywhere, from all over Africa," Toni tells me,

And the other thing was that there was a lot of live music, concerts from the non-aligned countries. Traditional music groups from Benin, Mali, Sudan, and so on

¹⁴⁷ This was related to Tito's role in helping to establish the "Non-Aligned Movement" (NAM) in 1961 along with prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, president of Indonesia Sukarno, president of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser, and president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah. The NAM included nearly all African countries, and arrangements such as scholarships for African university students and visits from African musicians were relatively common.

performing at the concert hall in Skopje. They came here and mainly held concerts for free. I remember I was at a young age when I said to myself “Wow wouldn’t it be nice to become a musician one day and share the stage with this band of ten percussionists.” It is still my dream even now. One day, that will happen too, in its time. But somehow this African music, everybody loves it—you can’t *not* like it. So, I began to study it, not scholarly or thoroughly but as it came naturally to me. Taking what I like, thinking about it, and analyzing it, what is the thing I like in the music—it would be always some kind of rhythmic or melodic structure or some strange sound or instrument. And all that contributed to the way I play my instrument, the guitar.

As I got to know Toni, especially as we frequently played together in 2013 and 2014, I was able to hear and experience his interest in African musicality. In 2014, he released an album called *III x III*, featuring Toni in three different trio configurations.¹⁴⁸ Throughout the year, whenever we would play together at Menada or Café-Bookstore Magor—or when Toni played with any small group—he would inevitably be leading the group.¹⁴⁹ We would start around 10:00PM, when people started going out to cafés, and play two sets, ending around 1:00AM (depending on what time of year and what day of the week, the gig might end earlier). The sets would be full of

¹⁴⁸ The first three tracks were recorded with Macedonian drummer Alek Sekulovski and Serbian pianist Vasil Hadžimanov playing Hammond B3 organ; the next three with French bassist Antoine Simoni (known for playing with Malian balafon master Lasiné Kouyaté) and Alek Sekulovski; and the final three with Greek bassist Kostas Theodorou and Turkish percussionist İzzet Kızıl.

¹⁴⁹ Magor was opened in 2006 and is connected with the publishing house of the same name, founded in 1992 by Ljupčo and Pavlina Lazarevski. They named it after their daughter Maja (Ma-) and their son Gorjan (-gor), who now run the café-bookstore and the publishing house, respectively. According to Maja, over the years people have tried to guess at the meaning of the name, imagining *makedonska gordost* (Macedonian pride), *makedonska gora* (Macedonian mountain, or forest), and others.

music that would appear on the *III x III* album, mostly Toni’s original compositions but notably also including “Odwalla,” the theme song of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC) composed by saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell. Other Toni “standards” included his compositions “Ed Blackwell” (discussed further below) and “Play is the Work of Children,” as well as Charles Mingus’ “Boogie Stomp Shuffle.” I quickly realized that the other musicians (usually a bass player and a drummer, I’d be playing saxophone), already knew these songs. We never rehearsed, and whenever Toni would call out the title of the song, everyone knew it and was ready to play—knowing Toni’s compositions was part of belonging as a jazz musician in Skopje.



Figure 31. Menada



Figure 32. Performance at Menada, Toni Kitanovski (guitar), Oscar Salas (drums), Dave Wilson (saxophone), Kiril Tufekčievski (bass)



Figure 33. Performance at Menada. Vasil Hadžimanov (piano), Alek Sekulovski (drums), Kiril Tufekčievski (bass), Toni Kitanovski (guitar)

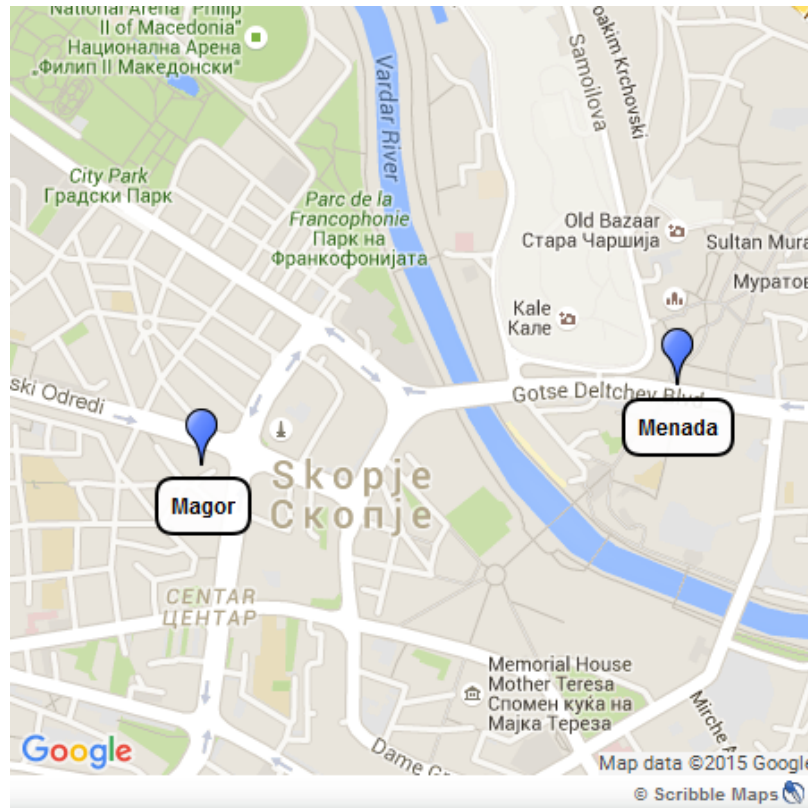


Figure 34. Locations of Magor and Menada

I gradually learned all of these compositions myself after playing with Toni numerous times, and began to hear and participate in the polyrhythms that underpinned especially the compositions from *III x III*. I would lock my playing into the guitar phrases that highlighted and sometimes expanded that polyrhythm, phrases that were sometimes composed in advance, but were more often improvised. The harmonic motion of these compositions was relatively static; they for the most part involved repeating ostinatos on the bass that formed interlocking patterns with the drums. The melodies were tonal, not departing much from the mode set up by the bass groove. But this static, repetitive groove formed the foundation for improvisation that could go in many directions. This was congruous with the social experience of Menada and Magor. Both locations attracted middle-class Macedonians (age 18–40, approximately) who were interested in

music, theater, and other visual and performing arts, and who came to drink (usually beer) and socialize.¹⁵⁰ Because of the emphasis on socializing, many people who came to Menada or Magor to “hear” jazz or any musical performance spent a lot of time talking to one another. Usually, there was a small group of 10–30 people (more at Menada, it is quite a bit larger than Magor) who were there as what I call “good listeners;” they sat or stood near the band and engaged actively with the musicians by listening and responding with applause or vocally when they were excited by the music.



Figure 35. Performance at Magor. Toni Kitanovski (guitar), Oscar Salas (congas), Kiril Tufekčievski (bass)

¹⁵⁰ Menada, by virtue of its location in the čaršija, also attracted Albanians from this age demographic.

Toni told me once, explicitly, that he played this music at Menada because at Menada, people want you to make them dance, people come there to be energized and have fun. They wanted to sonically *know* that the space being made in the place of Menada that night was one where they could have this kind of bodily experience. Toni would not play slow ballads or more gentle, subtle music—he always played something that had a groove, a beat, that people could feel in their bodies, sonically inviting his fellow musicians to co-produce the acoustemology that would transform Menada accordingly. The nature of the compositions, with their repetitive, open-ended vamps, kept the musical structure flexible to many possibilities for improvisation: sometimes soloists would explore the tonality of the composition using exclusively language of the bebop tradition, other times we would venture into atonality and experimental sonic techniques on our respective instruments, still other times Toni and I would engage in collective improvisation, sonically communicating with one another and drawing off the energies that the other provided. In every case, the groove continued, and the variegated participation of the good listeners and the socializers at Menada worked together in a mostly non-verbal synergetic symbiosis with the instrumentalists, all co-producing an acoustemology that transformed the place of Menada into a space for belonging—belonging to something transnational, something alternative to the belonging asserted in the space outside of Menada, littered as it was with monuments to an ancient Macedonia and statues of its figures (the monument to Phillip II was just 300m away and visible from Menada).¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Toni intentionally positioned himself favorable towards transnational musical collaboration, serving as “gatekeeper” of sorts for foreign musicians who were passing through Skopje. He seemed to have a knack for finding out when, say, a Peruvian conga player, or a couple of Brazilian choro musicians were in town, and figure out a way to jam with them at Menada or Magor. Through him, they would meet other musicians. Even though he was not the first jazz musician I met in Macedonia, he also served in this role for me. I, along with Peruvians,

By drawing on African rhythmic sensibilities, Toni—already well-established as a “jazz” guitarist and composer—also situated himself as aware and connected to jazz’s African roots, and sought to even transcend jazz as a category, as Duke Ellington had done so for him via Herb Pomeroy. On the website for the *III x III* album, the music is described as “reminiscent of something very old, almost timeless, the music of the human kind.”¹⁵² There is no mention of Duke Ellington as inspiring that description of the music, nor is there a mention of the word “jazz;” the problem of the boundaries of the jazz concept are sidestepped.¹⁵³ Also, and without being explicit, Toni pivots away from any idea of ancient Macedonian-ness providing a legitimate sense of belonging, and towards a jazz narrative that touts the universality of the music along a pathway that leads in time and space to a distant, African, human past.

Instead of viewing this as some primitivist view of a primordial Africa, I see it as more reminiscent of what John Szwed discusses in his essay “The Antiquity of the Avant-Garde” (2013). Szwed, too, draws on a comment from Ellington, this one via Charles Mingus. According to Mingus, he and Ellington ran into each other in 1972 at an Ellington Fellowship gathering at Yale University. He said, “Duke, why don’t you, me and Dizzy and Clark Terry and Thad Jones get together and make an avant-garde record. Duke replied, ‘Why should we go back that far? Let’s not take music back that far, Mingus. Why not just make a modern record?’” (Mingus 1991[1973]:119, quoted in Szwed 2013:44). Szwed goes on to muse about Ellington’s framing the avant-garde as something far back in the past, in the process describing the post-World War I French avant-gardists and their celebration of primitivism and fetishization of

Brazilians, and other foreigners who improvised and/or had a background in music of Africa or the African diaspora, also contributed to this transnational, alternative sense of belonging.

¹⁵² See <http://www.tonikitanovskitrio.com/news/test> (accessed August 20, 2015).

¹⁵³ That the album was released by SJF (Skopje Jazz Festival) Records associates it with the jazz concept, but in a way related to the festival, discussed below.

blackness and primitivism, which they also, not incidentally, linked to the jazz they encountered at the same time. He suggests that Duke's comment may have reflected fears that 1960s avant-garde jazz might be returning to such primitivism, but then situates Duke himself as a new kind of avant-gardist—one who “avoided the traps of early twentieth-century avant-gardism by opening his music up to every conceivable source of influence and freeing himself from the constraints of rebellion” (Szwed 2013:56).

Szwed lists some figures from avant-garde jazz whose music demonstrates the influence of Ellington in this direction, including Carla Bley, Steve Coleman, and Sun Ra, as well as Don Pullen, Anthony Braxton, and Sam Rivers, the latter three of whom Toni frequently cited as significant influences of his own alongside Ellington, Ornette Coleman, James Newton, George Lewis, and others. Toni also gravitated towards trumpet player Don Cherry who, like Ornette, could be called a “bebop revisionist,” but whose music became in the 1970s a convergence of various musical traditions from the Near East, India, Sweden, and Africa (and a forerunner of what would later be called “world music”). These musicians and others involved in avant-garde jazz of the 1950s, 1960s, and beyond, consciously drew not only on Ellington, but on the vocalized, speech-inflected qualities characteristic of black music (Baraka 1963:28) and other sensibilities tied to music with roots in Africa and the African diaspora such as collective improvisation, heterophony, hocketing, added growls and effects, microtonality, call and response, and rhythmic techniques drawn from throughout the black Atlantic (see Szwed 2013:51–55).¹⁵⁴ In this way, avant-garde jazz prominently featured musical sensibilities with ostensibly older roots in the form of something that was new, progressive, and quite distant from

¹⁵⁴ I am not suggesting some imaginary, essentializing link that binds all black music together, but rather choose to cite Baraka's *Blues People* here as a text contemporary to the avant-garde jazz of the 1960s, with which Baraka (then still going by Leroi Jones) was deeply connected through his writing, his Jihad record label, and his participation as a poet.

the primitivism that often characterized the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Toni embraced this understanding of African and African diaspora musical sensibilities, but not until he encountered them more deeply in Boston. Avant-garde jazz was not part of his experience under the mentorship of Špato who, like one of *his* big band heroes, Harry James, was influenced by Duke Ellington in that he took Ellington's arrangements and recreated them in a different context. Toni's encounter with avant-garde jazz would take him beyond the type of Ellington legacy carried on by Špato and towards his own jazz narrative that encompassed a much broader scope of jazz history, wider boundaries around the definition of jazz, and aesthetic preferences more grounded in African musical sensibilities.

Avant-Garde Jazz and the Čerkezi Orchestra

Toni, on his encounter with avant-garde jazz, told me this:

It was when I was a teenager, when I began to learn about jazz. I got the jazz bug and what I did all day and every day was jazz. I read about it. I read all the books connected with jazz, mainly a bunch of various historical books about jazz from the American library, where I came upon a number of names, which I haven't heard of before, who I supposed were important, especially in free jazz like [Ornette] Coleman. And time passed by. Normally, my teacher [Špato] and I listened to mainstream jazz, mainly music recorded from the time before I was born, from original records which were released before I was born and some recordings made personally by my teacher from the radio Voice of America, or live TV, when there was jazz on live TV.

I remember the first time when I heard it, I was like “*Wow*.” It didn’t sound as free or avant-garde as I expected it would. What I read was that it was weird or eccentric music. It was just that it was very different from the mainstream, it was more *exciting*. Ok. Then when I was at Berklee, there was little or no talk or anything about avant-garde music. I mean we did avant-garde techniques within jazz composition and everything that’s got to do with twentieth-century serious [classical] music but nothing in the curriculum about avant-garde jazz, and nothing with the musicians who were students with me. After that when I returned here in 1997, I started to listen to that particular music a bit more and only by chance I was engaged in certain projects that were “*creative music*” projects.¹⁵⁵ Then I went to Boston again and played only creative music at a club for an entire year—and thus began looking for the people that interested me. But while I was studying at Berklee, I got really fired up (*zapalen*) about Ed Blackwell, even today I still am. He is my favorite musician. It was difficult to get his records even in the States. You couldn’t find them at Tower Records. I used to order them and wait for months for some imports to arrive from Japan.

Toni would say that his experience studying jazz composition at Berklee opened him up to many new musicalities, to many new forms of expression. He often shared how his mentorship from Špato prepared him well for composition and arranging studies with the likes of Herb Pomeroy, and that he excelled while there. He was not the first musician from Macedonia

¹⁵⁵ Here, Toni uses the phrase “creative music” as it refers to improvisatory music that connects to avant-garde and free jazz. The use of the term is connected with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), founded in 1965 in Chicago. Among the AACM’s early members were Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill, George Lewis, Amina Claudine Myers, and the members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago: Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarmam, Famoudou Don Moye, and Malachi Favors.

to study at Berklee—it is a school long known for attracting international students and Ilija Pejovski studied there in the 1970s—but Toni played a role in its continuing reputation in Macedonia as a prestigious institution for the study jazz.¹⁵⁶ Toni tells many stories about Berklee, including some discussions of the curriculum and the jazz narratives of the institution itself. But what I remember most about his experience in Boston was that it was the locale of his encounter with avant-garde jazz, especially in the year he played the weekly avant-garde residency. His inclusion of Roscoe Mitchell’s “Odwalla” as the opening track on *III x III* is a nod to the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the broader jazz avant-garde that was so influential along Toni’s path.¹⁵⁷

He continued to exercise avant-garde jazz sensibilities in performances with poet Igor Isakovski (1970–2014), whose poetry is known for being dark, experimental, and surreal. I performed with Toni and Igor in December 2013 at a reading titled “~37.5 Minutes for Guitar

¹⁵⁶ Georgi Šareski—my earliest connection to jazz musicians and the Sektor scene in Macedonia—graduated from Berklee in 2005. During my time in Macedonia between 2011 and 2014, he became decreasingly active musically in the jazz scene in Macedonia. We collaborated on many occasions, beginning with a performance of Šareski’s music at the Kumanovo Jazz Festival in 2004 and, notably in November 2013 with the project “No Land’s Men” with Serbian group “Fish in Oil.” By the end of 2013, Šareski had begun a process of relocating to Berlin and continuing his life and career there.

¹⁵⁷ “Odwalla” also appears (as ODAWALLA) in the poetic text of the AEC composition “Illistrum” from the album *Fanfare for the Warriors* (1973). AEC member Joseph Jarman wrote and performed the poem, which introduces Odwalla as one who “came through the people of the Sun / into the grey haze of the ghost worlds [. . .] to teach them how they may increase their bounty / through the practice of the drum and silent gong / (as taught by ODAWALLA) . . .” (Jarman 1976:33; Jarman 1977:46–47). Odwalla, here, is not a character of traditional African mythology, but a new myth. And the militant spirit of the black political struggle of the 1960s, though apparent in the album’s title, is not explicitly referenced. Rather, the text of the poem reflects the struggle in a new mythical context (Mazzola and Cherlin 2009:27; see Appendix A for the full text of the poem). Odwalla seems to morph into ODAWALLA in the written form of the poem, which then morphs into “*Odvala*” for the Macedonian jazz musicians (typically w’s are transformed to v’s in transliteration). I wonder whether Toni takes his participation in the music of humankind, and sees himself as part of a different type of “people of the Sun,” living in his own ghost world full of grey haze, beating his own silent gong as he joins the contradictory nature of his undefined world.

and Voice” (Toni called me the day of the reading to invite me to join in on the flute).¹⁵⁸

Isakovski’s poetry is not as decidedly political as the work many of the poets of the Black Arts movement that was intertwined with avant-garde jazz (e.g., Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Jayne Cortez) and a constitutive part of a broader experimental African American poetry that expressed and embodied a link between “social marginality and aesthetic marginality” (Mackey 1993:7–8). But African American influences, especially jazz, are found throughout the American poetic avant-garde, upon which Isakovski at least partially draws (see Yu 2009:12–13; also Nielsen 1997). His poetry draws explicitly on the blues, and is suggestive of a darkness of humanity but does not take political stances. Macedonian literary scholar Elizabeta Šaleva describes his poetry as recognizable by its “fierce urban sensibility” and expressive of Isakovski’s

individual radicalism, rebellious eros, counter-cultural impulse, need for escapism in the blues, sex, alcohol. The city is the ultimate lyrical space in the poems of Isakovski, a privileged “setting” for the irrevocable loneliness of the lyrical subject. (Šaleva 2015:1)

Isakovski was well-known and respected; he exercised a well-developed craft and was open to reading his work with improvising musicians. For Toni—also not taking overtly political positions—this was a rare opportunity for participation in the continuation of the heritage of avant-garde jazz in poetry, an expressive collaboration with a Macedonian poet who drew inspiration from the blues; it allowed Toni to set his own musical boundaries each time he performed with Isakovski.

¹⁵⁸ Isakovski is internationally known, his poetry and other writing having been published in over sixteen languages and in twelve countries during his lifetime. See his obituary at <http://republika.mk/?p=360086> (accessed September 11, 2015).

Toni's 2012 album *Boston* is in many ways a tribute to his time in that city, and features trumpet player Greg Hopkins, one of Toni's composition instructors and collaborators at Berklee. A number of musicians appear on the album alongside Toni and Greg: Oscar Salas on congas and Latin percussion, Alek Sekulovski on drums, Ivan Bejkov on bass, İzzet Kizil on percussion, Sašo Serafimov on alto saxophone and flute, Džijan Emin on French horn, Vladimir Lazarevski on oboe, Vilhen Memedov on tuba (from the Čerkezi Orchestra, discussed below), and Martin Gjakonovski (Špato's son, who lives in Germany) on bass for one track. While some of the tracks hint towards the African influences of *III x III*, many of the compositions on the album lean towards avant-garde jazz through their inclusion of collective improvisation, departures from tonality, experimental timbres, and sections of open improvisation sometimes with an underlying groove, and sometimes without. Toni also leans towards the avant-garde when he plays with bassist Kostas Theodorou, an avant-garde jazz player and composer well-established in the broader European scene who splits his time between Greece and Germany. In February 2011, Toni, Kostas, and Turkish percussionist İzzet Kizil performed a formal concert in Skopje. While some of their selections featured Toni's groove-based vamps that would later be recorded by the same trio on *III x III*, others were grounded in avant-garde aesthetics and sometimes bordered on free jazz, abandoning pre-determined forms, meters, and tempos.

Earlier on, Toni's own engagement in the avant-garde, as he situates it, took a rather unexpected turn towards a collaboration with Romani musicians from the Topana neighborhood in Skopje, who he said reminded him of Sun Ra and the Arkestra, and who would later join him in the project "Toni Kitanovski and Čerkezi Orchestra."¹⁵⁹ As Toni tells it:

¹⁵⁹ Topana is located behind Skopsko Kale and the newly-build American Embassy. Literally meaning "arsenal," it was the settlement for Roms who were munitions craftsmen during the time of the Ottoman Empire. It has long been a settlement where many different Romani groups

The first time I heard this band, Čerkezi, I was wowed. I mean, there are a million brass bands here and it never even crossed my mind to do something with any of them. But when I heard these guys I went crazy!¹⁶⁰ It was that time when I had just returned from the States having spent a year of playing nothing but avant-garde [in the late 1990s]—I was drawn in by the sound, it sounded really avant-garde to me. The rhythm was unbelievable, constant rhythmic improvisation. Every measure was different, the accents always falling on different beats. The tuba was playing like a bass line, not just the foundation, but playing other strange things . . . and the solos! That time I heard just four guys playing—baritone tuba, *tapan*, trumpet, and alto saxophone. It wasn't Čerkez [Rašid] playing trumpet, it was his son, Asan, and his brother [saxophonist Ali Rašid]. Man, they sounded so avant-garde. In one measure they would change between two or three different scales. [. . .] It sounded to me like New Orleans. "It would be good to play with these guys, and to play second line." And then nothing, the idea sat there in the back of my mind. The sound stayed with me for eight years.

Whenever Toni talks about this collaboration with this group, he talks with great reverence about Čerkez Rašid, the group's oldest member, its trumpet player and leader. He is careful to explain that Čerkez and the other musicians dictated to him that the name of the group would be "Toni Kitanovski and Čerkezi Orchestra," in honor of Čerkez. Soon after the release of their first album

lived together. After the 1963 earthquake, many Roms relocated to Shuto Orizari, known as Shutka, which is among the largest Romani settlements in Europe. The Rašid family, constituting the core of the Čerkezi Orchestra, did not leave Topana after the earthquake and traces its roots back many generations in that neighborhood.

¹⁶⁰ "Se odlepiv skroz," literally "I became totally unstuck!"

Borderlands (2006) Čerkez passed away, and his son, trumpet player Asan, became the oldest member of the brass band and its new leader.¹⁶¹

Toni, like anyone in Macedonia, had been hearing Romani brass bands throughout his life, as they have been providing music for weddings (Macedonian, Albanian, Romani, Turkish, and often Vlah) and other celebratory occasions for generations. As Carol Silverman notes, forms of the economic patron-client relationship, such as Romani performance at weddings, are often the frameworks within which Roms perform, but “the artistic imperative is the creative engine between exchange of services,” an imperative that encompasses values among Romani musicians for innovation, excellent technique, and “soulful passion” (2012:26). Even when types of exchange and service for many Romani musicians (not only in Macedonia) extend beyond weddings and other celebrations to commercial recordings, especially since the rise of world music in the 1990s, the innovation, technique, and passion of musical artistry continue to drive their creativity—and attract individuals who pursue new types of exchange and collaboration, as well as those who appropriate and exploit their music (discussed further below). The idea of working with Romani musicians had never occurred to Toni until 1997, after he had spent so much time playing avant-garde jazz, and he heard a connection between avant-garde jazz and the music of the Čerkezi ensemble. Even then, he did not pursue any kind of collaboration, as he had no interest in participating in “world music” as a genre, viewing it as commercialized and distant

¹⁶¹ In my conversations with Asan Rašid, he affirms that Čerkez was a first name, not a family name. But the connection with the ethnic group *čerkezi* (Circassians) merits mentioning. This group, from the region of the North Caucasus and along the northeastern shore of the Black Sea, was displaced in the middle of the nineteenth century by Russian conquest of the area. Many were exiled to the Ottoman Empire, and a small Circassian population persisted through the Yugoslav era and even after, at least in Kosovo if not also in Macedonia (Kovačec 1992:44–46; Kaya 2004; Baskan 2012:99). The last Circassian village (Cherkes Kjoj), located 10 km from Prishtina, Kosovo, was evacuated during the 1999 Kosovo War.

from his individualistic musical pathway of self-discovery, a pathway where artistic and aesthetic moves are found within oneself.

But his pathway ended up leading him towards world music by way of the well-known Bulgarian kaval virtuoso Theodosii Spassov in the early 2000s.¹⁶² Toni told me about how they ended up working together:

I've never had a desire to get into world music, let alone make my own covers of Macedonian folk music, but it all turned out to be very spontaneous. The main person is Theodosii, I met him and he invited me to play together and that's how it started. Theodosii and I recorded two albums, full with mix and mastering, both of which never got released. [. . .] We recorded one album with Balkan Winds, eight musicians from seven different Balkan countries. After that Theodosii and I recorded at a concert in Universal Hall in Skopje. That was really crazy. It was Theodosii, Vasil [Hadžimanov], Alek [Sekulovski], and I. I wanted to bring together Vasil and Theodosii. I invited Vasil to play with us. It happened to be some kind of festival. Just before the concert I asked Theodosii what we are going to play. I hadn't given them any music. Theodosii says: "What should we play? Well, music, of course, what a stupid question. Let's start with something in E minor, something mystical." Alen [Hadži-Stefanov] recorded the entire concert and wanted to turn it into an album. It was supposed to be named *Mystic*. It's

¹⁶² Theodosii Spasov's music is often labeled "jazz" or "folk jazz." Donna Buchanan refers to him, primarily in reference to his music from the 1980s and 1990s as a "jazz *kavaldzhiya*" (Buchanan 2006), though especially his later recordings and performances cover quite broad stylistic territory with connections to film music, commercial pop music, and European-derived classical music.

stored somewhere on some hard disc. Anyways, that's how that thing began.

That's when I started to break the ice with Balkan Music.

Before that, I never touched it—I was running away from it. I was saying to myself, “I'm not in a field with a herd of sheep. I don't know anything about this music, I can only ruin it.” But when I had to go to the studio and on stage, I realized that all the people who were intensely involved in this kind of music like Theodosii, they liked my personal way of playing, that I'm not mimicking some kind of Balkan sound. I tried to practice Balkan phrasing in 7/8, but I was bored to death. Everything seemed to me like some kind of readymade solution—like now I have to put these four notes here, I'll need four more to finish the phrase and I'll put them in this or that scale. So I left it.

Even though he refrains from categorizing his project with the Čerkezi Orchestra as “Balkan music” or “world music” (or “jazz,” for that matter), he was drawn in by an artistry that he recognized in their playing, and his aversion to the realm of anything reminiscent of “folk” music was broken down. I asked him about it:

DW: What was the main difference between them and the other [Romani brass] bands?

TK: The integrity of their sound, it was on a much higher artistic level than the others. An opportunity came up [eight years after I first heard them] and I looked them up for a specific project and that was the reason we started the collaboration. But I had no idea if we'd even manage something until we sat down and start to play together. I could hardly wait. The first thing we played was my tune “Ed Blackwell,” you know, second line, and it sounded fantastic, better than I could

have ever dreamed. I said “This is it.” Then we tried Ornette Coleman’s “Three Little Wishes.”

DW: And how open were they for that?

TK: They were really open, just incredible, wonderful people. They were saying “our whole lives we have wanted to play jazz, but there has been no one to show us.”

DW: Do they know what jazz is or they have a concept of their own?

TK: They have listened to it—I mean they are brass players, they know who Harry James is and what *Bal na Voda* is. They’ve seen it a hundred times. They know a couple of the big names, they each know a *bluesy* phrase or two. [. . .]

But when I started to play with the Gypsies (*ciganite*), it was not going well, when *I* was trying to use jazz phrases. Their playing was destroying me. It was almost comical when I played a solo after them. So I had to get deeper into the music. But I never sat down to practice or listen or copy phrases, I would go directly on a gig with them and interact. And again, that stubbornness of mine to avoid the classical way of studying and solving a problem and to leave it to come forth naturally, either you have it or you don’t, it will come out or it won’t, resulted in the end with something suitable. Now, I don’t have a problem combining jazz, blues, or any other afro-centric style when I play with them. Sometimes I’ll put in some funk, some Caribbean music, anything that’s compatible, and I learned to play some Gypsy music and it’s all good for me now.

The collaboration between Toni and the Čerkezi Orchestra usually included Toni’s trio, with Alek Sekulovski on drums and Ivan Bejkov on bass, sometimes with the addition of Vasil Hadžimanov on piano and Cuban-born American percussionist Oscar Salas, who had relocated

to Skopje in 2011. The Čerkezi Orchestra part of the group was put together by Čerkez Rašid (and later, Asan), and included one tuba, one or two baritones, one or two saxophones, and one or two trumpets, and perhaps more musicians depending on the size of band required for a particular performance. Typical members of the ensemble included Ali Rašid on alto saxophone, Vilhen Memedov on tuba, Jashar Rašid on tapan and/or tarabuka, as well as female vocalist Tehaman Skenderovska. When I played with Toni and the Čerkezi Orchestra in the fall of 2013, Asan's 12-year-old son, Armando, joined the band for the first time on trumpet. "Ed Blackwell" is probably the composition Toni performs most often in any setting, which he usually refers to as simply "second line." Born in New Orleans, Ed Blackwell (1929–1992) was the long-time drummer for Ornette Coleman and is well known for the influence of the New Orleans second line style in his playing throughout his career.¹⁶³ The continuity of second line musicality through Blackwell's influential output is an exemplary case of the persistence of older, established African American musical sensibilities in avant-garde jazz.¹⁶⁴ Toni's "Ed Blackwell" illustrates a similar musicality: in its recorded version on *Borderlands* and in live performance, it features not only a second line groove laid down by Alek on drum set in dialogue with the grooves of the tapan and tuba, but also call and response, heterophony, collective improvisation, and microtonality. Through his composition, which is a tribute to Blackwell in name and in style,

¹⁶³ "Second line style" refers to the highly syncopated drumming patterns commonly used in New Orleans street parades. These parades usually consist of a first line, which include members of the club organizing the parade and the musicians, and a second line, the crowd that follows. Second line rhythmic patterns are numerous and often involve an eighth-note feel that is somewhere between swung and straight (for more on Blackwell, see Riley and Vidacovich 1995; Schmalenberger 2000; for more on second line, see A. Stewart 2000; Doleac 2013; Sakakeeny 2013).

¹⁶⁴ David Schmalenberger explores Blackwell's stylistic evolution, situating his playing as a cultural intersection of New Orleans and West Africa. In a close musical analysis, he traces the presence of various New Orleans "street beats" and second line gestures through various Blackwell drum solos and relates them to a number of West African rhythmic concepts (2000:55-97).

Toni joins himself and the Čerkezi Orchestra to the African-diasporic legacy of jazz—one that he sees as universal and available for all humanity.



Figure 36. The Čerkezi Orchestra warming up before a performance with Toni Kitanovski in 2013. At left playing trumpet is Asan Rašid.

In conversations with me, Toni’s rhetoric about the project is always in the context of the avant-garde jazz qualities that he hears in the improvisation and ensemble playing of the Čerkezi musicians. But he also emphasizes—and even more in public forums such as newspaper interviews—ways that there is a mutual process of musical learning occurring in the collaboration. Briefly examining the tracks comprising the *Borderlands* album gives at least some clarity to this process. “Ed Blackwell,” “Togo,” “New Orleans (Never ending story),” and much of the material behind “Sheherezad” are ideas that Toni brought to the ensemble, while

“Tetovska,” “Čerkez Babo,” “Turski Čoček,” “Krstačko Oro” (Christening Dance), “Mr. Choon,” and “Mr. Neat” are dominated by ideas brought by the Čerkezi musicians.¹⁶⁵

The third track, “Gnossienne No. 1,” adapts the Erik Satie composition by the same name (published 1893). The original composition by Satie, along with his other *Gnossiennes* (especially numbers two through five), draws on Eastern European folk music that Satie was ostensibly introduced to at the Romanian cabaret of the Universal Exposition at the 1889 Paris World’s Fair (Gillmor 1988; Orledge 1990:190; Nunns 2002:122; Fauser 2005:257–61; Pasler 2009). Annegret Fauser notes that the music of the Romanian *lăutari* (a class of professional Romani musicians in Romania) was perceived as the most exotic, primitive, authentic Gypsy music of the fair—surpassing the Hungarian Gypsies who had been the talk of the 1878 Fair (2005:257).¹⁶⁶ In *Gnossienne No. 1*, Satie, who would later become a significant figure in the early twentieth-century Parisian avant-garde, employed modes he encountered among the Romanian *lăutari* that emphasized the augmented second interval: an F dorian with an augmented fourth and an F melodic minor with an augmented fourth (the piece is also full of acciaccaturas that seem to reference the ornamentation of the *lăutari*). Toni and the Čerkezi add their own stylistic ornamentation, timbral variation, modal changes (sometimes a lowered sixth is introduced), rhythmic syncopation, and (sometimes collective) improvisation, but stray little

¹⁶⁵ Because of the highly improvisatory nature of the music, its form was highly inconsistent and frequently changed in live performances. In producing the album *Toni*, with the help of recording engineer Alen Hadži-Stefanov, edited the material to make it suitable for release, adding another layer of mediation.

¹⁶⁶ Though the *Gnossiennes* are usually positioned as anti-Wagnerian, anti-Germanic, and anti-Romantic in their simplicity and repetitive nature (and cited as one of the seeds of minimalism), Alexander Simmons (2012) argues that they have much more to do with Satie’s religious mysticism during this period. He suggests that Satie’s aim was to use symbolist means of depicting exotic musical representations of otherness to resist modern rationality, while also “ascetically restraining his subjective identity in reaction to both commercialism [and] to the grandiose rhetoric of late-romanticism” (2012:4).

from the repetitive pulse and harmonic outline of the original. Track 11 on the album, “Gnossienne Čoček,” transforms the piece into a *čoček*, a Romani dance genre. This version of the piece is in a 9/8 meter (loosely ♩ + ♩ + ♩ + ♩ . , a typical *čoček* rhythm), adjusts and embellishes the melody accordingly, and adds a virtuosic alto saxophone improvisation by Ali Rašid over a harmonic minor mode with an augmented fourth.¹⁶⁷

On one hand, this interpretation of Satie’s exoticist Europeanization of a Romani musical practice seems to pay homage to the early twentieth century avant-garde—the same avant-garde that Duke Ellington arguably turned his back on because of the very primitivism Satie’s music exhibits. But on the other hand, could the Kitanovski and Čerkezi recording of “Gnossienne No. 1” and to an even greater extent, “Gnossienne Čoček,” be read as a Romani reclaiming of a nineteenth-century representation of Romani music preserved by the notational practices of European classical music, through the lens of an Ellingtonian avant-garde jazz openness to a wide spectrum of musical influence that is not grounded in imagined narratives of primitiveness, purity, or authenticity? In “Gnossienne Čoček,” not only is Satie’s rhythmic framework discarded for something fast, energetic, and characteristically Romani, but his melodic mode is also discarded by Ali Rašid, who improvises using the lowered sixth—a pitch that only appears once in Satie’s form, as an *acciaccatura*.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, if this *is* an act of musical reclamation, where is Toni positioned in that act? Before pursuing that question, here are a few more thoughts from Toni on musical connections he hears in the collaboration.

¹⁶⁷ See Silverman 2012:27–30 for a full description of *čoček* in Balkan Romani music.

¹⁶⁸ Silverman notes that adapting themes from classical music to a *čoček* dance rhythm is a common practice among Romani wedding musicians, which would situate these adaptation of Satie’s composition as squarely within typical Romani practices musical innovation (2012:300–01n10).

When I ended up figuring out is that the rhythm [of the Čerkezi] is the same as *clave*. Many musics have that *clave*, the two-measure, three-two *clave* (| ♩ . ♩ . ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ |). The first three notes you hear in tango, *Ba-ba-ba, Ba-ba-ba, Bam-ba*, but the basic main rhythm in Gypsy music here, one of the *čoček* rhythms that comes most likely from somewhere in Turkey, it's the same rhythm, [singing faster] *Dan-ga-ga, Gan-ga-ga, Da-ga, Dan-diga-da, Ga-di-ga, Ga-ga*, and again—the same rhythm. I said *wow*, this is super, let's try and play everything has something to do with *clave*! We tried Caribbean, Brazilian, Cuban stuff, reggae. Everything was perfect, like the original.

One of the best things that have ever happened to us occurred while we were playing at the Berlin Jazz Festival. It was 2007 or 2008. We were performing together with the Rebirth Brass Band from New Orleans, all of us together on the stage, without any rehearsal. We sounded as though we were born and raised together and played our whole lives together. Everything was compatible because of *clave*. [. . .] *Anyways*, then I started to figure out and realize that all the great jazz artists had *clave* in themselves, the singers I mean, most of them don't even know what *clave* is, I mean they know it as a term, probably don't know what the rhythm is, though they have heard it. Every time I listen to Tony Bennett, he always phrases in *clave*, his accents are there.

Toni's primary thread here is finding common ground in the collaboration, and he does so rhythmically, connecting Romani music, New Orleans second line, tango, and the music of Africa and the African diaspora and even the pop singing of Tony Bennett. This supports his universality narrative that allows for his own participation in the jazz tradition. The universality

of the clave rhythm is not a new concept, as Christopher Washburne notes in his article “The Clave of Jazz” (1997). Washburne argues that the influence of clave rhythms in jazz should be labeled as “Afro-Cuban” to emphasize the significance of the clave Cuban and Caribbean styles and the presence of those styles in New Orleans during jazz’s formative years, even if that seems to oversimplify processes of cultural mixing historically fostered in New Orleans (ibid.:68).

David García (2011) similarly challenges a linear Africa-Cuba-New Orleans passage of rhythmic development, suggesting that musics are always in dialogue with one another as he demonstrates with regard to Afro-Cuban jazz in the period of bebop’s emergence and Dizzy Gillespie’s collaboration with Chano Pozo.

With the Čerkezi, Toni brings a number of musics in dialogue with one another, finding many rhythmic commonalities and succeeding in what Paul Berliner calls “striking a groove,” a goal of jazz musicians accomplished through “the negotiation of a shared sense of the beat” (1994:349), and an element of a co-production of acoustemology. Even as he negotiates the beat around the clave rhythm, Toni knows the parallel historical roots of Romani brass band musicians and their New Orleans counterparts, both of whom adopted instruments played by members of dominant populations and adapted them to their social-musical purposes. The Rebirth Brass Band and the Čerkezi Orchestra showed a similar sensibility in negotiating a shared sense of the beat, striking a groove that gives an illusion of a shared life experience.¹⁶⁹ I can imagine Toni, Asan, and the whole group nodding along with Charles Keil’s words about participatory discrepancies in striking that groove:

Music is about process, not product; it’s not seriousness and practice in deferring

¹⁶⁹ Toni’s trio and the Čerkezi Orchestra also negotiated a shared sense of beat, striking a groove that suggested some kind of shared experience; this is reminiscent of processes of interplay between musicians in jazz and other music of the African diaspora as analyzed by scholars (e.g., Berliner 1994; Keil 1995; Monson 1996; Hodson 2007)

gratification but play and pleasure that we humans need from it; “groove” or “vital drive” is not some essence of music that we can simply take for granted, but must be figured out each time between players; music is . . . about motions, dance, global and contradictory feelings; it’s not about composers bringing forms from on high for mere mortals to realize or approximate, it’s about getting down and into the groove, everyone creating socially from the bottom up. (1995:1)

In my conversations with Asan Rašid, he also emphasizes his and his group’s openness to collaboration and innovation. He compared strictly dividing music by categories or genres to the way that the politicians divide nationalities (*naciite*), and sees music as a model for the ways that people should come together. As far as jazz is concerned, he sees it as articulating difference, telling me “jazz is not our music (*džez ne e naša muzika*), it’s yours (*vaša e*),” presumably because of my American nationality and my familiarity with the jazz idiom as a player. But, like Toni, he sees it as a site for the negotiation of difference, and for the experience of striking a groove. He draws on Louis Armstrong and *Bal na Voda* as examples of jazz, situating himself as familiar with the roots of jazz not only in America, but in socialist Yugoslavia. Like Toni, he emphasizes the co-learning process, an eagerness to collaborate, and an excitement about the shared musical experience that has opened up new pathways and new opportunities. This corroborates Alaina Lemon’s observation in her study of Roms in Russia that

It is not Roma who find “hybridity” problematic, but non-Roma who see it as shifty . . . But acts of *shifting* between codes or cultural repertoires need not reveal shifty character; shifting is a basic condition of all social interaction and relations, which are always multiple. (Lemon 2000:212, emphasis in original)

Those pathways and opportunities are not only full of musical negotiations, but also negotiations that have to do with class, ethnicity, and power. The acts of shifting in these negotiations are sociovirtuosic and navigate pathways that are rife with contradictions, in this case, the contradiction of universality and difference. Toni's comments on a 2014 performance in Zagreb offer further insight:

TK: It was seven of us. Alek, Bejkov, and I were the whites, Tehamana on vocals, Asan, tuba, and tapan, four Gypsies in all. Their tradition and integrity is incredible, their ability to play every style of music, and to shade it with what they have within themselves—fantastic. What's more, individually, they are crazy! There is one guy, a saxophone player, with whom I had some of the best experiences playing avant-garde [Ali Rašid]. He hasn't even heard the word avant-garde, doesn't know what that is or that such type of jazz exists, but he has it naturally inside of himself. The instant he hears something weird, that sounds irregular, he turns into a perfect avant-gardist.

DW: And his sound, what is it like?

TK: Motherfucker. [laughs] He is number one (*najgolem car*, the biggest czar or king), fuck Ferus [Mustafa], fuck everything. He is mad as a rattle! (*lud kao zvečka*)¹⁷⁰

Though Toni has also described himself to me as mad (*lud*) many times, and his talk about Ali having some kind of sensibility “naturally inside” echoes the way he talks about himself as an artist, here he reveals that there is difference at play that goes beyond music to issues of ethnicity, race, and representation, especially when he situates himself and his trio as white, excluding the Romani musicians from that category and implying that they are black. At

¹⁷⁰ Ferus Mustafa is an internationally known Romani saxophone player from Macedonia, one of the most famous Romani saxophone players in the world.

one point in 2014, a joke was circulating in ethnic Macedonian musician circles—I heard the joke four or five times in the span of a week from musicians who played some form of jazz, in pop music cover bands, or in the bands of pop and rock artists. It goes like this: “Two Gypsies walk into a jazz club. They’re sitting there and after a while the one turns to the other and says: ‘Man these guys are really good, but they’re making a lot of mistakes!’” The joke always got a lot of hearty laughs for at least three reasons. First, there is the assumption that Roms have natural-born musical talent, and are attracted to and can recognize other virtuosic musicians. Second, the Roms’ erroneous evaluation of the jazz musicians’ abilities shows that they are apparently ignorant of what jazz is, and are not sophisticated enough to tell the difference between a mistake and the way the music is supposed to sound. And third, Roms are stereotyped as having big egos about their musical talent, always asserting that they are the best musicians (ostensibly playing up to patrons so they can get a gig) and that other musicians make many mistakes.¹⁷¹ The joke portrays them as putting themselves above even musicians who are playing in a style with which they have little experience, and, in turn situates jazz musicians (and, potentially, African Americans more broadly) as more sophisticated, more intelligent, and more cosmopolitan (but not necessarily as better musicians) than Romani musicians.

This joke and its repeated telling affirms these stereotypes, all centered on an image of Roms as unsophisticated but naturally talented, proud but ignorant, and entertaining but not cosmopolitan (read: primitive). Roms are relegated to a lower social position and situated as Other, but exhibit at least a curiosity about something (jazz) that is outside of their traditional domain. In these stereotypes, together with aforementioned Macedonian assertions that “Gypsies are our blacks,” Toni’s situation of himself and his trio as white, and the typical patron-client

¹⁷¹ I am grateful to Carol Silverman for suggesting this third layer of meaning.

relationship of Romani musicians in Macedonia, parallels with African American minstrelsy and its elements of fascination and degradation are clear.¹⁷² Yet when Toni or other Macedonians compare Roms to “blacks,” they almost always mean American blacks; and though identifying Roms as blacks may emphasize elements of essentialization and exoticization of the Other, it may mitigate degradation since ethnic Macedonians do not carry a historically racialized superiority over individuals marked as African or African American, even if they situate themselves as white.¹⁷³

By the time Toni’s collaboration with the Čerkezi Orchestra began, various Romani groups had been experiencing great popularity on the world music circuit, including Taraf de Haidouks, Fanfare Ciočarlaia, Boban Marković, and, from Macedonia, Kočani Orkestar. Projects featuring Romani brass band musicians in collaboration with non-Roms were also nothing new. Goran Bregović, born in Bosnia of mixed Serbian and Croatian descent, may be the most well known performer and arranger of Gypsy music in the world, but he is often “an object of wrath . . . labeled as a thief and a robber” (Silverman 2012:277) by Balkan Roms. Silverman discusses Bregović with regard to the ways he commercializes Romani musical practices, profits at the expense of others, and situates Roms as wild, primitive, ancient, and unchanging (2012:275–280). Anecdotes about how little Bregović pays Romani musicians with whom he plays circulate widely; Toni is aware of these stories and distances himself from such practices, choosing to divide payments from festivals and concerts equally among musicians in the same way that he does when he plays with his trio or in other configurations, almost taking pride in the fact that this project is not making him rich. In what he sees as the spirit of jazz, and especially avant-

¹⁷² See Lott 1993 and Johnson 2003, also Radano 2003 on the historical construction of black music as “black” in America.

¹⁷³ Cf. Lemon 1995, 2000; Zakharov 2015.

garde jazz, he rejects both the way Bregović shapes Romani music to make it more commercially appealing and the exoticist, populist approach that is sustained by practices of appropriation. To be clear, Toni and the Čerkezi are at least indirectly benefitting from the European craze for Romani brass band music, a trend promoted by Bregović and others before them, but they seem to be doing so on their own terms.

Silverman, drawing on the work of Feld et al., looks closely at what Feld calls “celebratory” and “anxious” narratives of world music appropriation (Silverman 2012:279; Feld 2000b; see also Lipsitz 1994; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). Celebratory narratives serve to valorize hybridity, while anxious ones are concerned about purity and economics of exploitation. She interrogates both narratives, finding the celebratory ones overconfident about the ability of hybrid musics to induce change and the anxious ones too preoccupied with purity and authenticity. She locates herself “in the celebratory camp in relation to artistic creativity and in the anxious camp in relation to political economy,” calling for greater attention to “questions of agency, profits, control, and the range of options available to performers” (2012:280). Toni seems to share Silverman’s location as both celebratory of artistic creativity and anxious about political economy, though he is perhaps more celebratory and likely less anxious. After all, the collaboration for him is the artistic pinnacle of avant-garde jazz, and he seeks to stay true to his Ellington-inspired values about the universality of humankind in the way he approaches the musical aspects of the collaboration and the sharing of profits. And yet Silverman further warns of the “slippery slope from collaboration to appropriation to exploitation” (ibid.:272–73). Similar to the “hybridity” concept, using the word “collaboration” can imply a false sense of equality and mask differences in intention, positionality, and results for various actors (ibid.:279–80; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000:19), and those differences are evident in this case, as I have described.

For both Toni and the Čerkezi musicians, their shared universal openness and drive for innovation seem to distance them from the concept of “appropriation” and its underlying assumption of essentialism, wherein music (or other parts of culture) can ostensibly be assigned to some singular, unitary origin and be owned, and thus be appropriated. “Exploitation” also seems too strong of a word as they are mutually benefitting from what the other is offering in the collaboration, albeit in different ways. As the Čerkezi borrow jazz sensibilities in the collaboration with Toni, the political economy of this collaboration follows Silverman’s general observation that “when Roma appropriate, however, their class relationship is rarely altered; no matter how powerful their music, they do not become powerful politically” (ibid.:274). But they observe Toni’s rejection of Bregović-style financial practices and see that his position in the Macedonian middle class is not changing as a result of their collaboration. When he works hard to book gigs for them in Macedonia and elsewhere and they view the compensation as fair, they continue to participate in the project and enjoy the greater name recognition (and employment opportunities) in Macedonia and the prestige that international performances has brought.¹⁷⁴

Like most of the participants in the scenes of this dissertation, Toni neither endorses dominant positions that aggravate social and economic inequalities nor oppositional ones that challenge the status quo and advocate for greater rights for Roms in Macedonia. Instead, he occupies an in-between space where ideas of inherent and divisive ethnic difference can coexist with a view of a shared universality of humankind. Though the collaboration is fraught with inequality of class (his and the ethnic Macedonians’ middle class in contrast with the lower class of the Romani musicians) and ethnicity (ethnic Macedonians as the dominant majority and Roms

¹⁷⁴ In contrast to the Čerkezi musicians’ warm affinity for Toni in the collaboration, they have expressed dissatisfaction with ethnic Macedonian managers that they feel have not provided enough performance opportunities for them as an independent ensemble.

as the most marginalized minority), Toni, Asan, and the other musicians of the group refrain from overtly challenging or highlighting those inequalities. Instead, they sociovirtuosically play with the inequalities, working together to produce desirable results for all: performances that pay a reasonable rate and that fall within acceptable and desired boundaries of aesthetic expression and artistic creativity.¹⁷⁵

Though Macedonian-Romani relations cannot be reduced to comparisons with white-black relations in America, two cases of how American jazz musicians have played with inequalities towards these same desirable results merit mentioning. First, Toni and the Čerkezi bear only some resemblance to the well-known integrated groups of Benny Goodman, as those groups were undergirded by an explicit progressive element. While Goodman's motivations were primarily musical (he saw music as more important than race and wanted to hire the best musicians, see Wilson, Van Loo, and Lighthart 2001:46), Goodman's groups were actively inspired, supported, and promoted by impresario John Hammond, a wealthy white man with progressive political ideas about racial equality (Hammond and Townsend 1977; Tackley 2012).¹⁷⁶ The second case is Ornette Coleman's longtime collaboration with bass player Charlie Haden, a parallel that might resonate stronger not only because of Coleman's avant-garde jazz sensibilities directly influenced Toni, but also because of the way Coleman never expressed an intention of bringing about social change through his music (at least not on the record). Instead, his music imagines alternative visions of reality rather than overtly challenging predominating injustices. As Robin Kelley has it in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, "the most radical art is not protest art but works that take us to another place, envision a different way

¹⁷⁵ I deal primarily with the economics of live performance, as the amount of capital generated from CD or digital download sales were relatively small in comparison and rarely discussed.

¹⁷⁶ Norman Granz was another prominent example of a white businessman involved in jazz who supported progressive ideals, see Hershorn 2011.

of seeing, perhaps a different way of feeling” (2002:11).¹⁷⁷ Perhaps Toni and the Čerkezi, despite their inequalities, are living out not a vision that is rooted in the well-worn pathways of appropriation and unequal power relations, but rather one that imagines a world where “the music of humankind” can be played by individuals of drastically different positions for ends that are acceptable and ethical for all participants, even the audience.

On the International Stage

After the release of their first album, and despite the fact that they consciously defined the project as neither jazz nor world music Toni and the Čerkezi Orchestra began performing at European jazz and world music festivals, performances that paid reasonably and allowed them to present their music as they had conceived it. Macedonian musicologist Tina Ivanova highlights the Čerkezi musicians in her 2007 article for the newspaper *Utrinski*, “The ‘Čerkezi’ Orchestra Fascinates the European Public.” She quotes Asan at length, and closes by comparing the Čerkezi Orchestra to the Buena Vista Social Club, both ensembles having existed for many years when they first received international attention (the Buena Vista Social Club having been promoted by Ry Cooder). She writes:

Only, it is a pity that Macedonia does not know how to discover its own true values. Our state institutions need to recognize these kinds of authentic musicians who are respected with the deepest honor by the audiences of the world. Unlike some countries in the world where these kinds of musicians even teach folklore in

¹⁷⁷ I am grateful to Alex Rodriguez for directing to me to this quote.

the conservatory, here in Macedonia, traditional music like this is marginalized instead of being celebrated, nurtured, and studied.¹⁷⁸ (Ivanova 2007)

On one hand, Ivanova's criticism seems to suggest that state institutions play a significant role in "discovering" and honoring musicians of diverse traditions within Macedonia's borders, and indeed the Ministry of Culture is a significant patron of musical recordings, performances, and tours for projects it selects every year. She points to larger issues of inequality and implicates the state as excluding the marginalized Romani minority, though she inadvertently draws on European "fascinations" with world music and the tropes of authenticity that often accompany representations of world music bands and artists and serve to further essentialize them and reinscribe the ethnic categories within which they are constructed.¹⁷⁹ In their performances at such European festivals since 2007, Toni joins the Čerkezi Orchestra in demonstrating musical virtuosity that might be considered stereotypically exotic and genetic, participating in a self-stereotypification that illustrates how, in a global political economy of performance, "self-representations are multiple and contingent, generated with an eye for maximum patronage" (Silverman 2012:7). Toni's position as a middle-class ethnic Macedonian fluent in English was advantageous in booking performances at these festivals, and, in time, Toni and the Čerkezi began performing as "official" cultural representatives of Macedonia at various festivals, sometimes supported by the Ministry of Culture.

Toni and the Čerkezi are in some ways playing out a variation on long-standing power relations where ethnic Macedonians function as patrons to Romani musicians who, in turn,

¹⁷⁸ Though *Utrinski* was one of the only print newspapers not controlled by the state or a ruling party ally at the time, Ivanova's account is still highly mediated, if only by virtue of the fact that she writes it in a journalistic fashion.

¹⁷⁹ This is particularly noteworthy considering growing anti-Romani sentiment throughout Europe.

mobilize existing stereotypes to their advantage. Their collaboration is not free from the imbalance of power as Toni navigates the business end in a pseudo-patron role, where he functions as gatekeeper of sorts to available funds and opportunities.¹⁸⁰ Toni has played a significant part in making the Čerkezi Orchestra well-known—Asan proudly highlights to me his projects with Vlatko Stefanovski and Kiril Džajkovski, both big names in Macedonian commercial folk-fusion music—but the Čerkezi are not getting rich either.¹⁸¹ For Toni, his role in promoting the Čerkezi Orchestra is not some kind of progressive advocating, but rather a consequence of the transnational jazz narratives that he espouses, narratives that loose him from the anxiety of appropriation. They collaborate in a mode of music making that is positioned as universally open to any human participant, and they do so towards mutually beneficial ends, even if absolute equality of benefit is impossible to achieve. Despite the sometimes essentializing and exoticizing nature of the support Toni and the Čerkezi orchestra welcome from audiences and state institutions, they all take advantage of that support, which provides for their own desired musical experience, even if perceptions of it as avant-garde jazz, world music, folk, or fusion vary even among the musicians themselves.

Along Toni's personal transnational pathway of jazz, he has accumulated jazz narratives through Špato and the musical institutions of Yugoslavia, through his education at Berklee, and through his encounter with avant-garde jazz in Boston, among, I'm sure, many others. His pathway has taken him in a new direction, to the position as the director of the jazz program at the Faculty of Musical Arts at "Goce Delčev" University in Štip. In that role, he passes along his

¹⁸⁰ The actual patrons in all of these cases include the Macedonian state, corporate sponsors of festivals, and the festivals themselves.

¹⁸¹ I contrast this not only with Bregović's accumulation of wealth at the expense of musicians he employs, but also with the well-connected in Macedonia who benefit from sponsorships and participate in corruption schemes.

own jazz narratives to students from all over Macedonia in the context of a state institution. Founded in 2007, the jazz program was the first place in Macedonian higher education to offer instruction in a musical practice outside European classical music or Macedonian folk music traditions. Toni succeeded the original director of the program, Ilija Pejovski, who was carrying on the Yugoslav legacy of Špato's jazz narratives he experienced in the context of the Radio Big Band until his retirement. As Toni has begun to shape the program, he has engaged his frequent collaborators Alek Sekulovski and Vasil Hadžimanov as instructors. He has also made efforts to engage a small group of younger jazz musicians who were trained in Graz, Austria at the University of Music and Performing Arts. It is to these musicians and the jazz narrative that they carried from Graz that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Graz Crew, Selective Music Labor, and “Apparent Political Patronage”

In the mid-2000s, a small group of male Macedonian musicians enrolled at the Jazz Institute of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, where they developed exceptional technical, stylistic, and improvisational skills on their respective instruments. Two saxophone players, a trumpet player, and an upright bass player all born in the mid-1980s, they went through a selective audition process and received full scholarships designated for students from former Yugoslavia. Tenor saxophone player Ivan Ivanov (b. 1984) from the town of Veles enrolled first in 2005, followed by alto saxophone player Kiril Kuzmanov (b. 1987) from Štip in 2006. Ivanov and Kuzmanov both studied at the music high school in Štip, and were introduced to jazz by long-time jazz saxophone pedagogue and Štip native Goce Micanov, who taught at the high school at the time. Trumpet player Trajče Velkov (b. 1983) from Probištip finished a degree at the Faculty of Musical Arts in Skopje and enrolled at Graz in 2007, followed by bassist Kiril Tufekčievski (b. 1983) who grew up in Skopje and enrolled in 2008 after receiving an undergraduate degree in classical music performance. Though Kuzmanov and Ivanov knew each other well before attending, as did Velkov and Tufekčievski, attending the school in Graz was the first time they all spent time together. In fact, Tufekčievski met Kuzmanov and Ivanov in Graz for the first time. Each of these musicians comes from a family that could be described as middle class, which in Macedonia could be characterized as downwardly-mobile due to increasing precarity and difficulty in finding and maintaining employment outside of state networks, as I have described.

While in Graz, these musicians developed a strong affinity for straight-ahead jazz, a term denoting jazz that is not usually influenced by post-1970 fusion, free jazz, or avant-garde jazz, but rather keeps with traditions and conventions of jazz performance of the 1950s and 1960s in the realms of bebop, hard bop, and other related streams. I refer to these musicians as the Graz crew, loosely translating the word “crew” from the Macedonian colloquial term *ekipa*, meaning “team” and used frequently to depict a closely bonded group of friends or business associates, a social formation that the Graz crew exemplifies. The Graz crew began to return to Macedonia in 2010 as each one finished his studies, but they all have struggled with the economic challenges of being jazz musicians in a small post-Yugoslav society with a small jazz scene, where the middle class is downwardly-mobile and economic gain is accessible primarily through the nepotistic clientelism of the partocratic patronage system. In this chapter I focus on the straight-ahead jazz narrative privileged by these musicians and the consequential implications for their employment, in the process illuminating the intersection of music making, economic precarity, and networks of nepotism and patronage.

In my discussion of employment in this chapter, I show how the Graz crew engages in what I call “selective music labor,” wherein they carry out their jazz narrative by privileging the straight-ahead jazz aesthetic and position themselves with varying degrees of disdain towards their various labor contexts. They draw on both official employment and a cash-based grey economy to survive the economic challenges of post-Yugoslav Macedonia, yet they idealize a life where an aesthetically preferable music labor provides not only an affect of enjoyment, but also their livelihood. I will first discuss concepts of affective labor and the privileging of certain aesthetics, followed by some background on the jazz institute at Graz. I will then provide several examples of these musicians’ music labor that illustrate how they are privileging a straight-ahead

jazz aesthetic as they selectively engage in the music labor they are undertaking. These examples also show how they are navigating the economic challenges facing music laborers in a post-Yugoslav case of what has been termed a global “precariat,” a term referring to “all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation” (Neilson and Rossiter 2005). I do not situate the precariat as a class *per se* in the way Guy Standing (2011) approaches it, but follow Richard Seymour (2012) in situating it as a state of uncertainty applicable to an increasingly large sector of the world’s population. The Graz crew is but one example of the growing precarity for musicians (seen in other examples in this dissertation) in an increasingly precarious Macedonian society.

I close the chapter, and the three-chapter part of this dissertation focusing on the jazz scene, with an ethnographic example of the “jazz party” hosted at the residence of the president of Macedonia, Gjorge Ivanov, in the fall of 2014. At this event, the jazz narratives of the jazz scene converged at the site of what I call “apparent political patronage.”

Affective Labor and Aesthetic Privileging

Based on my work with them, I conclude that the members of Graz crew engage in what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have defined as affective labor, a form of immaterial labor “that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion” (2004:108). They position affective labor as a subset of immaterial labor, that is, labor that produces immaterial products such as ideas, relationships, information, and affects. Affective labor can be seen in the labor of flight attendants, fast-food workers, nurses, and journalists, examples which illustrate that affective labor often occurs in combination with intellectual/cognitive labor (also immaterial labor), as well as material forms of labor. Hardt and

Negri emphasize that even if positive affects are produced or manipulated, affective labor does not make all work pleasant or rewarding. Ana Hofman (2015) follows this line of thinking in applying the affective labor concept to music making in *kafanas* during socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁸² In her examination of both positive and negative assessments of affective work, she builds on scholarship that seeks to provide more refined analysis of affective labor and its products (i.e., Dowling 2007; Gill and Pratt 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008), integrating the somatic and sonic production of affect with patron-client economic aspects of *kafana* musical performance in her discussion of female singers negotiating their social positions.

The musicians of the Graz crew also negotiate their social positions through affective work, constituting an example of a specific type of affective labor that places primacy on the production or manipulation of affect as laborers are experiencing it and assessing it themselves. In the case of the Graz crew, when they produced a given sonic aesthetic in their music making, their experience of the resulting affect as positive, exciting, or passion-inducing was directly related to the music's stylistic proximity to straight-ahead jazz. In addition, these musicians placed a morality on their affective labor, asserting that it *should* be pleasant and rewarding and produce a positive affect for them as musicians both individually and collectively, and that there *should* be an audience for such music—if only people understood the music the way they did. They bemoaned instances where the production of affect is unpleasant for them, mainly through their performance of—to them—inferior aesthetics requested (or demanded) by various employers, fellow musicians outside of their crew, and audiences. What they desired was an audience that appreciated jazz as they did—something more than the dozen or so “good

¹⁸² As Hofman (2015) notes, *kafana* can be translated as bar, café, tavern, but no translation can quite capture the specific experience of drinking, eating, listening to music and socializing that happens in a *kafana*. In the Yugoslav era, the word was associated with Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Macedonia, but was known throughout the whole territory of Yugoslavia.

listeners” at Menada—gigs that provided opportunities them to produce a positive affect without compromising their aesthetic values, and that paid a decent wage. Because of the morality placed on their affective labor, they also, as I will describe, exhibited refusal—refusal to produce the desired affect if it involved aesthetics outside the boundaries of their preferences.¹⁸³



Figure 37. Members of the Graz crew playing at Menada. Trajče Velkov (trumpet), Kiril Tufekčievski (bass), Kiril Kuzmanov (alto saxophone)

In fact, I choose to use the word “aesthetic,” because of the determination by the Graz crew that straight-ahead jazz is a superior—more beautiful, more sublime—sonic expression than other forms of jazz, not to mention other genres of music. And though I tend to agree with

¹⁸³ Though the straight-ahead aesthetic is quite distant from the music of serialist composers, Milton Babbitt’s notable article “Who Cares if You Listen?” (1958) seems relevant here. While Babbitt exhibits a staunch disdain for audience approval (which was not linked to the livelihoods and prestige of serialist composers), the Graz musicians yearned for audience approval of music that they found meaningful and compelling, and from which they desired to earn a living without compromising its practice or aesthetic.

Pierre Bourdieu in his arguments against Kantian aesthetics and in his characterization of taste as an issue of class (Bourdieu 1984), the marginalized position of jazz in Macedonian and other societies in combination with the transnational pathways that these musicians participate in preclude the positioning of this discussion as an issue of class-based taste in Macedonia. Instead, I propose that taste, or “aesthetic preference,” is one of three constituent parts of a transnational jazz narrative (the other aspects being history and boundaries for jazz). In this case, educational institutions like the University in Graz play a role in advancing particular jazz narratives by privileging certain aesthetics as elite or superior through their curricula, choices of faculty, and pedagogical methods. When musicians like the Graz crew return home, they carry with them a musical elitism that does not express (or match) their class position.

The Jazz Institute at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz is situated squarely in the straight-ahead jazz tradition.¹⁸⁴ As part of their curriculum, students learn and perform many jazz standards by memory and also develop their own compositions in the straight-ahead style. The Macedonian musicians, while honing their skills as straight-ahead players, performed often in Graz and around the region. But over the four years of their stay in Graz, they reported that the payment they received for a typical jazz gig steadily decreased, especially if there were no Americans in the group.¹⁸⁵ They remarked to me that whenever there was an American musician in a given group, or if a group was all Americans, that group commanded a significantly higher fee; from their perspective, audiences in Graz and the

¹⁸⁴ Its instructors include vocalist and pianist Dena DeRose, drummer Howard Curtis, pianist Renato Chicco, trumpet player Jim Rotondi, and trombone player Ed Neumeister, all practitioners of jazz that could be described as straight-ahead. There are many American jazz musicians on the faculty, as well as Europeans who have spent significant time living in New York City as participants in the jazz scene there.

¹⁸⁵ They speculated that this might have also had something to do with negative attitudes towards migrants and guest workers from Southeastern Europe in Austria.

surrounding region connected authenticity in jazz performance with American citizenship—reminiscent of David Ake’s analysis of American jazz musicians negotiating identity in Paris (Ake 2012b:121–139). This is certainly related to broader central European attitudes towards migrant workers from Southeastern Europe, and, in light of these challenges, the Macedonian musicians found solidarity, friendship, and musical collaboration with fellow students from other former Yugoslav republics—most notably Bosnia—that they continue today.

Attitudes from the Graz crew towards their experience in Graz were quite ambivalent and flexible. Sometimes the musicians talked nostalgically about their musical experiences there, living a bohemian life and playing jazz on the streets if they wanted to make a few Euros (doing so in Macedonia would be beyond the realm of possibility).¹⁸⁶ At other times they complained, as typical of music students just about anywhere, about the required elements of their program of study itself or about personal problems they had with instructors. But then they spoke with longing about how it was such a pleasure to play with so many talented jazz musicians among the students and faculty. Alto saxophone player Kire Kuzmanov often traveled back to Austria to perform with faculty trumpet player Jim Rotondi, an opportunity that he enjoyed and for which he was grateful. Like many expressions of nostalgia, these reflections were more about discontent with their musical experiences in Macedonia, which had much to do with an incompatibility between the jazz narrative they had picked up with Graz and the problem of subsisting as a musician in Macedonia.

¹⁸⁶ Musicians performing on the streets in Skopje’s city center were often thought of in the same category as beggars, and were often playing some variation of traditional music. Considering that *Skopje e selo* (Skopje is a village) and people tend to run into others that they know in the city center, playing jazz on the street as an educated musician would carry a high risk of humiliation and shame, and carry the risk of damaging one’s reputation as a skilled musician.

Especially in the earlier phases of my fieldwork between 2011 and 2013, these musicians would make comments to me like “Dave, I just want to play *jazz*, you know . . . ‘*ding-ding-a-ding-ding-a-ding-ding-a-ding . . .*’” imitating a driving swing pattern on a ride cymbal, “but come on, there’s no audience for that in Macedonia.” In my experiences listening to these musicians and playing with them in that early period, I found that they stayed very close to the musical practices of straight-ahead jazz, indicating something about the boundaries of their definition of what jazz is or is not. Their repertoire included standards and tunes mostly from before 1960, as well as newer material written in a straight-ahead style. Their improvisation was technically virtuosic and stayed within harmonic and rhythmic boundaries of straight-ahead jazz, rarely if ever approaching avant-garde or free jazz modes of improvisation, atonality, timbral variations, or any kind of adventurous polyrhythm. Their music was also distant from the music of Špato, which was associated with a large ensemble big band sound and not the small groups and extended improvisation characteristic of straight-ahead jazz. In many ways, this was the musical consequence of the history, jazz boundaries, and aesthetic preferences that constituted the jazz narrative they carried from Graz back to Macedonia. As these musicians began building their lives and livelihoods as professional musicians in Macedonia, the realities of this jazz narrative played out in the context of limited categories for employment and the absence of an audience of jazz aficionados.

Category 1: Macedonian Radio Television Big Band

In 2013, the Macedonian Radio Television Big Band held auditions for new ensemble members. The ensemble had continued the legacy of Špato into 1990s—playing not only big band music for occasional concerts and recordings, but also performing for televised events and

for state popular music performances—as a state-supported institution under independent Macedonia. But members of the big band had gradually retired since Špato’s time and had not been replaced, resulting in the eventual disbanding of the ensemble in 2002 (Dimitrov 2010). After the 2013 auditions, the big band hired its musicians as *honorarci*, a designation similar to that of independent contractors, where individuals sign a contract to receive a monthly paycheck but do not receive the benefits or security of being salaried employees. With independent contractor status, they were also not able to legally unionize or participate in the musicians’ labor union in relation to their employment in the big band.

In many cases, the 2013 auditions were a classic example of nepotism in Macedonia. Positions in the big band for which there are only one musician per instrument, such as bass or drums, were given to individuals with direct or family connections to party networks, regardless of whether their musicianship was superior to that of the other applicants. The three horn players in the Graz crew, none of whom are politically connected, were all hired—two in the five-member saxophone section, one in the five-member trumpet section. Their excellent technical abilities and musicianship could add to the horn sections of the ensemble without eliminating the employment of other perhaps better-connected musicians. Whenever I asked any of them how the big band was going, they would begin complaining about any of several aspects of the band. One aspect was the lack of competency of the band’s musical leadership, which consisted of individuals who had spent their careers embedding themselves in political networks and enjoyed the degree of power and job security that resulted. An example of this lack of competency was the low quality of the arrangements they were playing. They cited several instances where the entire big band would receive an arrangement that was written as a unison line in octaves, with the horn parts virtually unreadable, written outside of the range of the instrument entirely on

ledger lines above or below the staff. With at least some familiarity with orchestration and arranging using programs like Sibelius or Finale, the musicians all knew that these arrangements were made hastily using a “copy-paste” method, with no regard for basic orchestration skills of readability or playability in an instrument’s range, not to mention issues of musicality.

The big band in 2013 was engaged in playing for weekly performances on a live pop music singing competition titled “*Site Naši Pesni*” (“All Our Songs”) as well as the Macedonian franchise of “Dancing with the Stars,” among other responsibilities. The Graz crew found the music mind-numbing and held it in great disdain because of its sonic and stylistic distance from their preferred aesthetic of straight-ahead jazz. Their affective labor in this case in many ways fell short of producing the ideal affect for this type of performance. In fact, the affect it produced was one embodying unhappiness, boredom, and even disgust. In one example of the band playing on *Site Naši Pesni*, alto player Kire Kuzmanov, who had a high level of mastery of his instrument and consistently played straight-ahead jazz at a high skill level, performed a solo that revealed his disposition towards his experience: his playing was out of tune (he did not adjust his embouchure to compensate for the tendency for the middle D on the saxophone to be a bit sharp), and his affect was mechanical, robotic, and emotionally flat.¹⁸⁷ His musical act of refusal to produce the affect appropriate to the job exemplified not only a dedication to a set of aesthetic preferences, but also a testing of the boundaries for what would be an acceptable produced affect.

¹⁸⁷ See “Tvoite Bakneži na Moite Beli Košuli” (“Your Kisses on my White Shirts”) by Darko Tanevski, a pop ballad from the first quarter-final of the 2013 season of *Site Naši Pesni*. (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E4EBi9qr_Q accessed August 28, 2015.) For me, Kire’s playing in this example is nearly unrecognizable from a sonic perspective. In my experience playing and recording with him countless times, I have never heard him pay so little attention to the fundamentals of saxophone technique.

To add to the dissatisfaction with the aesthetic and musical leadership of the ensemble, the Graz crew discovered at their first rehearsal with the big band that the members had not received a monthly paycheck in over six months. It was well known that throughout the organization of Macedonian Radio Television, individuals with independent contractor status did not receive their paychecks on time, where as salaried employees did. In a country where utilities and cost of living were steadily increasing (especially in urban center Skopje, where Macedonia Radio Television operates), this inconsistency in payment caused extreme stress for the increasing number of individuals on the brink of poverty and motivates grey-economy cash payments in exchange for labor. Though these musicians were young and were not yet supporting families, all three of them are from regional towns and must either commute by bus from their towns and/or pay rent for a Skopje apartment. Most Macedonians continue to live in the home of their parents until they are married. If and when they marry, they either stay in their parents' home and their new spouse moves in, move into an apartment attached to their parents' home, or move into a parallel situation at the home of their spouse's parents. Thus, even the concept of paying rent is not something that is usually considered to be in the realm of possibilities. And even if they did receive their monthly paycheck of 200 Euros, affording bills, food, and either rent of even 100 Euros or bus tickets is hardly sustainable, especially if they are considering marriage and starting a family.

After a month or two of not receiving any payment for work, Trajče Velkov, the particularly outspoken trumpet player of the Graz crew, decided to take action. He began to speak to the other musicians of the ensemble (it was a *reviski orkestar*, which included a sizable string section) for *Site Naši Pesni*, using the arguments that, first, they were essentially working for free, and second, the live show in front of a studio audience of 300 could not go on without

them. They staged an informal strike, telling the ensemble leadership that they refused to play until their back pay was deposited into their bank accounts. Even though they were unable to legally unionize because of their independent contractor status, this informal strike worked. After about an hour, the musicians were able to see the funds in their bank accounts through accessing the internet on their smartphones, and the show went on. With a smirk and a laugh, Trajče told me that prior to that, he had no idea that direct deposit could work so quickly in Macedonia (the phrase *eh, ova a moja čudesna zemja Makedonija* fits here). This happened in one other instance at the end of 2013, after which the leaders of the big band and Trajče made a verbal agreement in front of all of the musicians that this would never happen again, and that the big band would turn over a new leaf after the New Year. As it turns out, they did just that, as Trajče received a text message from the director on New Year's Eve that his services would no longer be required. The message also told him to pass the word to alto player Kuzmanov and another saxophonist associated with but not from the Graz crew that they also were no longer employed.

Their inability to legally unionize prevented the musicians from building more than fleeting solidarity with one another. The tenor player of the Graz crew, Ivan Ivanov, ended up deciding not to resist the leadership of the big band, and remained in the ensemble for the sake of some job security and perhaps the promise of future opportunities such as promotion to the status of salaried employee, where he would be much more likely to receive his paycheck on time. The leadership of the band likely acted under the pressure of the politically powerful Macedonia Radio Television higher-ups to rid the ensemble of individuals who were disturbing the financial norms of that organization. As one of the fired musicians told me in disappointment a few months later: "Dave, you need to know that here in Macedonia it's not important to have something quality, it's only important to have something." I have frequently heard similar

sentiments from Macedonians, which all seem to suggest that there is an ignorance in Macedonia for standards of excellence in music, the arts more generally, and even extending to other areas of life (media, journalism, academic scholarship are among the examples that come to mind). In this case, it is only important that the MRT big band exists, not that an *excellent* big band exists. The priority for those in positions of greater relative power remains not on producing a quality result, but in maintaining one's own position by nurturing the nepotistic network and marginalizing others whose level of expertise or excellence could pose a threat.

Category 2: “*Tezgi*” and Weddings

The second category of labor for these musicians includes work for hire, opportunities such as weddings and what are known in Macedonia as *tezgi*.¹⁸⁸ *Tezgi* are gigs where a band is hired to play background music at a club, restaurant, or special event and receive between thirty and fifty Euros per musician. This might be analogous to what is known on America's East Coast as a “club date,” in Chicago as a “jobbing gig” or simply “job,” and on the West Coast as a “casual.”¹⁸⁹ At times *tezgi* can be satisfying for the musicians of this crew, because they may be playing, for example, jazz standards in the style of their preference at a restaurant, even though the audience is not necessarily listening to them attentively. Trajče, the trumpet player, played many weddings for some years because of his knowledge of folk wedding repertoire and his proficiency in the ornamentation and style of Romani brass bands, with whom he has collaborated. He would make sufficient money from tips in addition to his standard pay, but would play for upwards of ten hours. He and others in the jazz scene would comment that this

¹⁸⁸ *Tezgi* is the plural of *tezga*, “a market stall.” These one-off gigs are also indicative of a sense of commercial small-time.

¹⁸⁹ See MacLeod 1993 for an ethnography of club dates in New York; Faulkner and Becker 2009 for a study of the role of repertoire in such gigs among jazz musicians.

negatively affected his sound because of fatigue on his embouchure, and he eventually got to the point where he would only play a wedding if he was desperate for money, which sometimes was more often than he would have liked. Weddings and other *tezgi*, though providing some income and perhaps mildly satisfying labor from time to time, fell far short of the specific type of affective labor the Graz crew desired.

This description of the Graz crew and the aesthetic privileging associated with their jazz narrative vis-à-vis their labor practices, is not unique, but is I suspect quite common to jazz musicians the world over (see, e.g., Umney and Krestos 2014 for a comparative study of young jazz musicians in London). When these musicians would begin to romanticize New York or talk to me wistfully about some ideal jazz paradise somewhere else in the world, I often reminded them that in New York, they might be playing jazz-standard *tezgi* for even less than they would make in Macedonia, if they could even land the gig, not to mention the difference in the cost of living they would face even if they lived in Brooklyn.

Aside from touting the common New York-centric historiography of jazz, their perspective is particularly Macedonian and post-Yugoslav in that they exhibit an expectation that if they have a degree in music, that is what makes them officially a *muzičar* or “musician” by profession, and that they will have—and perhaps even deserve—a career earning music in that profession. The state is not able to provide work for all of the musicians with degrees in Macedonia, and in the post-Yugoslav neoliberal context of Macedonia, no one is obligated to provide such work—or even pay musicians who are doing such work in cases like the MRT Big Band.

In addition, as three of the Graz musicians are not from Skopje, their dialects and subtle differences in dress and behavior position them as provincial and not urban in the eyes of Skopje

natives. This positions them (to an extent) as outsiders to the urban network of musicians (I'm talking here mostly but not exclusively about the MRT Big Band and its Yugoslav legacy), and even as their musical skills acquired abroad impress others, they also represent a threat to those in power, especially because the field has an extremely limited number of positions, simply because of Macedonia's small size. Their existence as a competitive threat, their distance from urban sensibilities, their aesthetic elitism, and their relative youth in a society that maintains a public hierarchy of honor with regard to age, all combine as substantial forces against their assumption of positions of influence (or well-paying positions) that would enable the affective labor they desire. They *are* part of a global precariat, not only because of neoliberalizing forces, but also because of the specific Macedonian context and its particular convergence of transnational jazz pathways and their narratives. These pathways and narratives have given the Graz crew opportunities for alternative belongings that go beyond Macedonia's borders and nepotistic networks, but in this case, those belongings are experienced at a cost. My time in Macedonia was characterized by a growing precariat in all sectors of Macedonian society because of the nepotistic neoliberalism birthed in the post-Yugoslav era. But as hegemony is never totalizing, and the sociovirtuosity of actors enables them to capitalize on the inconsistencies of the world around them, there are ways for jazz musicians to make spaces for belonging to transnational jazz narratives. The elasticity of these intersecting narratives that constitute the jazz scene in Macedonia allow jazz musicians to live in the contradictions of life in Macedonia, even if they do not overcome them. Almost paradoxically, one of the sites of their most promising employment opportunities is within the walls of institutions at one time considered the most resistant to any type of jazz: state-controlled music academies at institutions of higher education.

Category 3: Teaching in Higher Education

Two of the three state universities offering study in music in Macedonia have initiated opportunities for the study of jazz.¹⁹⁰ Sts. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje opened a program of study called “popular genres” in 2012. As mentioned above, the Faculty of Musical Arts (*Fakultet za Muzička Umetnost*, or FMU) at the university in Skopje opened in 1966, and until 2012 remained dedicated exclusively to training musicians and composers in the European tradition and the Macedonian folk traditions. The university in Štip was established in 2007 by the VMRO-DPMNE government, which invested many resources in the development of university facilities. In his role as director of the “Jazz Academy” (which also opened in 2007), Toni Kitanovski made a way for two of the Graz crew, Kiro Tufekčievski (bass) and Kire Kuzmanov, to hold teaching positions with *honorarec* contractor status, and had begun efforts to provide a job for Trajče Velkov, the trumpet player. Kuzmanov is from Štip, and alternated between phases where he paid some rent to share an apartment in Skopje and where he exclusively commuted by bus to and from Štip. Tufekčievski lived in Skopje and drove the 60 to 90 minute one-way trip to Štip once a week to teach his private bass students. He and tenor saxophonist Ivan Ivanov also managed to assume positions teaching at the popular genres program in Skopje, with Ivanov making the 45-minute commute from his hometown of Veles, where he also preferred to live.

Even though his jazz narrative was quite different from that of the Graz crew (which he viewed as narrow and constraining), Toni always went to great efforts to keep them in the scene and to provide more opportunities in general for jazz musicians who had excellent training and highly-refined skills, regardless of their particular aesthetic preferences. In my many

¹⁹⁰ The State University of Tetovo offers study in music but not jazz; Sv. Kilment Ohridski University in Bitola does not offer study in music.

conversations and collaborations from 2011 to 2014 with Toni and the musicians of the Graz crew, I observed and participated in a slow, musical and discursive process of challenging the aesthetic privileging of straight-ahead jazz. As I played together more frequently with the crew, we developed our own musical intimacies, experienced our own moments when we co-produced acoustemologies to make spaces in places like Menada, and even in the new Macedonian National Theater, a construction of the Skopje 2014 project. In 2014, I was asked by the Composers Association of Macedonia (SOKOM) to put together one “jazz” arrangement of a known classical composition for an awards night known as “Virtuozi” (virtuosi) celebrating the accomplishments of classical musicians and composers at the then-newly completed Macedonian National Theater. I agreed to do it as long as I was able to choose the musicians and acquire fair compensation for each one. The result was a performance by Velkov (trumpet), Ivanov (tenor saxophone), Kuzmanov (alto saxophone), and Tufekčievski (bass), along with Adi Imeri (guitar), Ratko Dautovski (percussion), and me. We performed “O Fortuna” from *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff in an arrangement I put together for the group that we titled “Karma Bura,” a play on the title of the original work that translates in Macedonian as “Karma Storm.”

All of us were extremely satisfied by the performance (SOKOM and the audience of classical music and connected party elites were pleased as well), and Velkov suggested we do more work together as an ensemble. I took it upon myself to produce several compositions over the next few months, Tufekčievski produced an original composition, and we recorded the material in September 2014 (with Bojan Petkov on guitar in place of Imeri), weeks before my return to the US at the end of my extended stay. Through processes of rehearsing, performing, and recording in the context of this project and all of its many musical and social settings, greater musical intimacies were developed among all of us, greater trust was built, and deeper friendship

was forged—with many of the constituent uncertainties that undergird friendship and keep it persisting into the future. The results of this trust and friendship were, in some cases, the expansion of jazz narratives beyond straight-ahead jazz—narratives that I self-consciously brought along my own transnational pathway to Macedonia that, for a short time, formed a small part of the jazz scene.

Through performing and recording together, through discussing contemporary practices of well-known jazz musicians, and through playing and improvising on one another's compositions, a greater musical openness has begun to develop to varying degrees among the musicians of the Graz crew in their playing and in their rhetoric about jazz and its boundaries. One telling conversation happened over beers at Menada, where we ended up after a performance we had played together in Skopje. We got into discussions of jazz in higher education, about Graz, and about whether avant-garde jazz should be taught there. Many varying and intense opinions were shared, with one of the loudest conclusions arguing that the skills of playing straight-ahead jazz styles could (and should?) be taught in a university setting, but that avant-garde jazz is something that one has to discover on his or her own. Though this conclusion affirms an aesthetic preference for straight-ahead jazz and implies a fundamental misunderstanding of the improvisational practices of avant-garde jazz and the skills it involves, it actually includes avant-garde both in jazz history and within the boundaries of what can be considered jazz.

When it comes to the students who come to Štip to study jazz, they often have no background whatsoever in anything that might be described as jazz. They are primarily seeking a university degree and want to study music that is not classical and not traditional, and thus the jazz program is the only option. Guitar players, bass players, and drummers often enter the

program with knowledge and experience playing only rock music and pop covers. Others play saxophone or trumpet, for instance, but are familiar with only traditional styles and ornamentation. If they wanted to study traditional music at a university in Macedonia, they would not be able to do so on saxophone or trumpet, but would have to play a folk (*narodna*) instrument as part of the folk music program of study.¹⁹¹ Some of these wind players come from Štip's sizable Romani community. This in some ways draws a line back to Skopje and Toni's work with Asan and the Čerkezi orchestra, but with a much different dynamic whereby students are enrolling in the jazz program explicitly to learn to play jazz from Toni and the other instructors.

In his own teaching, approach and curriculum, Toni tries to provide a broad basis for jazz practice that models students and instructors the particularities of jazz styles from early jazz to the present as well as his ideals of the universality of jazz. And by creating employment opportunities for the Graz musicians, he allows them to pass along their own jazz narratives to students and affirm their own aesthetic preferences, which in turn, reaffirms and strengthens their transnational, alternative belonging to those narratives, even in the context of a state-aligned institution. That being said, the jazz instructors in Štip and Skopje express disappointment that their students have low levels of motivation to practice and sometimes a low interest in jazz (however it is defined), and that their respective departments are unable to provide the necessary resources or facilities support in terms of instruments or even music stands. The circumstances are far from ideal, and they provided fodder for the types of conversations that pervaded Macedonian society since the government embarked on the Skopje 2014 project, conversations that question how a government can afford countless statues, monuments, new buildings, and

¹⁹¹ See Chapters 9 and 10 for discussions of these terms “traditional” (*tradicionalno*) and “folk” (*narodno*) with regard to music in Macedonia.

new facades in a capital city's center, but cannot allocate funds to outfit state institutions (universities, hospitals, primary schools, student dormitories, etc.) with their basic needs for equipment and maintenance.

For the Graz musicians, the transnational straight-ahead jazz aesthetic was a road to musical excellence, and a certain type of apparent merit-based elitism that they observed in Graz. Upon their return to Macedonia, they became disillusioned with their musical labor, and experienced classic Marxist alienation as they encountered the system of power deeply embedded in Macedonian society. Trajče began looking outside Macedonia and used his connections in Bosnia to find work teaching in a music high school there in the fall of 2014, while the others remained based in Macedonia. The individuals who are able to navigate the fissures in that system, like Toni Kitanovski, can perhaps play a role in providing opportunities for the types of affective labor these jazz musicians desire. Time will tell whether they and other musicians will follow the transnational pathway of jazz outside Macedonian borders like Trajče, or stay and attempt to make space for themselves and others to sustainably make music they find meaningful and aesthetically satisfying.

Transnational Jazz Pathways Converge: the Jazz Party at the President's Residence

I move this chapter one step closer to its closing with one final ethnographic example where pathways of jazz in Macedonia converged in the same time and place. In September of 2013, I got a call from Toni Kitanovski telling me that there was a "jazz party" to be hosted by President Gjorge Ivanov at his residence, and asking me if I would like to play in an ensemble representing the jazz program of the university in Štip. I had heard that the president was a big fan of jazz (and a serious audiophile), though I was not sure quite what that meant in terms of his

concept of jazz or what type of support (symbolic, financial and/or institutional?) he provided for jazz in Macedonia. I already knew that the office of the president carried little actual power—the Macedonian parliamentary system is set up for the parliament to be led by the prime minister, who forms the government and controls most of its constituent ministries (including the Ministry of Culture, the primary patron of the arts in Macedonia). The president is the official head of state, but because of the office of the president’s lack of power to actually influence policy, many citizens view him as a figurehead who only attends and hosts events.

Gjorge Ivanov took office in 2009 and was re-elected in 2014, both times as the VMRO-DPMNE candidate. The jazz party at his residence was originally intended to be a follow-up to an event the president had initiated a year earlier, designed to help raise funds for Skopje’s private 24-hour jazz radio station Jazz FM. Jazz FM was founded in 1998 by Alen Hadži-Stefanov and his father, Ljupčo, and has always carried on a precarious existence, drawing on a few corporate sponsors for financial support.¹⁹² The presumable goal for both events was that Jazz FM would receive more sponsorships from business owners who were in attendance, but

¹⁹² Alen lived in New York with his parents and younger brother from his high school years in the late 1980s until 1998. In 1990, he started listening to jazz intentionally, and got involved in recording live performances in the downtown avant-garde jazz scene. He did this out of his own passion for the music, usually for free, and slowly developed an encyclopedia of knowledge for jazz of all types (for more on the downtown scene of the 1980s and 1990s see Gendron 2005; Lewis 2008; Currie 2009; Piekut 2011; and Barzel 2012). Alen told me about that time period in New York, and began an impromptu roughly reverse-chronological laundry list of musicians who made an early impression on him: “I’m recording avant-garde at night, listening to Miles Davis Quintet with Philly Joe Jones during the daytime, learning about hardbop, bebop, learning about Duke Ellington, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, Satchmo, the Hot Fives and the Hot Sevens . . . Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter arrangements, McKinney’s Cotton Pickers, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, anything by Fats, I try to get everything by Fats Waller.” As a significant transnational pathway of jazz, Jazz FM reflected Alen’s broad grasp of the jazz tradition in its programming, which includes not only avant-garde jazz but fusion and even some so-called “smooth jazz.” Alen stayed involved with the scene in New York after he moved back to Macedonia, traveling back every summer for some time to record the annual (since 1996) Vision Festival, the world’s premier festival featuring avant-garde jazz. (See the festival’s webpage for more on its mission and purpose: www.artforart.org, accessed August 28, 2015.)

neither event produced such a result. The second event also ended up broadening its scope beyond Jazz FM, and became a celebration of “Macedonian jazz culture” as promoted by three institutions: Jazz FM, the jazz program at the university in Štip, and the renowned Skopje Jazz Festival, all of which are exemplary cases of institutions that function as transnational jazz pathways.¹⁹³ The lack of actual financial support is the primary reason that I label this as a site of “apparent political patronage” (not to mention the fact that the musicians were not paid to perform). There may have been some symbolic capital to be had at being included in this event, but patronage from the state came usually not through association with the president, but through the prime minister-led government and connections to party elites.

The evening at the president’s residence took place on a large outdoor patio with a small temporary stage in front of a crowd of about 200 people who were served drinks and hors

¹⁹³ The Skopje Jazz Festival began in 1982 and by 1987 was featuring the most famous jazz musicians in the world. Held every October, the festival is run almost single-handedly by its director Oliver Belopeta, whose hospitality and wonderful treatment of artists has given the festival an excellent reputation among jazz musicians around the world. Like Jazz FM, the jazz narrative of the Skopje Jazz Festival is broad, and the listing of its artists read like a who’s who of the most highly-regarded musicians in avant-garde jazz, straight-ahead jazz, European jazz, and Latin jazz. (European jazz is yet another jazz narrative in Macedonia that I have not approached here, with active bands including “Sethstat” and “Next to Silence” drawing primarily on that tradition. See Cerchiari, Cugny, and Kerschbaumer 2012 for a collection of essays on the topic.) After a period in the late 1990s and early 2000s when the festival included an “African night” and/or a “Brazilian night,” Belopeta initiated a second festival, “Off Fest,” a world music began in 2002 and occurs every June. Annual sponsors of the Skopje Jazz Festival include the Ministry of Culture, the Embassy of the United States of America, and other corporate sponsors. The festival has provided an introduction to jazz for many people in Macedonia, as it has become an event where people come to “see and be seen,” and also participate in a musical performance whose quality it verifiably world-class. Since the early 1990s, Belopeta also has run the record label SJF Records, which puts out CDs of Macedonian jazz musicians. He sees this as an opportunity to stimulate new material from local musicians, though for him, the recordings function more as promotional materials for musicians to seek bookings (usually there is no digital distribution, and only a limited number of CDs are pressed). Belopeta typically holds several events during the year to celebrate jazz and promote the festival, asking musicians to volunteer to perform, which most Macedonian musicians end up doing, if only to be associated with the festival name and perform in front of a large crowd.

d'oeuvres. The ensemble of eight musicians associated with jazz program in Štip performed, led by Toni Kitanovski and including three of the Graz graduates and me. We played Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," Roscoe Mitchell's "Odwalla," and other decidedly post-1960 compositions that Toni selected and arranged for our ensemble. There was also a performance by a group called *Letečki Pekinezeri* (Flying Pekinese), a five-piece band not associated with the university known for playing original compositions in the style of 1930s swing. Led by guitarist Bojan "Šamba" Petkov, the band has performed at the US Embassy 4th of July celebration (attended by all of Macedonia's political elites and every foreign dignitary in Macedonia), and was funded by the Macedonian Ministry of Culture to travel to New York for a performance at the Macedonian cultural center in Manhattan.¹⁹⁴



Figure 38. At the president's residence before the jazz party. (from left) Kiril Tufekčievski, Kiril Kuzmanov, Sašo Serafimov, Filip Stevanovski, and Trajče Velkov

¹⁹⁴ Šamba attended the Berklee College of Music briefly in 2005, but has been, for the most part, self-taught.

At the end of the night, a third ensemble performed that, at first glance, seemed to not quite fit with an event billed as a “jazz party.” It was a Cuban salsa band (and one or two dancers) that had recently been brought to Macedonia by a politically-connected restaurant owner and businessman to perform nightly at his restaurant for a three-month period. When the band started playing, the audience immediately shifted from a mode of listening while carrying on casual conversation to a mode where they were energetically dancing and feeding off of the performers. Though most of the jazz musicians would not define this music as jazz, and saw the clear discrepancy between the alleged focus of the evening and the band selected for this third performance, most of them just shrugged and shook their heads, understanding that the point of the event was to entertain the crowd and that the apparent inconsistency between the term “jazz” and the Cuban band playing “Oye Como Va” and other Latin standards was not surprising and almost expected. The broader crowd had no issue with the Cuban band performing at a jazz event, perhaps consistent with confluences of Latin American musical styles with jazz that trace their roots back to Špato and the Yugoslav era.

The audience of about 200 included the American ambassador, various business executives, and other potential supporters of Jazz FM, as well as many well-known musicians. The most notable of these was arguably the wealthiest musician in Macedonia, drummer Garabet Tavitjan of the Yugoslav rock band *Leb i Sol* (Bread and Salt), and his sons, drummer Garo Jr. and pianist Diran.¹⁹⁵ The Tavitjans did not participate in the jazz scene I have been describing, but positioned themselves outside of it by working mostly in commercial pop music, by garnering financial capital from large corporate sponsorships and large-scale state patronage, and

¹⁹⁵ *Leb i Sol*’s music often combined rock, jazz fusion, and Macedonian folk music, and their jazz fusion-inspired versions of particular Macedonian folk songs (such as “Uči Me Majko, Karaj Me” [Teach me, mother, scold me] and “Jovano, Jovanke” [Jovana, Jovanka]) were particularly well-received and celebrated by audiences throughout Yugoslavia.

by combining jazz with Macedonian folk music.¹⁹⁶ In his comments during the night, President Ivanov invoked *Leb i Sol* as one of the founders of Macedonian jazz culture, expressing praise for how they introduced Macedonian folk music into Yugoslav popular music in the 1970s and 1980s. This harkens back to Yugoslav confluences of jazz and other popular music styles within the larger category of *zabavna muzika* and points to yet another jazz narrative in Macedonia historically tied to *Leb i Sol* that features an aesthetic preference for jazz fusion.¹⁹⁷ Ivanov also called *Letečki Pekinezeri* “a true representative of authentic Macedonian jazz.” Many other musicians were present who were (or had previously been) active in rock and commercial pop music, but these were primarily instrumentalists, not known pop singers. Guitarist-songwriter Vladimir Četkar was present, and his music is considered “jazz” in Macedonia, even though it covers a wide spectrum of styles from soul to disco to smooth jazz. This broader and more flexible definition of jazz in the wider public seems to have something to do with defining an musical practice that is usually instrumental, and is neither classical music, nor traditional music,

¹⁹⁶ Their most recent project at the time was the album *Makedonskoto Srce Čuka vo Sedum-osmini*, or *The Macedonian Heart Beats in Seven-eight* (2009). The Tavitjans are household names in Macedonia and known throughout the Balkans. Occasionally they travel to New York to record, and have performed at the famed Blue Note jazz club, gaining great cultural capital at home by making that known. For this album, though, they turned to Macedonian folklore, recruiting Macedonian and former Yugoslav pop singers young and old to collaborate on pop versions of nine folk songs—five of which are in 7/8. The Tavitjans were closely aligned with Ivanov as well as the VMRO-DPMNE government, and the 2012 Macedonian Independence Day celebration at Skopje’s city stadium featured a performance of the material from this album for tens of thousands of people. With its essentializing title linking biological and emotional aspects of ethnic Macedonians with a single musical aspect—the 7/8 meter—the album connects Macedonians with a mono-ethnic nationalistic folk past.

¹⁹⁷ In this case, jazz fusion typically combines jazz and rock, employs electronic amplification and effects, and features highly technical and virtuosic playing. For example, bass guitar is usually preferred over upright bass, usually with five or six (or more) strings. Jazz fusion musicians emulated by Macedonian musicians who carry this narrative include bassist John Patitucci, drum Dave Weckl, and pianist/keyboardist Chick Corea, especially in the context of his bands *Return to Forever* and the *Chick Corea Elektric Band*.

nor pop music. In Četkar's case, he plays a guitar and sings, but is not exactly singing commercial pop, and is distant stylistically from both rock and folk music.

Along with the many various jazz narratives that came together at Ivanov's jazz party, there were equally as many positions vis-à-vis the partyocratic state, with some musicians in the inner circle benefitting handsomely from patronage and nepotistic network of the state, and others holding in disdain dominant political practices and ideologies. For musicians in the lower and downwardly-mobile middle classes, playing at the "jazz party" (ostensibly supporting the status quo) and refusing to align oneself with the state is not contradictory. Rather, these musicians gain symbolic capital (again, no one was paid to play at this event) and continue playing the serious games of economic survival as trained jazz musicians in Macedonia. A few hours into the evening, the bar ran out of glasses, and bartenders began to serve drinks in plastic cups. One young person exclaimed to me with great laughter: "These are the cheapest cups you can buy at the corner store—just like you use when you're having a party in your university dorm room! Do you think this would happen at Obama's party?" I'm sure at least some people were thinking "*Ah, ova moja čudesna Makedonija!*" That one could be at an exclusive party at the head of state's residence that is not planned well enough to have enough clean glasses is an irony that those not aligned with the state thoroughly enjoyed, even as they begrudgingly understood the contradiction in having a "jazz" party feature a band playing Cuban salsa. After the party I went to play with a DJ from the Sektor scene and told him about the plastic cups—almost two years later we still joke about it. These kinds of contradictions showed that, symptomatic of its increasing dominance, the state increasingly became an object of humor.¹⁹⁸ Humor, in turn, could be used as a tool for the survival in the sociovirtuosic hands of those

¹⁹⁸ This is consistent with legacies of humor about dominant states in general stretching back to the communist period across Eastern Europe and the USSR.

experiencing economic and other hardships. Beyond serving as an object of humor, the state allowed for the making of space for musicians to identify as Macedonian jazz musicians. In these spaces and in their musical practice, they experienced the two-fold nature of belonging—*identifying* themselves as ethnic Macedonians, and *participating* not in party networks or identity politics, but rather drawing on musical traditions that had traveled to them from outside Macedonia and participating in transnational narratives that, for them, did not depend on language, religion, or ethnicity. They participated in these narratives sonically, co-producing acoustemologies wherever they played together, making and re-making their alternative spaces for belonging over and over again.

Yet in many ways the scene seems to reaffirm the patriarchal, ethnic Macedonian dominance of Macedonian society. There is not a single ethnic Albanian involved in the jazz scene, and no parallel scene exists among ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. However, ethnic Macedonian jazz musicians (and, besides the Čerkezi orchestra, a few young Roms) frequently performed in neighboring Kosovo at Hamam Jazz Bar in Prishtina, and at various private and state events in Albania. Bassist Kiro Tufekčievski began to record and perform with Albanian jazz musicians in Albania and Kosovo towards the end of my stay in Macedonia. And with regard to patriarchy, I have clearly spent this entire chapter describing male musicians. I know of one young woman studying jazz piano at the university in Štip, and another pianist/singer from Štip who moved to Australia to continue her study of jazz (Andreana Micanova, the daughter of jazz saxophone pedagogue Goce Micanov). Toni Kitanovski, at the time of writing, is preparing a project where he will be part of organizing and promoting an all-female big band with members from throughout the Balkans. Beyond the sociovirtuosity of the Macedonian jazz musicians I have discussed, these small fissures in the jazz scene reveal further examples of how

hegemonic notions of monoethnic nationalism and patriarchy can never be complete, and alternative formations are always forming within dominant ones to potentially shape and challenge them.

Conclusion

In closing, I will offer two brief encounters I had at Menada. About two months after the president's jazz party, I ran into Šamba (the front man of *Letečki Pekinezeri*) at Menada, and he was excited to tell me, since I am an ethnomusicologist, that his group had, for their second album, recorded a version of "*Pembe Pembe*," a Macedonian traditional *oro* (line dance) in 2/4, superimposing the harmonic structure of "rhythm changes" over the melody.¹⁹⁹ At that moment, I remembered that at the jazz party, the tenor saxophone player from the group, Petar Hristov, had briefly hinted at a phrase with ornamentation referencing a traditional style reminiscent of a (Romani) wedding band. Some members of the crowd immediately noticed and responded just as they would when hearing that kind of music played by a wedding band—by raising both hands in the air, bending both knees and raising both shoulders with the beat, and whistling rhythmically. For both of these cases, instead of suggesting that the *Letečki Pekinezeri* were pivoting towards some sort of "ethno jazz" aesthetic, I suggest that for them, *oros* and folk music references are part of the everyday Macedonian experience. They avoid a "purist" approach to jazz, and incorporate music of their world into their vocabulary and repertoire, similar to what jazz musicians have done since the early years of jazz, the "music of humankind"—as Toni Kitanovski (and maybe even Duke Ellington) would have it. In other words, they do not actively

¹⁹⁹ "Rhythm changes" is the term jazz musicians use to refer to the harmonic progression of "I Got Rhythm" (1930) by George and Ira Gershwin. The progression follows an AABA form and constitutes the basis for hundreds of jazz compositions, many of which have become standards.

conform their music so that it becomes politicized and panders to party interests, but they are not afraid of musical influences located “outside” some jazz canon even if it is close to the state’s nationalist ideology, just as they are not opposed to receiving real or apparent support from political systems in which they have no interest in actively participating.

The previous evening, also at Menada, Toni Kitanovski was performing with bassist Kostas Theodorou, a well-known musician and composer in European jazz circles. When I met Kostas, he told me in broken Macedonian that he was visiting from northern Greece, Aegean Macedonia, but that he was ethnically Macedonian. I later learned that Kostas, over the previous few years, had begun connecting musically with his Slavic Macedonian roots, occasionally using his Slavic name Dine Doneff and releasing the album *Rousilvo* (2010), named for a Macedonian village, destroyed by the Greeks, near the town of Edessa (Macedonian: Voden) located northwest of Thessaloniki.²⁰⁰ The album integrates recordings of an elderly woman from Aegean Macedonia singing Macedonian folk songs, and incorporates rhythmic and melodic sensibilities characteristic of the songs into the compositions. Kostas/Dine is not interested at all in the political dispute between Greece and Macedonia, but concerned with the ways that forms of cultural expression and culture itself can disappear. He engages with those concerns as a jazz musician. (Another one of his projects is called “Lost Anthropology.”) When Menada co-owner Silva first told me about Kostas a few weeks before, she mentioned his frequent collaborations with Toni Kitanovski and other musicians in Skopje. She casually said, “well he’s an Aegean Macedonian, you know,” then added with a smile and a laugh, “but of course *we* don’t need to talk about politics here.”

²⁰⁰ The Macedonian name of the village was “Rusilovo” (Gr. Xanthogeia or Xanthogia).

The polymorphous web of transnational jazz pathways and their narratives, which help to constitute the jazz scene in Macedonia, allows alternative, seemingly contradictory political ideologies to develop and persist outside of verbal discourse. The musical and social practices of the jazz scene's actors of all positions are necessarily sophisticated and subtle as they maneuver through the overlapping fields of politics, education, ethnicity, popular music, and power. In doing so, they pursue economic survival and assert their version of what it means to be Macedonian: not participating in the nepotistic network of the state nor preoccupied with reviving an ancient past, but engaging with—and experiencing belonging within—a transnational musical art form, jazz, as contributors to the future of the art form itself.

Toni Kitanovski has repeatedly told me that he never really fit in Macedonia, that he never felt like he belonged. But in 2014 as I was preparing to wrap up my stay in Skopje, he told me that over the previous two years, his perspective had changed. When I asked him about it he said:

I believe that the main influence that helped was from my students in Štip. I see them coming from all kinds of small villages, provincial places, and I see their passion. And they're here, they're kind of stuck here, most of them until recently couldn't travel anywhere, they haven't even been outside Macedonia, they haven't even been to Serbia! And you teach them about *jazz music*. So if they can live here, why can't I?

Toni situates his evolving personal experience of belonging as being shaped by his students at the Štip jazz academy, but I know that it is more than just that for him and for the other jazz musicians in Macedonia. He experiences belonging when he plays with his trio, when he plays with the Čerkezi Orchestra, and when he plays with Kostas Theodorou, me, the Graz musicians,

or any other traveler on a transnational jazz pathway. Some musicians have followed that pathway elsewhere: Trajče to Bosnia, drummer Alek Sekulovski to Canada with his family in the summer of 2014, and Oscar Salas to the next world on September 5, 2014. For the musicians who remain, their performance, recording, and teaching of jazz makes, for them, a space for belonging that embraces the dissonances of the contradictory nature of life in Macedonia.

PART IV

“Ethno Music”: Making Space to Remember

CHAPTER NINE

1990s Ethno Music and the New Urbanization of Rural Music

Macedonians use the terms “ethno bands” (*etnobendovi*) and “ethno music” (*etnomuzika*) to generally refer to music involving elements (e.g., instrumentations, styles, and/or repertoires) of traditional music (*tradicionalna muzika*) in some new configuration or in combination with some contemporary style.²⁰¹ Some Macedonians suggested that *etnomuzika* should be translated as “world music,” and even though many ethno bands would be well-suited to be (and have been) participants in festivals and events in the “world music” category, I stick with “ethno music” and “ethno bands” consistent with local and more specific usage, as all of the bands constituting this scene engage with musical traditions specifically associated with Macedonia.²⁰²

Before I proceed, defining some musical categories that frequently appear in this chapter is essential. *Narodna muzika* draws on the word *narod* (people), while *narodna* itself translates as “national” (also “folk”). For example, *makedonskiot narod* means “the Macedonian people,” usually referring to those identifying as ethnic Macedonians, rather than citizens of the Macedonian nation-state. The confluences of nation and ethnicity in this word reveal the complexities in its use for music and folklore, as *makedonska narodna muzika* almost always refers to music of ethnic Macedonians.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Though the American discipline of ethnomusicology has problematized the “ethno” prefix at great length, Macedonians embrace the meanings implied in the prefix consistent with its usage throughout socialism, evident in continuing practices of ethnomusicology.

²⁰² I have seen several phrases that have attempted to translate “world music” into Macedonian. *Muzika od svetot*, literally “music from the world,” is the most accurate translation that I have encountered.

²⁰³ See Buchanan 2006:34–36 for a thorough discussion of the closely related socialist representations of the term *narod* in Bulgaria.

Narodna muzika encompasses several sub-categories. One of these, *izvorna muzika* (music from the “source” or “wellspring”) refers to rural village music that was passed down by oral tradition, romanticized and constructed as timeless and ancient under Yugoslavia. Music from this repertoire was often arranged for performance into *obrabotki* (arrangements) by groups like Tanec (Macedonia’s Ensemble of *Narodni* Songs and Dances), and the Macedonian Radio Television Ensemble of *Narodni* Instruments, directed by Pece Atanasovski. These *obrabotki* were also considered narodna muzika. Another category is *novokomponirana narodna muzika* (newly-composed folk music), which rose to prominence in 1960s Yugoslavia. It followed *izvorna muzika* stylistically in many ways, but was constituted by newly-composed songs.²⁰⁴ *Starogradska muzika* (old urban music) first arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in connection to the rise of an urban bourgeoisie under the Ottoman Empire. It often combined instruments imported from Western Europe such as the violin and the clarinet with narodni instruments such as the *kanun* (plucked zither) and the *ut*. Starogradska muzika thus is often considered narodna muzika, and starogradski musicians often perform well-known narodni *pesni* (songs) both izvorni and novokomponirani. All of these categories are often subsumed by musicians, especially musicians in the ethno music scene, into the broader category *tradicionalna muzika* (traditional music), which I too use as a blanket term.

Ethno music is quite different from the staged folklore of Tanec (described in Chapter 1), in that its practitioners are not claiming to present or represent definitive, “pure” representations of Macedonian *izvorna muzika* per se, but rather are selectively employing elements of folk

²⁰⁴ Though I do not discuss *novokomponirana narodna muzika* in this chapter, its significance throughout the Yugoslav period and beyond cannot be understated (see Rasmussen 2002 for a book-length study of the genre). Well-known composers of this genre in Macedonia include Aleksandar Sariovski (1922–2002) and Jonče Hristovski (1931–2000), the composer of the beloved “Makedonsko Devojče” (1964).

music and its representations (such as traditional folk dress) in their recordings and performances, even as they employ discourses about purity. Tanec's status as the "National Ensemble of Narodni Dances and Songs of Macedonia" also differentiates it from ethno bands, all of which are independent groups whose albums are usually self-produced. Some ethno band musicians are also employees of Tanec, for reasons I will discuss below.²⁰⁵ Ethno music in Macedonia is also distinguished from pop-folk styles that emerged in many ways from novokomponirana narodna muzika: *turbofolk* (in former Yugoslavia) and the related *chalga* (in Bulgaria). Ethno music's stylistic elements feature acoustic instruments rather than the incorporation of electronic sounds and avoid the overt eroticism and decadence often found in turbofolk and chalga.²⁰⁶ In cases where ethno musicians use a contemporary style, I have heard them refer to such styles with genre labels such as "new age" (*njuejdž*) or "jazz" (*džez*), as well as with more general categories such as "modern" (*moderno*) or "current" (*segašno*).

While the Sektor 909 electronic music scene centered on the making of space for belonging at specific locales and the jazz scene existed as a polymorphous web formed by the intersection of several transnational jazz pathways and their narratives, the ethno music scene was constituted by a constellation of bands that draw on folk music traditions from within the borders of Macedonia. These bands performed in a variety of settings, including festivals, self-organized concerts, gigs at café-bar Menada, occasional diplomatic events outside Macedonia,

²⁰⁵ For more on Tanec, see Dunin and Višinski 1995; Kitevski and Veličkovska 2015.

²⁰⁶ Though my focus is not on comparing "ethno bands" with turbofolk and/or chalga, many other issues are at play in differentiating between these musics including those of class, gender, sexual orientation, national identity, and variegated expressions of orientalism. The extensive academic literatures on turbofolk and chalga deal with many of these issues. On turbofolk, see, e.g., Kronja 2004; Baker 2007, 2010; Rasmussen 2007; Volčič and Erjavec 2010; Archer 2012a, 2012b; Čvoro 2014. On chalga, see, e.g., Psycheva 1999; Dimov 2001; R. Ivanova 2001; Levy 2002; Rice 2002; Statelova 2005; Buchanan 2007b; Kurkela 2007; Apostolov 2008; Chapter 9 in Silverman 2012)

and, more rarely, small festivals outside Macedonia. In this chapter, I present a brief history of the ethno music scene, beginning with the first ethno groups in the early 1990s and continue up to what I call the “second wave” of ethno bands that began performing and recording around 2004. In Chapter 10, I examine the two primary trends in the music of the second-wave ethno bands.

In considering the practices of the ethno band scene, I show how issues of politics, national identity, and ethnicity converge at the sites of the scene. My principal argument is that these musicians and their practices make meaningful sites for a belonging that is more consistent with the Macedonian nationalism fostered under Yugoslavia than that which has been advanced by the dominant state (see Chapter 1). That is, they maintain a Macedonian nationalist ideology that places primacy on ethnic Macedonian symbols, and they avoid engaging with pre-Slavic notions of a Macedonian nation, which is often conflated with party nepotism and corruption related to projects by which Macedonia is being rebranded with symbols related to Alexander the Great and his legacy. To close Chapter 10, I consider the case of Karolina Gočeva, one of Macedonia’s most famous pop singers, and her project *Makedonsko Devojče 2* (Macedonian Girl 2), named after an old urban song (*starogradska pesna*) that arguably evokes more love for the Macedonian ethnicity (and perhaps the nation) than any other urban or village song.²⁰⁷ Karolina and her team adopted ethno music sensibilities, bringing broader public exposure to musicians of the scene, even as she and her team co-opt the musical tools provided by the ethno music scene towards their own ends.

History of the Ethno Music Scene

²⁰⁷ The song “*Makedonsko Devojče*” itself does not appear on the album, nor on its predecessor *Makedonsko Devojče* (2008).

The development of ethno music in Macedonia can be traced musically to two occurrences in the 1990s: (1) the 1994 release of Milcho Manchevski's film *Before the Rain* and its subsequent Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film and (2) the later formation and ensuing popularity of the band DD Synthesis. Around the world, as "world beat" and "New Age" categories arose in Western Europe and the United States in the 1980s, various projects such as *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares* and Balkana in Bulgaria were spearheaded by American and Western European impresarios and gained traction among consumers in the New Age market (Buchanan 2006:345; other examples are also discussed in Taylor 1997). The music of the *Before the Rain* score and later, DD Synthesis, built on these musical trends and featured timbres and textures—including a fair amount of long, sustained drones and chords on synthesizers—that referenced New Age musical sensibilities, which had already come to index "meditational ambience and antediluvian, spiritualist overtones" (Buchanan 2006:345). But in contrast to the many cases where American and Western European individuals have "discovered" and promoted various traditional musics as "world music" with sometimes dubious financial and ethical practices, ethno music in Macedonia was not stimulated by foreign impresarios coming to Macedonia with an interest in promoting folk music projects abroad. Rather, in place of the mediation of such impresarios, *Before the Rain*'s global recognition as an Oscar nominee and the mechanisms of the film industry paved the way for the rise of the music from the film, and helped to inspire similar musical projects within Macedonia.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ In most cases, Macedonian musicians seeking renown outside of domestic borders follow the transnational flows of culture connecting Macedonia to other areas of former Yugoslavia. In the case of ethno music, Serbs, Croats, and others in former Yugoslavia are often familiar with Macedonian folk songs, and carry on the stereotype that Macedonians are the best singers and dancers, and that they have the best folk music. Though my analysis does not center on reception of ethno bands outside Macedonia, it is important to remember that the significance of their music varied widely depending on context. DD Synthesis, in some ways, participated in this

My discussion of the history of ethno music in Macedonia focuses on Dragan Dautovski, arguably the most important figure in the development of ethno music. This is due to his significant contributions to the score of *Before the Rain* as well as his role as the founder and leader of DD Synthesis. His prominence also relates to the second wave of ethno bands, as he founded the department of *narodni* instruments at the Faculty of Musical Arts (FMU) at the state university in Skopje in 1993, as well as founding similar departments Macedonia's two music high schools (in Skopje and Shtip) and in a number of elementary schools. A large number of the members of second wave ethno bands had spent time either under Dautovski's direct tutelage or enrolled in one of the programs he founded.

Born in 1957, Dautovski grew up in eastern Macedonia in the town of Berovo, studied trombone at the music high school in Štip, and received a degree in music theory and pedagogy at the Faculty of Musical Arts (FMU) in Skopje. It was not until his fourth year as a university student that he began to become interested in what he calls *tradicionalna muzika* (traditional music, referring generally to rural village music), even though at that time and after (late 1970s and early 1980s), he primarily played guitar at *tezgi* around town that featured the popular rock and pop songs of the time to support his living as an elementary school music teacher. In the late 1980s, he began leading a folklore ensemble (choir and folk-instrument orchestra) at "Grigor Prličev" elementary school in the Železara neighborhood near the steel mill (*železara*) on Skopje's northeast side. (According to him, it was out of boredom of teaching the same things over and over every year.) As an official organization of the school, the ensemble performed

flow, wherein they were highly regarded first in former Yugoslavia, where they became a model for other projects throughout the region. Also important to note is that the success of *Before the Rain* and its widespread visibility due to the Oscars (and other film festivals) allowed its music to skip over the typical first step of becoming well known in the region and proceed directly to a broader, more global stage.

traditional music—much of it from a repertoire of folk children’s songs—in other schools around the city. In 1989, Dautovski formed the children’s folklore studio “*Detelinki*” (“Clovers,” but also a play on the word for child, *dete*), which functioned under the auspices of Tanec for two years. Out of that project, Dautovski formed the ensemble “*Orkestarot od Narodni Instrumenti ‘Mile Kolarovski’*” (The “Mile Kolarovski” Orchestra of Folk Instruments) in 1991.²⁰⁹ It was an amateur group that featured 12 instrumentalists (instruments included *kaval*, *gajda*, *kemane*, *tapan*, *tambura*)—older folk artists who had moved to Skopje from rural areas—along with six vocalists. The ensemble was registered as a legal entity of the *Združenie za Prosvetni Rabotnici ‘Sveti Kiril i Metodij’* (Association of Educational Workers “Sts. Cyril and Methodius”), who already had a choir, but no instrumental ensemble. Its first formal concert was in 1992 at the *Dom na ARM*, Home of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, whose approximately 500-seat hall long served as the performance venue for the Macedonian Philharmonic and many other performances. The ensemble also presented an “Evening of Traditional Music” as part of the “Days of Macedonian Music” festival that traditionally had presented the music of Macedonian classical composers and other new compositions from around the world. According to Dautovski, opportunities to hear live music played on traditional instruments were rare in

²⁰⁹ Mile Kolarovski (initially known as Mile Kolarov) was the first *kaval* player, or *kavaldžija*, to be employed by Radio Skopje, beginning in the late 1940s. Originally from the village Dračevo near Skopje, he also performed in Tanec, beginning in 1950 (Dunin and Višinski 1995:9). His grandson, Goce Kolarovski (1959–2006), was a leading classical composer and pedagogue, well-known for his years serving as the dean of FMU towards the end of his life. Goce and Dautovski were contemporaries, and Dautovski met Mile (through Goce) when they were young, but Dautovski had no interest in traditional music at the time. When his interest grew and he decided to name the ensemble “Mile Kolarovski” (using the family name in use at the time), the family gave him many old cassettes and recordings from Mile’s time at the Radio. Dautovski learned many of his *kaval* skills from these recordings. Mile Kolarovski also was involved with American aficionados of Balkan music in the 1970s, even making a yearlong trip to the United States at the invitation of Eran Fraenkel and the Philadelphia-based band Novo Selo (Laušević 2007:207–208).

Skopje's urban setting. For many years, Pece Atanasovski had led the folk orchestra at Macedonian Radio Television, but that was, as Dautovski puts it, a "hermetically sealed ensemble," whose role at MRT was to record and preserve folk music practices. Dautovski told me that many the well-established Macedonian composers and music professors were in the audiences of those first concerts of the Mile Kolarovski ensemble, and he describes the concerts as a "shock"—in a positive sense—for the them. He says:

They were, for the most part, under the influence of the West, and the Russian school, the classical music of the world. Shostakovich, Korsakov, Wagner, those kinds of orchestrations. At once they encountered the wellspring (*izvorišteto*, also the "source" or "spring," the augmentative and/or collective form or *izvor*); they were not well-acquainted with it previously.²¹⁰ At that time there was a *very* rigid—and there still is—division between village culture and city (*gradska*) culture. But that transition, the village/city, a synthesis, a blending was being made in that period, it was practically a revolution in culture. Usually urban culture influences village culture, but this was kind of a true revolution in culture; practically, all of a sudden you could see tons of kaval players, kids carrying kavals [in the city]. That had only happened in the villages previously [. . .] In that period a philosophy was prevalent among the young people, that you need to return to the tradition, so that you can find your identity—your personal artistic identity—whether in visual arts or in terms of a musical identity. When we'd

²¹⁰ That Dautovski uses *izvorište*, the collective and/or augmentative form of the more standard *izvor* metaphor referring to traditional music, indicates two potential implications: (1) that there are many wellsprings contained in the collective wellspring of traditional music in Macedonia, and/or (2) that this collective wellspring of tradition has some sense of greater or augmented significance than would be communicated using simply *izvor*.

rehearse, we would be about 20 people in the ensemble, and there would always be 50 people as an *audience*. Pejovski [composer Ilija Pejovski] would come, the young people from Anastasia [a group I will discuss below], other musicians. This was the beginning of that revolution.

This growing interest in traditional music recognized by Dautovski corroborates the ways that, after the establishment of an independent Macedonian nation-state for the first time in 1991, the traditional music fostered under Yugoslavia as a marker of national identity (to serve its ideologies) began to serve as an affirmation of a unique and distinct national Macedonian identity in the face of challenges to that identity.²¹¹ Dautovski's ensembles, though not the only folklore ensembles in Macedonia at the time, played an important role because they presented concerts of folk music featuring exclusively traditional instruments (and singing) on prestigious and highly visible stages in Skopje such as the DMM festival and the Dom na ARM. To be sure, composers in Macedonia had long been attentive to folk music and sometimes incorporated additive meters, melodic phrasing, and ornamentation adapted from musical folklore into their compositions in the tradition of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály (though most Macedonian composers in the Yugoslav era were not travelling to villages collecting folk songs). The phenomenon Dautovski is describing is a new growing interest among musicians who consider themselves “urban” (i.e., *gradski*) in the actual practices of folk music—playing folk instruments and singing folk repertoire using traditional ornamentation, timbre, and style.

²¹¹ Stojkova-Serafimovska argues that beginning in 1992, this renaissance of traditional music, especially the use of *narodni* instruments, created a space for “the protection of Macedonian music and musical culture from the danger of the penetration of so-called ‘turbofolk’ which was being practices on a massive scale neighboring Serbia and Bulgaria, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (2014:206).

Dautovski sees the period of those concerts in the early 1990s as a shift, what he calls a “synthesis” between urban city culture and rural village cultures. When he mentions the young musicians of “Anastasia,” he refers to a band formed in the late 1980s known for combining Byzantine vocal music with contemporary styles. Dautovski tells of Anastasia members Goran Trajkoski and Zlatko Origjanski visiting his rehearsals, where they learned much about Macedonian traditional music. In 1993, Dautovski joined forces with Anastasia (which also included Zoran Spasovski) in producing the score for the film *Before the Rain* (1994), directed by Macedonian filmmaker Milcho Manchevski.^{212,213} The film’s music contained several genres of music from Macedonia—including Byzantine chant and Macedonian folk music—in combination with contemporary electronic sounds. It also featured the vocals of Vanja Lazarova (b. 1930), who had been a singer employed by Macedonian Radio Television and was known for having performed with every major folk ensemble in Macedonia both during and after the Yugoslav period.

Among the influences of Anastasia and the music of *Before the Rain*, Dautovski highlights the band Dead Can Dance, a British-Australian duo known for combining traditional musics of the world drawing from Bulgarian, North African, Arab, and Irish folk styles, among others.²¹⁴ Because of the film’s worldwide recognition (and, by proxy, worldwide recognition of

²¹² The members of Anastasia have been involved in numerous musical projects both before and since *Before the Rain*, involving various pop, rock, and folk-influenced styles.

²¹³ *Before the Rain* has been widely written about due to the way the film deals with complex issues of ethnicity, religion, and the transnational flows of Macedonia and the Balkans, as well as to Manchevski’s convincing use of unconventional and innovative storytelling techniques. For examples from film studies, anthropology, and linguistics, see the issue of *Rethinking History* dedicated to the film (Rosenstone 2000; especially Friedman 2000a and Iordanova 2000). See also Brown 1998, Marciniak 2003, and Crnković 2011. Kostova 2015 contains a collection of essays on Manchevski’s oeuvre as well as some of his own writings.

²¹⁴ See Yri 2008, where one Dead Can Dance album is situated as a classic example of orientalism and exoticism.

Macedonia), its soundtrack has played a crucial roll in stimulating interest in ethno music in Macedonia in the 1990s—in fact, the label *etnomuzika* was first used in this period—as well as providing continuing inspiration for the second wave of ethno bands that began in the early 2000s. In some cases, the film has even become an authoritative reference point of sorts with regard to Macedonian folk music, as I will highlight in a later example. For Dautovski, the *Before the Rain* soundtrack was the first time that he had been involved in combining traditional music with contemporary sounds. “That was *my* synthesis,” he told me. He added that the film was “an indicator, a signal that this kind of form, combination, or synthesis could pass, that it holds water, and that a lot of groups in the world were already doing this, like Dead Can Dance, forms of New Age music.”

After the film, Dautovski formed the group DD Synthesis (Dragan Dautovski Synthesis), releasing an eponymous album in 1996 on SJF Records. For him, this was the next logical step after the Mile Kolarovski ensemble and *Before the Rain*. The three female vocalists of DD Synthesis had all been part of the Mile Kolarovski ensemble (Aneta Šulankovska, Biljana Ristevska, and Mirjana Joševska). Beyond the three vocalists, DD Synthesis included Dautovski on gajda, tambura, kaval, and zurla; Marjan Jovanovski on tambura and guitar; Vančo Jovčev on piano and synthesizers; Radoslav Šutevski on drums; and Goce Usunski on tapan, tarabuka, and other percussion instruments. At the time, Dautovski described his inspiration for forming the group in a press interview:

The rejuvenation of traditional instruments, the preservation of Macedonian folklore [. . .] all that just inspired me to make a group that will do just that, continue the Macedonian tradition, though in a new form that is in step with the times in which we live. (Čanakjevikj 1998)

In the same interview, he describes the musical characteristics of the group more specifically:

The songs of DD Synthesis are sung exclusively in Macedonian, just as they are in their original versions. We use instruments typical for this region [meaning southeastern Europe more broadly]. The rhythm, melody and harmonies are also based on Macedonian traditional music. Now, on that base, on that foundation, classic—that is, modern—instruments are added such as piano and synthesizers, which together constitute the musical language of DD Synthesis. The singing itself is very interesting, that is, the interpretation of the songs. The girls sing in that old, traditional way, exclusively characteristic of this region, and that is rustic (*rustikalno*) or nasal (*nazalno*) singing. A very important feature is that in the music of DD Synthesis motives or melodies (or music if you like) are used, from all parts of Macedonia, which means that through the songs of the group one can see and hear the complete folklore of our country. (ibid.)

Dautovski sees DD Synthesis as bringing together a broad selection of ethnic Macedonian folk music elements as a foundation, and does not seek to privilege certain traditions over others.

His comments describe the general musical sensibilities of DD Synthesis accurately. Their first album features textures common in Macedonian folklore such as a gajda playing a drone below an active melody (the first track, “*Goten*”), but these textures are always either complemented by other instruments (often a drone on a synthesizer), or are preceded and/or followed by textures including other instruments such as synthesizers, piano, electric guitar, or the drum set. The synthesizer string sound played in octaves accompanied by tapan and other percussion is a texture found on several tracks from the album, and is reminiscent of some of the music of *Before the Rain*. For example, the opening theme in *Before the Rain*, “Time Never

Dies,” features a kaval and a kanun playing a melody in unison over a synthesizer drone along with Indian tabla and other percussion playing in 11/8 (2+2+3+2+2), an additive meter common in Macedonian folk dances. Notable here is that, while both the kaval and the kanun are *narodni* instruments, the kaval is a rural village instrument associated with *izvorna muzika* and the kanun is an urban instrument associated generally with *starogradska muzika* (old urban music) and more specifically with *čalgija* (discussed below). They are combined here providing a general *narodni* sensibility, which became generally glossed as “ethno” in common parlance as it was quite different from *narodna muzika* that, on its own, featured exclusively styles marked as old.

After a brief kanun improvisation, the kaval and kanun again play the melody in unison, joined this time by the synthesized strings. At the end of “Death of Alexander” from *Before the Rain*, the unison synthesized strings return with a repetitive five-note melody after Vanja Lazarova’s performance of the folk song “So Maki Sum Se Rodila” (“I Was Born with Great Troubles”), accompanied by forceful percussion. These commonalities in texture (and timbre) show similar sensibilities in the two projects, and demonstrate one way that Dautovski, in the 1990s, situated Macedonian traditional music in a “new form that is in step with the times in which we live.”

In the final composition on *DD Synthesis*, the seven-minute-long “Vreminja” (“Times”), the opening texture features a unison line performed in octaves by a synthesizer with a string sound predominating, which leads to a texture featuring a pair of zurlas performing (one a drone, the other a melody) with a tapan first in a slow, non-metrical section, followed by a rhythmic section in 7/8. This is a common texture in the zurla and tapan tradition, practiced in many parts of Southeastern Europe and part of the broader shawm and drum tradition also practiced

throughout Turkey, the Near East, and North Africa.²¹⁵ As Dautovski mentions, melodic motives for the compositions are often drawn from known folk songs. The clearest example of this happens during the second half of the “Vreminja,” where much of the melody is constructed from shorter phrases from the folk song “Prošeta Se Jovka Kumanovka” (“Jovka from Kumanovo Took a Walk”), and performed once again by the synthesized string sound, which is joined later by vocals and electric guitar.

One other track from the first DD Synthesis album deserves mentioning here, and that is the arrangement of “Ajde Pominuvam Zaminuvam” (“Hey, I Pass By, I Go Away”), a folk song from the Lerin (Gr. Florina) region of northern Greece. The second line of the song’s texts reads “na Belkamen počinuvam” (“at Belkamen I come to rest”); Belkamen (Gr. Drosopigi) is a village outside of Lerin, marking the song by its location. This song and others from Aegean Macedonia were originally made well known in Yugoslav-era Macedonia by the female vocal quartet “Bapčorki,” which formed in 1971 and consisted of Dosta Donevska, Leta Bardžijeva, Vaska Klandževa, and Leterija Šankova. Donevska and Bardžieva were first cousins, and fled their home village of Bapčor (Gr. Pimeniko) in 1948 as refugees from the Greek Civil War.²¹⁶ Located near Kostur (Gr. Kastoria), Bapčor, like many other villages in northern Greece was destroyed in the war. Klandževa and Šankova were born in other villages in Aegean Macedonia. They recorded many folk songs from Aegean Macedonia for Radio Skopje, which, as a result, became well known. These included “Belo Lice Ljubam Jas” (“I Love a Fair Face”), “Ogreala

²¹⁵ In Macedonia, performance of *zurla* and *tapan* has long been a hereditary practice of male Romani musicians (Rice 1982; Silverman 1996b, 2012). Dautovski performed on the *zurla* for DD Synthesis recordings and performances, though the Romani roots of that tradition are not addressed (See Seeman 2012 for more on the erasure of Romani musical practice in Macedonia, discussed further below).

²¹⁶ Other female vocal groups featuring the rural music of Aegean Macedonia included Kosturčanki, Vodenki, Meglenki from the towns of Kostur (Gr. Kastoria), Voden (Gr. Edessa), and Meglen (Gr. Almopia).

Mesečina” (“The Moon Rose/Has Risen”), “Mori Čupi Kosturčanki” (“Hey You Gals from Kostur”), and “Ajde Pominuvam Zaminuvam.” The DD Synthesis arrangement of “Ajde Pominuvam” was consistent with the other songs on the album, and included heavy synthesizers, tapan, and tambourine, as well as a nasal timbre produced by the female singers. This timbre, along with the unison vocal texture, modeled the Bapčorki recording closely. The DD Synthesis arrangement is in a notably slower tempo, and the ornamentation is more rigid and fixed to equal temperament, whereas the Bapčorki slide into pitches from above or below and emphasize a flexibility between equal-tempered pitches in their ornamentation while maintaining a high level of precision.

By the end of the 1990s, DD Synthesis was performing outside of Macedonia, first as a representative of Macedonian Radio Television at festivals of European associations of radio and television, and later at world music festivals and other events around the world. Its inclusion of a song from the Aegean Macedonian region on its debut album did not feature prominently (as that repertoire would in the second wave of ethno bands), and it was typical of the continuation and outgrowth of the national ideology of Macedonia developed under Yugoslavia. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this nationalist ideology of 1990s Macedonia was dominated by (1) *affirmation* of the existence of a unique people with their own history, culture and identity; and (2) *recognition* of this by international entities and institutions as well as global public opinion (Danforth 1995:43). *Before the Rain* accomplished both of these goals by focusing on Macedonian distinctiveness in its content and bringing that distinctiveness to the world via recognition by the Oscars and other film festivals. The music of the film, as it adapted traditional music to contemporary musical sensibilities and technologies, became a model in Macedonia for a legitimate affirmation of a unique Macedonian people that could be feasibly receive recognition

as such on the world stage. I suggest, however, that an aspect of that affirmation is a self-affirmation for Macedonians that they are not “backwards,” or “inferior,” as contended by many stereotypes propagated under Yugoslavia.²¹⁷ Dautovski put it simply in his 1998 interview, where he described his desire, through DD Synthesis, to “continue the Macedonian tradition, though in a new form that is in step with the times in which we live.” DD Synthesis benefitted from this nationalist ideology—even as its music represents an ethnocentricity that allows the Macedonian ethnicity to be conflated with the nation-state at the expense of other groups.²¹⁸ Even though my analysis does not center on reception of the group outside of Macedonia, DD Synthesis seems to fit in with global trends in “world music” of the 1990s where stereotypes of people groups as timeless, natural, or exotic, are reinscribed (cf. Taylor 1997, 2001; Feld 2000a). To self-inscribe these traits, especially as part of a “timeless” or “natural” Macedonian ethnicity, seems to place 1990s Macedonian nationalist ideology right in step with global trends, at least in world music marketing and its commodified representations of traditional expressive culture.

In 2000, DD Synthesis released their second album, *Swinging Macedonia*, which continued many of the patterns established in their first album, but with an increased use of piano rather than a synthesizer, and the inclusion arrangements recorded by a live symphony orchestra on three of the tracks. Some time after that, Dautovski and the group parted ways (it has continued without Dautovski under the name “Synthesis”). His next project was the Dragan Dautovski Quartet, formed with three musicians who had previously studied with him at FMU,

²¹⁷ For example, in other parts of Yugoslavia, especially Serbia, it was common to refer to “Macedonians” by the diminutive form of the word that implies child-likeness, “*makedončinja*.”

²¹⁸ Even though my analysis does not center on reception of the group outside of Macedonia, DD Synthesis seems to fit in with global trends in “world music” of the 1990s where stereotypes of people groups as timeless, natural, or exotic, are reinscribed (cf. Taylor 1997, 2001; Feld 2000a). To self-inscribe these traits, especially as part of a “timeless” or “natural” Macedonian ethnicity, seems to place 1990s Macedonian nationalist ideology right in step with global trends, at least in world music marketing and its commodified representations of traditional expressive culture.

vocalist Aleksandra Popovska, Romani multi-instrumentalist Bajsa Arifovska, and percussionist Ratko Dautovski, Dragan's son. Their recordings and performances abandon the use of electronic instruments and sounds common in DD Synthesis and the music of *Before the Rain*. Instead, the music features each musician's virtuosic playing (or singing in the case of Popovska) in the context of arrangements of Macedonian folk songs as well as new compositions. The sound is centered on the use of acoustic instruments, and emphasizes textural simplicity (only four musicians) instead of the complex, multi-layered, electronic arrangements of DD Synthesis. Other than a battery of percussion instruments from around the world, the quartet used exclusively Macedonian rural instruments on its first album *Path of the Sun* (2002).²¹⁹ Popovska's vocals are not traditional; she explores various timbral colors on the album, and exhibits other styles including some vocal improvisations reminiscent of scat singing.

Dragan Dautovski does not situate himself as a purist with regard to Macedonian traditional music, as is evident in his musical output. Yet he does concern himself with concepts of musical purity. On the one hand, he highly respects what he calls "musical amateurism" (*muzički amaterizam*) that is, the tradition of learning traditional music from master musicians outside of a formal educational institution.²²⁰ These types of musicians are considered "*narodni*

²¹⁹ Ratko Dautovski spearheaded their 2014 album, *Flame*, which also included Arifovska performing on the clarinet, an additional musician playing contrabass on several compositions, and a greater emphasis on Ratko's playing of the *cajon* rather than the *tapan*.

²²⁰ "Amateurism" (*amaterizam*) was an important feature of official Yugoslav discourses regarding practices of traditional expressive culture as "a basic necessity of each individual subject in the aspiration to be part of the 'wider social community'" (Supek 1974:8–9). After World War II, KUDs (Cultural-Artistic Societies) were formed and sponsored by the state and featured amateur instrumental ensembles, singing groups, and dance groups. As Rudi Supek notes in his article on public practices of amateurism in 1970s Yugoslavia, authorities and media considered events focused on village culture to be irrelevant; such events were not widely promoted in the public sphere (ibid.:15; see also Dunin and Višinski 1995:7–12 and Kitevski and Veličkovska 2015:16–20 for examples from Macedonia; Hofman 2011:37–39 about Yugoslavia more broadly). The Soviet-bloc analogue to *amaterizam* in Yugoslavia was the idea of "artistic

umetnici” or narodni artists, and include most musicians who rose to prominence in the time of Yugoslavia, such as Pece Atanasovski and Vanja Lazarova. Since Dragan did not begin learning traditional music until later in life, he does not consider himself in this category. Rather, he situates himself as a pioneer of formal education in Macedonian traditional music. He says:

I don’t have an obligation to make a student into a *kavaldžija*; I’m not a *kavaldžija*, I’m not a *gajdadžija*, and I’m not a *zurladžija*, because I haven’t been brought up with that.²²¹ I’m an academic musician who became interested in that area (*problematika*). I analyze it, I affirm it, I present it. And that’s the end of the story.

Dautovski has told me many times that he instructs his students in the basics of traditional music performance, and then they are, of course, free to do with that what they want as creative individuals. In the cases of both narodni umetnici and those educated in a formal system, he does not seem to prioritize one as being “more pure” or “authentic” than the other; his respect for musicianship is not dependent on musicians’ background or the ways in which they acquired their skills.

On the other hand, when I interviewed him in 2014, he continually emphasized the importance of always returning to the *izvorište* (the wellspring, the source) in order to drink *čista voda* (pure, clean water) from it, in reference to understanding and knowing traditional music, especially the traditional music of one’s homeland. He repeatedly brought the metaphor into our

amateurism.” See, e.g., Rice 1994:217 and Buchanan 2006:132–134 for examples from Bulgaria of understandings and experiences of this artistic amateurism (Bg. *hudožestvena samodejnost*).

²²¹ The suffix –*džija* is a Turkish borrowing that is used, among other things, to denote various professions, especially traditional ones. Here it implies that playing a particular instrument is part of one’s professional expertise or personal identity. Thus, a *kavaldžija* is a master of the *kaval*, a *gajdadžija* is a master of the *gajda*, and a *zurladžija* is a master of the *zurla*. *Gajdar* also occurs, but I have not encountered *zurlar*, which is unlikely.

hour-long interview as a recurring theme of our conversation, which centered mainly on his personal musical chronology.

Many groups around the world [in the time of DD Synthesis] were influenced by Dead Can Dance, but it's important to ask where even *their* influence lies, where they perceived those threads, those pathways. You can't say that it's some creative moment that just came to you today. You must go to drink water from somewhere. That water will cool you down (*kje te oladi*), it will relax you, it will give you new enthusiasm (*elan*) or a new strength—in the creative sense—to create something new. Your path from here on will be totally different, because you drank water from some deeper level. You have quenched your thirst, you have satisfied yourself with what you need, with water, with what you were thirsting for. And then, all at once, you can continue your path fresh. Actually, that is freshness, that is autochthony, that is authenticity.

Dautovski says that even though he has departed from the wellspring, he is always returning again and again to drink of the pure water. And for him, all musical traditions have their own wellsprings—he often suggested that I, as a jazz musician, often went to the wellspring of jazz, located in the music of Africa. Thus, even though he differentiates himself from narodni umetnici as a university-educated musician, he is still able to drink from the wellspring of the Macedonian musical tradition along with anyone who also seeks it. In this way, he suggests a shift in the discourse of “authenticity” away from an impossibly absolute purity of some unchanging, fixed, and ancient form of musical expression. Instead, he compares it with “freshness,” implying that the wellspring has an important role in inspiring new directions and new modes of expression. In a sense, he uses the metaphor of the wellspring to conflate images

of the old and the ancient with ideas of the fresh and new. He implies that “authentic” music must be connected to both the old and the new; it must be in dialogue with its source *and* relevant to its current world. Parallels to Macedonian nationalist ideology, which prioritizes affirmation and recognition of Macedonian distinctiveness, again, are clear, as the wellspring both affirms a musical tradition as Macedonian and empowers a contemporary musical practice to be fresh and new, and worthy of recognition.²²² DD Sythesis and the *Before the Rain* score indeed run in parallel to this nationalist ideology that has its roots in the Yugoslav period. By the mid-2000s, new nationalist ideologies emphasizing a pre-Slavic Macedonian people with ties to Alexander the Great and Aegean Macedonia began to be promoted by the increasingly powerful VMRO-DPMNE government, accompanied by its neoliberal policies and nepotistic network of patronage. But before I examine the music of ethno bands during that period, I will briefly discuss some other prominent projects that came after *Before the Rain* and involved combinations of Macedonian folk music with contemporary musical styles.

Other Overlaps with Traditional Music

Since the 1990s, several other significant projects have involved some sort of combination of Macedonian traditional music with pop music. The legacy of Leb i Sol’s rock/jazz fusion interpretation of Macedonian folk songs was most directly continued by the group’s guitarist, Vlatko Stefanovski, who has continued to be one of Macedonia’s well-known

²²² This also is reminiscent of studies of nationalism that involves cosmopolitanism, especially Turino 2000. But since definitions and types of cosmopolitanism vary so widely, because Macedonian nationalist ideology hinges on distinctiveness, and because the ethno band scene is not primarily concerned with cosmopolitan ideals, I choose not to situate this scene in discourses of cosmopolitanism. See Wilson (forthcoming) for a discussion of nationalism and cosmopolitanism on display through a variety of European-derived classical, folkloric, and pop-inflected musical performances at Macedonia’s state celebration of twenty years of independence.

musicians. In 1998, he released the album *Kruševo*, the beginning of a long collaboration with guitarist Miroslav Tadić involving arrangements of Macedonian folk songs for two acoustic guitars.²²³ Another person, Vanja Lazareva, became extremely well-known after *Before the Rain*, working as a vocal coach for the Folk Orchestra “Pece Atanasovski” (formed in 1997 in honor of Atanasovski, who had passed away in 1996), and recording albums that continued to combine her folk singing with contemporary, usually electronic styles. Her album *Ritmistica* (2000, a combination of the words for rhythm, “*ritam*” and mysticism, “*mistika*”) features two songs she sings with no accompaniment (“Prošeta Se Jovka Kumanovka” and “Mnogu Mi Go Falat Babo,” “They Praise Him a lot to Me, Grandma”), as well as highly produced tracks with electronics in collaboration with several producers including Zlatko Origjanski, Vlatko Stefanovski, and Kiril Džajkovski.²²⁴ Džajkovski, after first becoming known as the keyboardist in mid-1980s synthpop band “Bastion” (whose lyrics were written by Milcho Manchevski), continued as a keyboardist in *Leb i Sol* for a time, and then moved to Australia where he began combining Macedonian folk music with electronic music. He has become known as a DJ and as a composer, often collaborating with Manchevski on film projects, notably as the composer for *Dust* (2001) and as contributing additional music to *Shadows* (2007).

All of these musicians are part of this same phenomenon, but they are not necessarily considered “ethno musicians.” Stefanovski, for example, is considered a rock guitarist who has

²²³ Tadić is a trained classical guitarist, composer, and improviser. Born in Yugoslavia, he emigrated to the US and has taught at the California Institute for the Arts (CalArts) since 1985. His work with Stefanovski later also included Theodosii Spassov on kaval, and they have also performed concerts where their duet (or trio) was accompanied by a symphony orchestra, including a performance at the Skopje Jazz Festival in 2013.

²²⁴ One track “Tamu Le Dolu Voda Mi Doteche” (“Oh Dear, the Valley Has Flooded”) was produced by Miroslav Tadić and includes Lazareva’s voice accompanied primarily by Tadić on classical guitar with occasional fills by a jaw harp, a resonator guitar (known as a “Dobro,” common in American bluegrass and related practices) played with a slide, and percussion samples.

adopted folk music in one of his more successful projects. Džajkovski is primarily known as a DJ and film/media composer who often relies on folk music timbres, textures, melodies, and rhythms.²²⁵ This cohort of musicians all got their start in Macedonian music scenes of the 1980s and 1990s, and have continued to ride their various levels and types of success into the twenty-first century as some of the first musician who promoted a distinct Macedonian folk music culture in contemporary musical styles both in Macedonia and abroad.

One example of a musician that I would consider an “outlier” case (though embedded in the same social and political processes, albeit in different ways), is that of Macedonian pop icon Toše Proeski (1981–2007). He rose to stardom as a pop star throughout Macedonia and Southeastern Europe in the early 2000s and released *Božilak* (Rainbow, 2006), an album of Macedonian traditional songs in arrangements by Soni Petrovski, Ilija Pejovski, and Sasha “Gjumar” Nikolovski, featuring the Macedonian Philharmonic performing on many of the songs, sometime along with folk instruments (e.g., kaval, zurla, tapan). This album arguably broadened Toše’s audience to include older and younger generations in Macedonia and in other former Yugoslav republics; when he passed away at age 26 in a car accident a year after the album’s release, massive outpourings of grief and mourning occurred throughout former Yugoslavia and his status as a musical icon and national hero of Macedonia rose further. Toše’s success with *Božilak* and the way it was commemorated after his death inspired yet another trend in which singers in the realm commercial pop began to record and perform versions of traditional songs.²²⁶

²²⁵ During my time in Macedonia, Džajkovski was not active as a DJ in the clubs of Skopje or any other town.

²²⁶ This is, I suggest, one of the inspirations for the Tavitjans’ project *Makedonskoto Srce Čuka vo 7/8* (2010), see Chapter 8.

Introducing the Second-Wave Ethno Bands

The ethno bands of the second wave descend from the work of Dautovski and are distinct from the directions taken by Stefanovski, Džajkovski, Origjanski, and even Lazarova in her collaborations, as well as from the trend in pop music inspired by Toše Proeski. This second wave began to emerge around 2005, was not connected to the commercial pop music industry, and was generally constituted by a younger generation of musicians influenced in most cases (but not all) by the pedagogy and ideologies of Dragan Dautovski. This second wave also corresponded in time with new political developments. It was during this period that the Ohrid Agreement (ending the 2001 insurgency) was first being implemented, resulting in increased rights for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia with regard to education, language use, and political representation. At the same time, ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians were becoming increasingly segregated geographically, socially, and politically, a process encouraged by the ways politicians from ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian political parties divided resources according to the Ohrid Agreement. This process also coincided with building tensions with Greece regarding the name issue.

The bands formed in this period such as Baklava, Ljubojna, Monistra, and Čalgija Sound System each released an album every few years, either self-financed or supported by an assortment of commercial sponsors, often with a few hundred euros of support from the Ministry of Culture. Ethno bands typically played several concerts during the year and performed at small cultural events and festivals in towns throughout Macedonia.²²⁷ Only a few ethno musicians

²²⁷ As the Ministry of Culture sponsors many of these cultural events, and many ethno band albums receive token financial support from the Ministry of Culture (around 500 EUR), this scene offers occasional contact points with the state. The Ministry of Culture does not micromanage the musical content of these albums or performances, but takes a broader approach, supporting projects that represent themselves as “ethno” in any way.

made a living exclusively from their work in these bands, since their groups did not operate in the sphere of commercial pop music and most individuals were on the fringes or (or were non-participants in) the nepotistic network of the partyocracy. Some had careers outside music that provide them with income, some made their livings playing in wedding bands, some taught folk music at musical institutions, some freelanced in multiple musical genres, and some performed in Tanec as salaried employees. Despite the fact that performing in Tanec or working for another state musical institution involved an often uncomfortable participation in activities, events, and relational networks that supported or at least endorsed the state and its ideologies, musicians who did not support such ideologies as individuals often would accept employment because of its benefits. Working as a salaried employee for Tanec (in contrast to a freelancer or contract employee) or another state institution provided many benefits, including a monthly paycheck with a higher likelihood of arriving on time, paid health benefits (contract employees had to pay independently for health care in a complex voucher system), and greater job security.

These bands, I argue, continue to make space for a belonging rooted in the nationalist ideology fostered under Yugoslavia rather than the new nationalistic senses of belonging promoted by the state and offered by participation in its nepotistic network (see Chapter 1). In another apparent contradiction, these bands initiated a trend wherein they began to extensively perform folk songs from the ethnic Macedonian repertoire of Aegean Macedonia. This would appear to be an endorsement of the new nationalism and its focus on the name dispute with Greece, along with its accompanying contested symbols. Instead, I position it as a sociovirtuosic strategy whereby musical actors maintain Yugoslav-era perspectives on the question of Aegean Macedonia, deploying them in a new socio-political context in order to survive without participating in the political network. This trend, and another that deals with a musical tradition

reminiscent of Macedonia's Ottoman past, form the basis for my discussion in the following chapter of how the second-wave of ethno bands looked into the past as they made music in their present world.

CHAPTER TEN

Ethno Music since 2005: A Space for Yugoslav-Era Belonging

This chapter continues the history of the ethno music scene into the period of my ethnographic research by focusing on two trends prominent among ethno bands active during that period. The first is the rise in the practice of performing and recording songs from the folk repertoire of ethnic Macedonians in Northern Greece (or “Aegean Macedonia”). I first discuss the well-known ethno band Ljubojna and how it began to pursue this repertoire. Then I explore the broader trend as it relates to the current political stalemate between Macedonia and Greece, and to the related consequences for Macedonian cultural and public policy. The second trend is increasing popularity of the *čalgija* genre over the last ten years and its manifestations in two different ethno music projects. With roots as a nineteenth-century Ottoman urban music and having been shaped in formal Yugoslav-era institutions in Macedonia, *čalgija* has been adapted and adopted by ethno band musicians in several ways to express and provide experiences of multifarious interpretations of Macedonia’s Ottoman past. I close the chapter with one final look at the sociovirtuosity of ethno band musicians as they participate in a project of one of Macedonia’s most well-known female pop vocalists, Karolina Gočeva.

Ljubojna and the Music of Aegean Macedonia

The ethno band Ljubojna was formed in 2005 and is a project of vocalist Vera Miloševska and her husband, bassist-composer Oliver Josifovski, known as Oli. The name of the band is a combination of the words *ljubov*—love, and *vojna*—war. Vera and Oli met making music together. Vera explains the genesis of the group’s name:

The stage—you understand it as a field of love-war (*ljubojno pole*). For people playing, in order for there to be music, the people playing have to make love on stage. Otherwise there isn't any . . . there can't be any . . . I mean . . . And at the same time you realize how everyone has to hold onto his own place (*mesto*) in the music, but also to make space (*prostor*) for the other [musician]—because otherwise someone else will take it. That is a tendency that always exists, it's a natural tendency. And while you're struggling with this, fighting for it all to sound good—you're actually at war—there is a love scene (*ljubovna scena* or “stage of love”) unfolding, music is happening. That's how the name Ljubojna came about.²²⁸

For Vera, the stage is a space where making music is a dynamic process. In that process something beautiful is produced through a struggle, where space is made by the co-production of acoustemology on the place of the stage for a meaningful and moving experience to be communicated with an audience.

Vera and Oli have two young children, and make their living as freelance musicians, combining Ljubojna projects with Oli's earnings from performing and composing in jazz and theater settings as well as in some other ethno music projects. Vera graduated with a bachelor's degree in ethnology from the state university in Skopje, but as a singer she was a student of Vanja Lazarova and her husband, music theorist and musicologist Duško Dimitrov. Vera and Oli position themselves outside of nationalist party politics, and are not part of the networks of nepotism that pervade society—at one time Vera briefly taught at the Faculty of Musical Arts in

²²⁸ Ljubojno is the name of a village in Macedonia located near the Greek border. Vera told me that people commonly mistake that for the origin for the band's name, but says that the resemblance is coincidental.

Skopje, but was not politically connected enough to secure a long-term job (and chooses not to be). Oli auditioned as a bass player for the newly revived Macedonian Radio Television big band, a job that would pay little (if at all, but he couldn't have known that at the audition) but could, down the line, provide opportunities for health insurance and other benefits of official employment. The committee chose a more connected musician instead.

Vera and Oli do, however, participate in a patronage system to an extent. Since they make their living as freelancers, they depend on personal connections with individuals who often *are* participants in Macedonian political nepotism, such as local festival organizers and individuals at political institutions such as the Ministry of Culture. This participation in patronage and their musical practice both seem to at least tacitly support the very nationalist ideology they oppose, due to their focus on Aegean Macedonia repertoire. Through their musical practice and discourse, however, Vera and Oli seem to maintain and promote a Macedonian nationalist ideology that is a residual of the Yugoslav era and in so doing, make space for a belonging that is alternative to state nationalistic projects.

Ljubojna has released five albums featuring different configurations and a range of material including some original music and numerous arrangements of traditional songs.²²⁹ Most recently, Ljubojna has collaborated with Romani musicians for a series of albums and concerts under the name “Ljubojna Brass Fantasy.”²³⁰ The musical material almost exclusively consists of folk songs from Aegean Macedonia, arranged by Oli and performed by Vera as a soloist, backed

²²⁹ Notable among their original music is their third album *Pesna za Mojata Pesna* (2009). Its text is taken exclusively from the poetry of Petre M. Andreevski (1934–2006), a prominent figure in the Macedonian literary world since the 1960s known for his poems, plays, short stories, and novels. Macedonian literature scholar Vesna Mojsova-Čepiškova (2011) focuses on this album in her discussion of cultural memory and nostalgia in the use of Macedonian poetic texts in the music of Ljubojna. She also discusses similar themes with regard to the music of heavy metal band Verka and genre-defying rock band Foltin (ibid.:37–47).

²³⁰ The album *Ljubojna Brass Fantasy* was released in 2012.

up by a female choir and brass band with Oli performing as a conductor/percussionist. While the Sektor scene is generally not a space for belonging for Roms and Toni Kitanovski's project with the Čerkezi Orchestra was inspired by his conceptions of avant-garde jazz and inscribed a variation on the typical patron-client relationship between ethnic Macedonians and Romani musicians, Ljubojna's work with Romani musicians is more typical example of that patron-client relationship as experienced in a collaboration (rather than a wedding or other celebration). In putting together recordings and performances, Oli is always hiring a variety of musicians in different formations. He regularly engages not only Romani brass band musicians, but also Romani percussionists Demir and Najdo Sakirov (from Bitola), ethnic Turkish kanun player Džengiz (Cengiz) Ibrahim, and ethnic Macedonian musicians such as clarinetist Blagojče Trajkovski, guitarist Bojan "Šamba" Petkov, pianist/accordionist Nikolče Micevski, percussionist Ratko Dautovski, and trumpet player Trajče Velkov—known for his excellent Romani-style wedding music chops as well as his jazz playing. The musicians who have performed and recorded with them are Roms from the Strumica area of eastern Macedonia, and several concerts and recordings have featured trumpet virtuoso Džambo Agušev (b. 1987). After winning first prize at the Guča brass band festival's international competition in 2011, Džambo became well known and since then has performed extensively not only in the Balkans, but around the world in concerts and festivals in Turkey, Western Europe, the US, and Mexico.

As the composer/arranger for the group, Oli prides himself in paying deep respect to the variety of musical traditions found in Macedonia. When asked in a press interview about how he got the idea to bring a brass band into the Ljubojna project, he said

The music or rather the sound of music on the album has long been measured and re-measured in my head. It's easy to fall into the trap of so-called "brass" music,

and to make many mistakes, which has a high cost. However, it hasn't turned out that way in this case, with much credit due to a record by KUD "Makedonija" that I purchased on the Skopje square (if you remember a wonderful time when they sold records and books there, I had a habit of picking through piles of records).²³¹ It was a record full of music from the Aegean region played in that form [with a brass band], with the sound and manner, as I had never heard previously heard. "Hey, this is the kind of band I want," I said to myself at the time! With admiration I listened to it over and over and for a long time it was just music for relaxation and for guests in my home. (Nikolovski 2013)

Oli grew up in a mixed neighborhood in Bitola, where Roms, Albanians, and Turks all lived nearby.²³² He grew up in a family of *tapandžii* (his uncle made tapans), and remembers hearing the music of many wedding parties in the neighborhood as a child. Sometimes he would spend all day playing tapan with Romani zurla and tapan groups for holidays and other occasions. In discussing this, he and Vera suggest that this music does not seem foreign or exotic to him, since he grew up around such a diverse set of musical practices. In the Brass Fantasy project, Ljubojna brings together musicians from various parts of Macedonia—primarily Romani musicians from eastern Macedonia—to play the repertoire of the Aegean region (an area with its own Romani musical styles and traditions). Vera made this distinction:

²³¹ Here Oli is making a veiled criticism of the renovated center square in Skopje featuring the Alexander the Great statue and fountain. The kiosks selling old books and records have been removed, though tourist souvenirs are sold at a few locations on the square.

²³² I speculate here that Bitola's proximity to the Greek border suggests that Oli had some knowledge of and/or exposure to Aegean Macedonians and their preference for brass band music. Ljubojna is clearly not looking to duplicate this experience, as they draw on brass band styles of eastern Macedonia in the collaboration.

Macedonian music for us is so inspirational that you really can dress it up as you'd like. She [the music] is such a beautiful girl, I mean, she really is a girl, unfortunately raped a lot nowadays, I mean I'm sorry to put it that way, but what can I do, you know? You just put a little gray jacket on her that suits her well, because she doesn't need a lot of intervention. You don't have to do something to it. All you need to do is leave it alone and, you have to – you have to live it.

Vera's words position her as an authoritative tradition-bearer, using the violent rape metaphor to describe nameless other musicians' treatment of Macedonian traditional music. She also shows her understanding that traditions do change, and interprets her collaboration with Romani musicians as a tribute to the musical diversity of the region. In the same press interview quoted above, Oli was asked where the idea for a brass band project came from, and what they would like to say through taking this position. His reply was:

The music that Ljubojna works on has no limit. I love when the breadth [of the music] varies from one extreme to the other. You well know that in previous albums Ljubojna offers a fresh, playful, and above all living musical story. And when I think "living," I emphasize that it is not something told too many times over and over (*preraskazana*)—frozen, or a fabricated product, music as museum, only interesting because in recent years one direction has appeared under a pseudo-name, which to this day I haven't understood what it means, and that is "ethno" music—but music that young people from Macedonia are living. And that's it, it works. Human beings recognize their own music, by its language (or code, *kodot*), by the Macedonian musical language (*jazik*). Not by the instruments with which the music is performed. That for me is research. The term "research" I

often use to fully explain the material that Ljubojna deals with now and will deal with in future albums—reading and acquainting ourselves with our own musical tradition over and over again. (Nikolovski 2013)

Though Vera and Oli were not products of the educational system that Dautovski founded, their rhetoric to an extent matches his, in terms of an openness to drawing from a variety of musical traditions from within Macedonian borders. Vera and Oli diverge from Dautovski in that they also incorporate—in “celebratory” fashion (see again Silverman 2012:279–280)—the musical styles of minority groups as played by minority musicians themselves. Oli also shows a sophisticated understanding of the ways that traditions change, rejecting attempts to “freeze” traditional music or present folk music as an artifact of the past in a staged museum, recognizing that those types of performances are stylized and fabricated. Likely because of his upbringing, he recognizes that Macedonia is a place where countless musical traditions overlap and affect one another as “living” traditions. He situates Ljubojna as a musical entity that is also living and changing, and distances it from the very label “ethno music,” implying the limits of the term and recognizing that many musicians have poorly imitated this trend for which Ljubojna, along with a few other groups, has set the standard.

Though Ljubojna’s earlier albums contained more original material (i.e., their first album, *P.S.O.* [2005], and their third, *Pesna za Mojata Pesna* [2009]), their repertoire primarily has included ethnic Macedonian narodni songs, which is what Vera refers to as “Macedonian music” that you can “dress up as you like.”²³³ This is where they get a bit closer to the patron-client

²³³ All of Ljubojna’s music can be linked to Oli’s background composing music for theater performances. Before they began the Brass Fantasy project, they would draw on some traditional music repertoire, but also explored more original compositions. Stylistically their music often included rhythmic sensibilities borrowed from traditions of Latin American, African, and

relationship with Romani brass band musicians, where they draw on the long tradition of Romani musicians knowing extensive repertoires of the traditions of their patrons, but do not also include Romani repertoire in their performance. As Ljubojna draws on “Macedonian music” for this repertoire, they include—and, more recently, highlight—music with roots outside the borders of the Macedonian state. They thus take a position with roots not in the new pre-Slavic nationalist ideologies of VMRO-DPMNE, but in Yugoslav-era (and earlier) nationalist ideologies, that Slavic-speaking people in northern Greece are ethnic Macedonians and that their folk songs are part of a broader ethnic Macedonian folk repertoire. With the exception of one song in particular (discussed below), much of this repertoire was likely known by the significant population of Aegean Macedonians in Skopje (refugees of the 1948 Greek Civil War and their descendants) and those in older generations who had heard the recordings of the Bapčorki and other groups through Macedonian Radio Television. Beginning in around 2006, Ljubojna and other ethno-bands began to bring this music to a broader public. Though Ljubojna does not participate in the pre-Slavic emphasis that has characterized the prevailing nationalist ideology promoted by state projects, their engagement in promoting the music of Aegean Macedonia plays to the interests of actors involved in state networks of patronage.

The Rise of the Repertoire from Aegean Macedonia

Macedonian ethnomusicologist Velika Stojkova-Serafimovska (2014) attests to the fact that, in the mid-2000s, Tanec was turning to the archives of Macedonian Radio Television for new material, and began to draw on the recorded materials of the Bapčorki, among other groups. Stojkova-Serafimovska suggests that renewed public discourse regarding ethnic Macedonian

African American (e.g., hip-hop) musics, as well as instrumentations, styles, and harmonies characteristic of jazz.

refugees who fled the Greek Civil War in 1948 in combination with desires to prove the uniqueness of a Macedonian national identity owing to outside contestation from Greece made way at this particular time for a growing interest in the history of the Aegean Macedonian region and all of the cultural activities surrounding that history. Elena Hristova, the vocalist for ethno-band Baklava, was a member of the Tanec vocal group at the time and was introduced to the material from Aegean Macedonia in that context. Baklava included “Mori Čupi, Kosturčanki” on their eponymous 2006 album, and “Tvojte Oči, Leno Mori” (Your Eyes, Dear Lena) on their second album *Kalemar* (meaning “grafter” or “one who grafts,” as in the botanical grafting of a shoot or twig onto the trunk or stem of an existing plant, perhaps of a different variety), released in 2008. These two songs in particular became widely popular on YouTube, and other groups began to release their own arrangements of these songs and other music from the Aegean region.²³⁴ The opening of Milcho Manchevski film *Mothers* (2010) includes an instrumental orchestral version of “Mori Čupi, Kosturčanki” as various sites from Skopje are depicted, and its melody continues throughout the film as a recurring *leitmotif*.²³⁵ Ljubojna included “Tvojte Oči,

²³⁴ Baklava was not particularly active during my extended stay in Macedonia, and they thus remain largely outside this discussion. Their bio, at one time, read “Baklava’s worldview is open to other folk traditions . . . but the key challenge is to create original music in a vivid dialogue with the aesthetic achievements of traditional Macedonian music” (“About Us”). Their third album, *Me Mankas Mucho* (I Miss you Very Much, 2011) is a tribute to various Sephardic musics, honoring the heritage of Sephardic Jews in Macedonia, almost all of whom were murdered in the Holocaust. The album was financially supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Austrian Embassy, U.S. Embassy and The Jewish Community of the Republic of Macedonia.

²³⁵ Comments from Manchevski and the film’s composer, Igor “Novogradska” Vasilev, illustrate how “Mori Čupi Kosturčanki” was well-known enough to them to serve as an available option among the broader category of Macedonian traditional songs. According to Manchevski, “I always ask for a traditional song to be used in everything I do ever since *Before the Rain*, including my commercials. Igor did a fantastic job—he’d propose things, we’d try them in different places and in different arrangements, etc. This song jut felt right for that place, and a few other places” (pers. comm.). Vasilev said, “we tried different themes for the scene in *Mariovo* (we used “Mori Čupi” there first), and that theme fit the atmosphere the best. Then we

Leno” on *Macedonia Fresh* (2008), and Čalgija Sound System and other groups have made songs from this region part of their regularly performed repertoire.

“Tvojte Oči, Leno” in particular, as Stojkova-Serafimovska shows, is a striking example of a little-known folk song with origins in Northern Greece rather quickly attaining the status of a national folk anthem with ubiquitous popularity. By referencing place-names in Aegean Macedonia confirming its origin, the text plays the role of affirming the presence of ethnic Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia. According to Stojkova-Serafimovska, Tanec’s turn to the folk music of Aegean Macedonia seems to be more directly influenced by the political climate and increased interest in the history and culture of refugees from Aegean Macedonia. However, whenever I asked musicians from ethno bands why they approached this repertoire, they never mentioned current politics—especially in recorded interviews—and usually focused on aesthetic preferences such as finding the melodic sensibilities beautiful or the rhythmic features inspiring.

In December 2013, Ljubojna held a concert in Skopje, performing the music of Ljubojna Brass Fantasy at Universal Hall, nearly filled to its 1500-seat capacity.²³⁶ The audience—mostly ethnic Macedonians of all ages—was enthusiastically involved throughout the concert, clapping along with various songs, shouting and applauding loudly in approval, and standing on their feet towards the end of the concert. Vera became emotional during the concert when again describing

tried it in a number of different places in different arrangements (sad, comical, intense, etc.) so that in the end we could use it as a leitmotif. It appears at the beginning, in the countryside at Mariovo, with the sex at the grandmother’s house, at the court [. . .] In short, we chose it because it interwove very beautifully with the atmosphere of the film” (pers. comm.).

²³⁶ December is traditionally a month for many year-end concerts in Macedonia. The “holiday season” in Macedonia has borrowed many practices from American and Western European commercial celebrations of Protestant and Catholic Christmas and the broader holiday season (Macedonians celebrate Christmas on January 6 and 7 on the Orthodox calendar, usually at home with family). In Macedonia, the season revolves around New Year’s Eve, and December is full of holiday parties, gift-giving, and special events such as concerts. Ljubojna has presented a December concert annually, and since at least 2012, has done so at Universal Hall with a large and enthusiastic audience.

Macedonia as a beautiful young girl (perhaps unintentionally drawing on the song “Makedonsko Devojče” to personify Macedonia itself), and showed emotion again with regard to the concert in an interview I did with her a few months later. When I asked her about it, she framed her emotions as empathy for Aegean Macedonians in the audience, who experience the music as nostalgia for a home they or their relatives left as refugees. She stated:

It’s a journey, so you see, like I said at the concert, I wanted this [concert] to be a ship that will take you where you want. You know, so they’d feel [*she trails off*] . . . I’ve never been there personally. I’d like to go. Some people have been, so they can remember. Everyone can interpret it as they want.

And later:

they remember it [the music], it comes from their childhood, from where they used to play, where they grew up, they had their first loves, where, if you go now, you won’t even find a brick remaining from the houses, not even a rock [in reference to villages destroyed in the 1948 Greek Civil War].²³⁷

Vera’s poetic rhetoric employs a nostalgia that emphasizes the impossibility of return to a past era. In an essay on musical nostalgia in post-Socialist Bulgaria, Donna Buchanan discusses a different nostalgia for a Macedonia of the past in the rise of the “Pirin Songs” genre in 1990s Bulgaria. Through this genre, Bulgarians in Pirin Macedonia were expressing and experiencing a cross-border sense of belonging to the geographical region of Macedonia, which spans portions of Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Greece (Buchanan 2010:136). In this and other examples, she responds to Svetlana Boym’s concepts of restorative and reflective nostalgia, providing not a sonic corollary, but situating musical nostalgia more in line with Kathleen Stewart’s definition of

²³⁷ Some of those villages were destroyed; some were not and are still inhabited by ethnic Macedonians.

nostalgia as a cultural practice (Boym 2001; K. Stewart 1988). For Buchanan, music is a complex sign vehicle that may solicit “imagined, potential, future-bound realities that seek to mitigate the sense of exilic-like displacement characterizing the post-Socialist predicament” (Buchanan 2010:130; see Turino 2008 for a more extensive discussion of music as a sign vehicle and how it can operate as an icon and/or index).

Twenty years later and a few hundred kilometers to the west, the predicament is a Macedonian nationalist one, and these musicians use the complex signs of the Aegean repertoire to mitigate a long-past exilic displacement of an older generation, at least on the surface. When I asked Vera about their choice of songs from the Aegean region, she told me:

They are an inspiration for us at this time, and that’s that. There are people that saw Brass Fantasy as an embodiment of their music, the music that was the music of their childhood or, I don’t know, new Aegean Macedonians came, and they loved us, you know? Because of—because of the music. I never made it [the music] into [*trails off*]. . . But I leave room for anyone to feel it like that if they want. Even though I’m not Aegean, I don’t have any ancestors there either.

She forms a diasporic solidarity with Aegean Macedonians, whose nostalgia becomes a vehicle for Vera and other non-Aegean Macedonians to experience and express a longing for change and a better life. Vera does not mention what that change entails, what that better life would look like—and, perhaps most significantly, she does not articulate who or what has precipitated the struggles of present, nor does she make clear what might be preventing that life from becoming a reality. In the recorded interview, Vera focuses on musical features of the repertoire, and the political rhetoric that can be indexed by the music of Aegean Macedonia is absent. (She knew that I was well aware of the situation with Greece.) Vera mentions several

times that she allows audiences to interpret the music as they please—this is as far as she will go in stating any awareness that the band’s musical products are available for political nationalists to support and use for their own ideological ends.

Another example comes from a recording session for an album titled *Nezgasnati Ogništa* (Unextinguished Hearths, 2014), officially a “project of Oliver Josifovski,” but unofficially referred to as “Ljubojna and Friends” during its production. The album was not released widely, and was completely financed by the Markovski family, in honor of Ilija M. Markov (1939–1993). Markov was born in the village *Novoselani* in the Kostur (Kastoria) region of Aegean Macedonia, and was one of tens of thousands of child refugees of the Greek Civil War, separated from his family and sent first to Albania, and then to Romania until he finished high school (1956) and moved to Skopje.²³⁸ The album included many of Ljubojna’s regular collaborators, including percussionist Oscar Salas and jazz pianist Vasil Hadzimanov, as well as Baklava vocalist Elena Hristova. Oli invited me to record as a saxophonist and flutist on three of the songs, one of which was a new arrangement of “Tvojte Oči Leno.” After working through much of the track, Oli asked me to play my alto flute along with Vera’s melodic line repeated on vocables several times at the close of the track. I chose to play heterophonically, with my own jazz-oriented ornamentation and melodic phrasing, consistent with my own musical background. I played the ending of the melodic phrase descending step-wise down to the tonic of a minor scale from the third scale degree, adding some ornamentation along the way. We recorded the passage several times before Oli said to me “Dave, make sure you play the end of the phrase like this . . .” He sang the phrase ending as moving, by scale degree, b3-2-1-2-b7-1, with the significant

²³⁸ See Monova 2002 for an anthropological study of “Aegeans” in the Republic of Macedonia, with a detailed analysis of the child refugees of the 1948 Greek Civil War. Details on Ilija M. Markov can be found at <http://www.pravdiko.mk/advokat-ilija-markov-1939-1993/> (accessed September 6, 2015).

difference occurring in cadence of the phrase, moving from the lowered seventh scale degree to the first. “That is the most Macedonian phrase ending of all. Hey, and that should help you with your dissertation! It’s *so* Macedonian, you know, *Before the Rain*.” At the time, I had no idea which part of *Before the Rain* he was talking about, but when I asked him about it later, he referenced the “Death of Alexander” cue that includes Vanja Lazarova’s performance of “So Maki Sum Se Rodila.” The melody he referenced was performed by the synthesized strings after Lazarova’s vocals, and it repeats the same melodic cadence (b3-2-1-2-b7-1) several times.

I should note that “Tvojte Oči Leno” became the most commonly recorded and performed song by ethno bands, with well-known band Baklava performing the melodic line closer to the way I had, sliding down from the second scale degree to the first, without descending to the flat seven below the tonic. I heard Tanec perform the song in a concert in the Philip II square in Skopje as part of *Skopsko Leto*, the Skopje Summer Festival in 2014. Their vocalist for the song—Suzana Spasovska—also omitted the lowered seventh and slid down from the second scale degree from the first.²³⁹ The recording made by the Bapčorki for Radio Skopje, however, *does* include the descent to the lowered seventh, in the style that Vera sang the song, which suggests that this may be the actual reference point for her phrasing (she was not in the studio to voice her own thoughts on the question). Oli’s evoking of *Before the Rain* as the authoritative reference point for Macedonian traditional music shows both the film’s symbolic power as a transnational representative of Macedonian traditional music and Oli as aligning himself and his music with a pre-VMRO sense of ethno-national belonging.

Through their musical practice, Vera, Oli, and other participants in the ethno-band scene offer a space for belonging that is aligned with a concept of Macedonian-ness primarily based on

²³⁹ Many folklore groups, wedding bands, and other entertainment ensembles now include the song in their repertoire because of its wide popularity.

the affirmation of Macedonian cultural distinctiveness. Their musical inclusion of Aegean Macedonia in the canon of Macedonian traditional music is a strategy for remembering, left open to interpretation by potential patrons. It does not constitute symbolic violence or irredentist territorial claims—even though it is not directly at odds with the ideology of those who employ such violence or promote such claims. These musicians avoid the pre-Slavic symbols being put forth by VMRO-DMPNE, and remain outside of the political network of power.

There have been some cases of new folk songs and dances being created featuring themes related to Alexander the Great, especially in the Macedonian diaspora, where a completely different set of nationalisms and social structures are in play (see Danforth 1995). Nonetheless, expressive culture from the diaspora often makes its way back to the homeland, providing texts and tools that often prove useful to actors. A notable example here was “Aleksandar’s Oro,” a folk dance performed by the KUD “Nikola Karev” of Melbourne, Australia. The dance features choreography depicting Alexander’s warriors fighting against an ancient Greek army, complete with costumes and accompanied by instrumental Macedonian-style folk music in 7/8 and 11/8. A YouTube video of the dance went viral in Macedonia in 2010 and 2011, and while some media outlets praised it for highlighting elements of Macedonian history, it was widely criticized in public and private forums. Macedonian musicologist Angelina Dimovska suggests that some now-accepted folk dances such as “Komitskoto” and “Jugoslavija” (both part of Tanec’s repertoire from the Yugoslav era) were new choreographies exemplifying political processes and nation-building strategies of their times (Komitskoto in 1950 and Yugoslavia in the 1908s). She quotes ethnomusicologist/ethnochoreologist Ivona Opetčeska-Tatarčevska at length (seemingly from an interview or personal communication), who questions whether decisions about these types of folklore practice should be addressed by scholars, researchers, and educational systems,

or that they should be left to processes of populism (Dimovska 2010; cf. Dunin and Višinski 1995:12 on Komitskoto; see also Stojkova-Serafimovska 2014:219 for a perspective highly critical of Aleksandar's Oro).

To conclude regarding Ljubojna, Vera and Oli work hard, and sometimes struggle, to make ends meet as independent artists, and are not willing to make ideological compromises or back-room agreements to seek employment in a state educational or folk performance institutions. Also, as they work with Romani musicians in a collaboration with complex if not unbalanced power relations, it is perhaps helpful to remember that Carol Silverman describes Romani communities not as homelands or places of musical origin, but rather as sites of negotiation between economic and artistic forces (Silverman 2012). In fact, several sites of negotiations overlap in the musical practice of Ljubojna: the site of Romani negotiation with Ljubojna, the site of Ljubojna's negotiation with the dominant political and economic forces of Macedonian society, and even the site of Vera and Oli negotiating their self-representation with me, an American musician-ethnographer who will represent their work in academic and other forums. They are constantly involved in negotiations of artistic and economic concerns, deploying nostalgia, notions of homeland, and notions of the Macedonian nation vis-à-vis VMRO ideologies as they operate as freelance musicians seeking economic security and pursuing their own culturally and artistically meaningful ends. Through this type of practice, they make this alternative space for belonging, where they, their collaborators, and their audiences can exist outside the nepotistic network of power without challenging it.

Čalgija and Perspectives on the Ottoman Past

The second trend that rose to prominence in the years following 2006 was the increasing presence and popularity of čalgija. Čalgija is an urban musical genre featuring a heterophonic texture and typically performed by an ensemble including *kanun*, violin, *ut* (fretless short-necked plucked lute), clarinet, and either *tarabuka* (goblet-shaped drum) or *dajre* or *def* (frame drums).²⁴⁰ The Ottoman čalgija ensemble took shape in Macedonian towns in the nineteenth century, and often included musicians who were members of diverse religious and/or ethnic communities. By the middle of the twentieth century, čalgija ensembles consisted primarily of Romani musicians, and they served Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Vlah, and Romani patrons, having developed extensive repertoires in Turkish light classical music, folk songs, and popular urban songs in the many languages of these communities (see Seeman 2012 and Silverman 2012:31).

Sonia Seeman has detailed the history of čalgija in Macedonia's Yugoslav period, showing how musical changes in čalgija performance reflect state cultural policies that were tied to the development of Macedonian nationalist ideology (Seeman 2012). Through examining archival recordings, she demonstrates how musical signs of Ottoman cosmopolitanism were gradually subjected to erasure as čalgija was shaped into a homogenized symbol of Macedonian national identity with both European sonic sensibilities and markers of the "oriental." In one example, she traces the transformation of the "Segah" *mekam* (Tk. *makam*, or melodic mode) whereby its microtonally-lowered first scale degree was replaced by a whole step between the first and second scale degrees to sound like a major scale (ibid.:308). In another example she demonstrates how a syncopated and "orientalized" *čoček* rhythm (| ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ |) gradually

²⁴⁰ Sometimes the *ut* is replaced with the *džumbuš*, a fretless short-necked plucked lute with a skin face and a metal resonator, sometimes referred to as the more generic *bendžo* (banjo).

replaced a simpler beat pattern that primarily emphasized the downbeat of each measure. She asserts: “The overall effect is one of taming the Ottoman within čalgija to re-create a native ‘*oriental*.’” (ibid.:315). Seeman also notes that SR Macedonia was unique in southeastern Europe in its support (and re-working) of a musical genre coded as oriental; other neighboring republics and states typically suppressed Ottoman genres in their cultivation of state folklore (ibid.:322). This “native oriental” aspect of čalgija has continued to serve as one of the genre’s primary features since Macedonia’s independence in 1991. After that time, the genre became one of many available tools for the building of a national identity in independent Macedonia, and corporate patrons, musicians, and audiences have had a greater freedom to either honor or disregard the roots of the music when interpreting the music for meaning and employing it to serve their own purposes.²⁴¹ The Čalgija Orchestra of Macedonian Radio Television continued to operate, and several masters of the genre who served as leading musicians in the *Čalgija* Orchestra are still living in Skopje, including ut player and former director of the orchestra Raim Baki and *kanun* player Husref (Ustrev) Said. Baki’s group “Orient Čalgija” (with Said and Naser Mustafa on *tarabuka*) performs in the *čaršija*, and at restaurants throughout Skopje. Baki and Said also are often contracted to perform with Tanec for concert performances that involve čalgija and other starogradska muzika without dancing.

Bajsa Arifovska (b. 1979), student of and later collaborator with Dragan Dautovski, is one example of a musician who became interested in čalgija in the years since the second wave of ethno bands emerged. Bajsa taught narodni instruments for many years in the department Dautovski founded at Skopje’s music high school until she resigned in 2013 to begin working for

²⁴¹ For example, Seeman opens her article with a discussion of a DVD documentary on čalgija put out by Komercijalna Banka, a Macedonian bank. The DVD includes visuals of a Christian church in its opening, which has nothing to do with the roots of čalgija. I discuss below several ways čalgija is employed to serve various ends.

Tanec. As a multi-instrumentalist, she has diverse interests and skills, and I have known her to be contracted by the Macedonian Opera and Ballet and countless other projects where she plays clarinet, violin, tambura, kaval, and/or percussion in a traditional style. In 2013 Bajsa released an album titled *Macedonian Čalgija* featuring Baki, Said, Mustafa, and Arifovska herself on clarinet and violin. Though Bajsa is part of Dautovski's Quartet, which could be considered an ethno band, this project would not be considered "ethno music," because it featured čalgija music performed by čalgija musicians with no purposeful creative adaptations. Bajsa put together the album after spending a few years learning čalgija performance practices from these musicians. In 2014, when I asked her about that experience, she told me:

When I discovered that music, only three or four years ago, it was like my whole life I was preparing for that moment. And I can play with a sense of my own. (I had to turn a whole circle back and forth and realized that the same influence from North Africa was present in jazz. The roots of jazz hold that influence.) In the beginning, the diatonic scales meant nothing more than a scale to me. You can only move around these scales, for the improvisations, for the melody. But when a more mature musician would say to me: "Well you are doing fine, just lower that B a bit." I would say "well it's not a B-flat." "Just, lower it for a few cents." To me, that sounded out of tune. "No, it is not out of tune" and I realized much later that it was not out of tune! Simply put, my inner solfège needed to be reset, so that I could produce that sound on purpose in the future. There are so many things to be yet uncovered. Even today, although I have recorded an album with the great čalgija musicians and I play this music, it seems to me that one more lifetime is not enough for a person to understand all those scales. Maybe this is

nothing, maybe this is very little, but still it is worthwhile, so that it remains for others. [. . .]

Some gig would come up for them, and they would invite me along. The way it worked was based on how well you could get by, how well you could keep up with them. You play, to the best of your ability, listen and try to improvise. As I watched how the musician playing the kanun [Said] improvised, I realized how far away I am from his improvisation style and the musical scales he used. The same goes for the *ut*. It made it clear, that I have to research, practice, discover. I used to say that my *čalgija* music sounds too pure and we would even make a joke out of it. The Turks used to call the Macedonians, the Christian ones, “*kaurin*” [an term used in the Ottoman period for Christians in general as an insult but also as a self-ascriptive term], they used to have such expressions. So, I would make a joke saying that the way I play *čalgija* is very much “*kaurška*” [sic; *kaurška* is the adjective form of *kaurin*]. “Yes, that’s true,” they would say, “Well, of course. You hang out with them, you play with them. Come on we’ll take you where we play *čalgija čalgija*.”

Husref Said has reminded me numerous times that to learn *čalgija*, one needs at least twenty years of experience, learning from a master as an apprentice. Bajsa seems to have also aligned herself with this philosophy, aware that she is not a *čalgija* master, but not hesitating to promote the music through organizing an album with the living masters of the genre as she negotiates her position as a Romani musician whose musical skill and knowledge was, in large part, cultivated in the Macedonian system of higher education.

Čalgija Sound System is a group that is considered an ethno band and represents a pathway to the čalgija genre that is quite different from Bajsa's. The group performs songs of the čalgija repertoire, as well as other songs arranged in čalgija style, and consists of exclusively ethnic Macedonians. Having released one self-titled album in 2010 the band performs sporadically in various capacities. They performed one lively concert in the basement of Menada while I was in Macedonia, along with several other organized sit-down concerts as part of festivals and special events. The group formed as a result of a school for folk music organized in 2005 by orchestra "Pece Atanasovski." The classes met regularly and in 2006, the school held a special seminar, where Palestinian *oud* and violin virtuoso Simon Shaheen was a guest artist, along with Turkish kanun player Günay Çelik. The members of Čalgija Sound System cite Shaheen and Çelik as an inspiration for the formation of their group, which consists of violin (Aleksandra Kuzman), ut (Dorian Jovanovikj), kanun (Boško Mangarovski), percussion (def or *tarabuka*, Filip Krstevski), and female vocal (Dobriła Grašeska). They do not cite contact with Said, Baki, or any of the other musicians of the MRT Čalgija Orchestra in their discussions of the inspiration for their group, though they certainly grew up hearing the orchestra—Baki is especially known throughout Macedonia as the long-time director of the ensemble. Instead, in line with the way čalgija was re-fashioned and "cleaned up" by state policies under Yugoslavia they represent čalgija as a rich treasure of Macedonian music, as an expression of various aspects of the character of ethnic Macedonians.

The group's journey to čalgija via Simon Shaheen and Günay Çelik seems to embody, at least in part, the consequences of Macedonia's increased ethnic segregation—somehow Shaheen and Çelik as outsiders were more accessible than the čalgija master musicians in Macedonia, even though those masters were well-known and not hard to find. Bajsa, on the other hand, went

to Said and Baki (was she drinking from the izvorište, as her mentor Dautovski would advise?), seeking to align herself with the čalgija tradition despite the facts that she was not born into a family of čalgija musicians, that she was educated in a formal educational system, and that she was a woman playing instruments that were traditionally the domain of men. For the musicians of Čalgija Sound System, the ethnic barriers to seeking out the masters of čalgija were more insurmountable than the ones facing Bajsa, who was an ethnic Rom like Said and Baki. As a result, they perhaps unwittingly participated in the propagation of the further erasure and marginalization of minorities, inspired by Shaheen as an exotic outsider to explore the exoticness of čalgija, whose roots are in Macedonians' history with "the other within." Seeman positions the reworking of čalgija into an expression of internal exoticness by state institutions as "dangerously close to supporting racist ethnonational projects," citing related examples from former Yugoslavia by Mirjana Laušević (2000), Svanibor Pettan (1998), and Brana Mijatovic (2005). She warns:

sinister techniques by which musical practices were manipulated in order to dehumanise particular communities, through the narrowing of symbolic vocabulary. Such reduction enabled dominant political regimes to present different communities as de-humanized 'others' by repressing memories and experiences of shared cultural participation. (Seeman 2012:322)

Musicians like those in ethno bands that make music outside state institutions have perhaps greater freedom and agency to approach čalgija and other musical genres in ways that do not corroborate the erasure, repression, and marginalization of Yugoslav-era Macedonian national ideology—and instead recognize diversity and Macedonia's Ottoman heritage. I have seen Oliver Josifovski and Vera Miloševska of Ljubojna perform in a čalgija style numerous

times, and they have emphasized their consistent employment of Romani and Turkish musicians—citing a desire to honor the tradition and a value for “authenticity” in representing the riches of Macedonian musical folk traditions, which include a rich diversity of musicians.

Karolina Gočeva and Further Commercialization of Ethno Music

I close this chapter with the example of the latest project by pop singer Karolina Gočeva (b. 1980, Bitola), known simply as “Karolina,” one of the most well-known individuals in Macedonia. Karolina’s career began when she was a teenager, and she has released many hit songs and albums, maintaining a high level of popularity and visibility since the late 1990s. In the course of her career, Karolina has become to some extent a national symbol for Macedonia. In addition to two appearances as Macedonia’s representative at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2002 and 2007, she was featured in one of the central performances at Macedonia’s celebration of twenty years of independence in 2011.²⁴² At that performance on Skopje’s central square, which was also the unveiling of the Alexander the Great fountain, she sang the patriotic song “Zemjo Mila” (“O Dear Country”). As she sang, accompanied only by three or four unseen female backup vocalists, she was lifted on a crane five or six stories into the air, her flowing dress stretching down to the ground as thousands of people filled the square for the celebratory event.²⁴³ Some have suggested that this moment positioned her as a Macedonian embodiment of or analogue for “Marianne,” the symbol of the French Republic representing Liberty, through the iconographic similarities of a woman with flowing hair and garments, lifted up, leading her

²⁴² Her 2007 entry, “Mojot Svet” (My World) approached some elements of traditional music with its 7/8 meter and inclusion of timbres that resembled those of the kaval, kanun, and ut.

²⁴³ “Zemjo Mila” was written by Jane Kodžabashija in 1977, and first performed by Nikola “Kole” Davidovski. In the time of the 2001 Insurgency, the Davidovski video of the song reportedly ran often on the state-run Macedonian Television (Nikolikj 2011).

people.²⁴⁴

Her music has covered broad stylistic ground within commercial pop categories (e.g., R&B, hip-hop, rock), but never approached anything considered “ethno” or “folk” until her 2008 release of the album *Makedonsko Devojče* (Macedonian Girl). The songs on the album drew on folk styles and were all original compositions with music and lyrics by Zlatko Origjanski of Anastasia. The album enjoyed wide popularity in Macedonia and was also released in the Serbian market. She followed that album with *Makedonsko Devojče 2* (2014), which was marketed, released, and its material performed during my stay in Macedonia. For this project, Karolina and her management team at Avalon Productions engaged Nikolče Micevski as the primary composer/arranger and music director and Valentin Sokolevski as the primary lyricist. The album and its associated concerts included many musicians active in the ethno music scene, such as Oliver Josifovski of Ljubojna (bass), clarinetist Blagojče Trajkovski (a frequent member of Ljubojna), kanun player Boško Mangarovski of Čalgija Sound System, and Romani trumpet player Džambo Agušev.

Makedonsko Devojče 2 was released with a slick marketing campaign to great fanfare in February of 2014, and accompanied by six concerts on consecutive nights at the Macedonian National Opera House. Though she is not part of the ethno-band scene, the songs on this album were mostly newly-composed in a style that could be considered “ethno music” drawing on urban styles of Macedonian traditional music in combination with elements labeled by composer/arranger Micevski as “jazz” and “pop.” The first single from the album, “Čalgiska,”

²⁴⁴ I thank Ivona Opetčeska-Tatarčevska for this observation. Though some key Marianne iconographic elements are missing (most notably the Phrygian cap), the painting *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix (1830) represents the strongest parallel, with its female Liberty figure elevated above the armed civilians she is leading; there are also a number of corpses at her feet.

was released before the release of the full album and, as evident in its title, follows the trend of incorporating čalgija elements into ethno music. It features Mangarovski on kanun and, like many of the songs, a text full of Turkisms in the Macedonian language both common and poetic. “Čalgiska” (the feminine adjective form of čalgija that would modify the word “song” or pesna), is not in čalgija style, but includes the timbre of the kanun as possibly the only marker of čalgija in the song. Micevski situates the timbre of the kanun thus: “The interesting thing about the kanun is that for 90% of the songs, if they would be played by the kanun and played well, the sound of the kanun itself would give them a čalgija sound, a čalgija style.” The strong association of the timbre of the kanun with čalgija indexes the genre for the audience along with all of its self-orientalizing meanings that have attached the genre to Macedonian national identity.



Figure 39. Karolina Gočeva performing at the Opera House

When I spoke with Micevski about the project after its release, he said that the goal was “to make something folk, but not folk . . . somehow for it to still belong in ethno or world music.” He spoke in great detail about how it was important how to add the correct “spices” to the music—harmonic elements from European classical music, dominant and extended dominant chords that he characterizes as “jazz,” some traditional elements but not others (there are no kavals, gajdas, tapans, or zurlas; i.e., no indexing of rural village music), and some pop sensibilities in Karolina’s vocal performance. The hope was to go even deeper into traditional music styles than the first *Makedonsko Devojče* album, and to create new music along the lines of the starogradska muzika (old urban music) genre, without venturing too far into rural village (narodna or izvorna) music sensibilities or turbofolk sensibilities (with influences from disco, hip-hop, and electronic music).

Micevski told me about the success of one of the songs, “Dve Liri” (Two Turkish Liras), suggesting that its music and its lyrics touched people’s souls.

So it’s not typical folk music, but I’ll say it again, it has a soul. We touched the soul. “Dve Liri” became a hit in 3 days, you understand? It’s typically Macedonian [in its musical aspects]. On the other hand, the lyrics tell a story that is also typical for these parts, about how a grandmother left two gold liras so that her grandchild could use them to request a song in her honor at his wedding, after the grandmother had passed. Everyone, or every other person has had that kind of experience. Those days might be over now, we live in a different time, but in the eighties, we still had our grandmothers and grandfathers, you understand? So that’s the combination that reached everyone. “Wow, the story! It reminded me,” they say, “of my own grandmother.” No way it won’t remind you, right?

The concerts at the opera house were all filled to that hall's 700-seat capacity (the sixth one was added after the first five quickly sold out) with Macedonians of all ages. After each concert, Karolina and several of the band members hurried out to the lobby of the opera house, where a small stage was set up. They reprised several of the songs in this more intimate setting, where audience members were in very close proximity to Karolina and the other musicians, just as they would if a starogradski band was playing at a restaurant. People crowded onto the stairs and the balcony of the lobby, and many had their smartphones out and were recording videos as she performed "Čalgiska" and "Dve Liri," the most well-known songs from the album. Even more audience members were continuing their experience of the music, singing along, clapping their hands, and raising their hands in the air with smiling faces as they enjoyed being part of a moment that perhaps gave them nostalgia for lost relatives, or provided an experience of being part of something distinctly Macedonian.



Figure 40. Karolina Gočeva performing in the lobby of the Opera House after the concert



Figure 41. The crowd listening to Karolina Gočeva in the lobby of the Opera House

Karolina and her management team at Avalon Productions followed the trend of folk music sensibilities, appealing to an ethnic-Macedonian audience through following common trope of a female vocalist backed up by a band constituted by all ethnic-Macedonian males with the exception of Džambo Agušev. Though she avoids overt nationalism in this case, her music has wide appeal among an audience of all ages and she creates a space for the experience of musical sound as homogenously Macedonian despite (and because of) its subtle orientalizing elements. She and her team draw on the growing popularity of čalgija in Macedonia and trends in ethno music to attract audiences and move her career in a new direction. The ethno music scene, though it is a site for a belonging more consistent with Yugoslav-era nationalist ideology, provides tools available to those outside the scene that they use for their own ends. Ethno band musicians willingly and sociovirtuosively perform in these settings, not overly concerned about how their music is being represented for national or commercial interests, but happy to be

making a living and building their careers in the face of increasing economic uncertainty and the precarity of being outside the networks of the powerful.

Conclusion

Just as Karolina and her team have used trends in ethno music for commercial success in the pop music realm, these trends are available to others as they seek to make their way amidst the increasing precarity brought on by the neoliberal policies of the state and its accompanying economic challenges. Returning to Velika Stojkova-Serafimovska's analysis of how "Tvojte Oči Leno" was transformed from local song to national folk anthem over the last ten years, she reports hearing the song played at a private performance of the Čalgija Orchestra of Macedonian Radio Television in 2012. When she asked then-director Raim Baki how this song managed to enter the ensemble's repertoire, he said "recently, people have been requesting this song at every gig we play, so now we've included it in our repertoire because obviously it's very popular" (quoted in Stojkova-Serafimovska 2014:224), consistent with the patronage-based practices of čalgija ensembles for generations.²⁴⁵

The multiple subjectivities involved in the representation and consumption of musical texts in the ethno music scene are a significant part of what makes them sites for the making of space for variegated senses belongings. Baki is certainly not remembering the exodus of refugees from Northern Greece, nostalgic for a distant home. Vera Miloševska and Ljubojna induce that nostalgia for their audiences, but experience it as a desire for a better life, and escape from the struggles of the present induced by the powerful who politicize Aegean Macedonia to increase

²⁴⁵ In 2015, heard Baki and Said perform "Mori Čupi Kosturčanki" at a small gathering of Macedonians in Los Angeles, most of whom had lived there for five years or more, and none of whom (to my knowledge) had heritage in Aegean Macedonia. The song was not requested, and did not elicit a particularly strong response.

their dominance. Čalgija Sound System and Karolina Gočeva casually follow and affirm the structures set up in Yugoslav Macedonia, where musical homogenization of čalgija has served to attenuate the perceived specter of Macedonia's Ottoman past while further marginalizing minority populations and their cultural practices. Yet Oliver Josifovski makes strides to include minority performers in various iterations of Ljubojna to honor Macedonia's diversity, which stretches back to its Ottoman heritage—even if such inclusion also serves his goals of affirming notions of authenticity produced by minority musicians. And certainly none of these seeks to make irredentist claims on Northern Greece, nor aligns themselves with VMRO-DPMNE nationalist ideologies (Karolina comes the closest to doing so).

Macedonian musicians in the ethno band scene engage with musical repertoires from Aegean Macedonia and musical styles with roots in Ottoman urban music to assert ideologies of memory that depart—to varying degrees—from those of the nationalistic state. Through their representational choices, their musical references, and their rhetoric, they offer competing and alternative approaches to memory that do not overtly challenge the hegemonic memory ideologies of the dominant state, but ensure that there are available breaks beyond it.

In her 2011 book *Game and Simulations*, Macedonian literary scholar Vesna Mojsova-Čepiševska examines the 2009 Ljubojna album *Pesna na Mojata Pesna* and several other Macedonian musical interpretations of classic Macedonian poetry and prose. She suggests that music is a node for progressive motion towards the expression of Macedonian culture beyond the powerful political world of contemporary Macedonian life, stating:

We also keep in mind the European trend of the exportation of culture across borders, the exportation of music, visual art, and literature, which transport themselves as an echo. That means that forms of culture freely travel in such a

way that no political force is able to thwart their movement. And somehow in all of this, the form that most easily transverses borders is music. (Mojsova-Čepiškova 2011:47)

Her idealistic metaphor of music echoing across borders, its movement unhindered by political forces, hints at the capacity of musical practices to enable the survival of alternative senses of belonging at the margins of power. Ethno bands have crossed geo-political borders, making music to make space for belonging in new ways through their musical practice, some even performing the Aegean Macedonian folk repertoire at events in northern Greece for Macedonian communities there.²⁴⁶

At the end of my stay in Macedonia in 2014, I spent two days in Istanbul, and ended up arranging to go to jazz club Nardis near that Galata Tower with Goce Naumov, drummer for the jazz group Next to Silence, who happened to also be in Istanbul participating in an academic conference on archaeology. He had run into Oli on the street the previous day, and attended a reception at the Macedonian consulate where Ljubojna was performing for an official event. In one final act of sociovirtuosity, Ljubojna was able in this case to operate as a contracted entity, drawing support from the state even as its members embodied a discursively silent ambivalence to the state and all of its practices. The following day, we gathered at a tiny bar, “Favela Teras,” on the fourth floor of a building in a tucked-away alley off İstiklal Caddesi, Istanbul’s famed

²⁴⁶ There was one case in ethno music where ethnic boundaries with Albanians were crossed in the ethno music scene. I had long searched for a parallel ethno music scene among Albanians in Macedonia, to no avail. But in 2014 Muhamed Ibrahim, an Albanian guitarist who had not been active for many years, released an instrumental album, *Fly* with PMG Records, that could be considered an ethnic music project. Ibrahim had been part of the Macedonian/Albanian rock band *Bla Bla Bla* in the 1990s, but had not been active since around 2000. The album included rock guitarist Sead “Secko” Hadžikj, electric bass player Džole Maksimovski, and a number of percussionists, including Ratko Dautovski. Live performances were performed as a trio by Ibrahim, Maksimovski, and Dautovski.

pedestrian street. Vera and Oli, along with their multi-ethnic ensemble of two percussionists, guitar, violin, and clarinet, crammed on a small stage and played “Tvojte Oči, Leno” and countless other songs from their repertoire for hours late into the night, their love-war acoustemologically transforming the place into an effervescent, momentary space for alternative belonging. Those of us at the bar—Macedonians and others from southeastern Europe along with local Turks—sang along, danced folk dances, and enjoyed the space that the music was making for us to belong—identifying and participating—there together, even for a fleeting moment. By deploying meaningful sound in seemingly contradictory ways in any number of settings, musicians in the ethno band scene make their own musical spaces for belonging. They offer meaningful, if ephemeral, experiences for themselves and their audiences that provide relief and pleasure, something alternative with which they can identify and in which they can participate amidst the challenges of their socio-political realities.

CONCLUSION

In the course of this dissertation, I have fleshed out several concepts as applied to various forms of music making, situating it as a social and sonic practice that takes place in *scenes*, makes spaces for *alternative belongings*, is carried out by social actors who can often be characterized by an agency that is *sociovirtuosic*, and is constituted by the *co-production of acoustemology* in the making of ephemeral space in existing places. In each of the case studies in Macedonia—the techno DJ scene, the jazz scene, and the ethno band scene—these concepts are developed in various and distinct ways.

The ephemeral, elastic nature of scenes is evident in each case, and each one illustrates different potentialities for what form a scene can take. The techno DJ scene is grounded in the physical locales at its core—Izlet café and Sektor 909’s winter and summer locations—and is made and remade as DJs, proprietors, and scenesters socially and sonically inhabit those locales and others that are peripherally and occasionally sites of practice and experience for the scene. It demonstrates how scenes can frequently be centered on nodes of activity as actors organize their lives and practices around those physical locations. The jazz scene comprises the intersection and confluence of transnational jazz pathways and the narratives that travel along them. In focus for this case are the ways scenes serve as sites for collisions of variegated histories, aesthetic preferences, and definitions of the boundaries of a musical practice, collisions that are demonstrative and constitutive of the scene itself. The ethno music scene takes the form of a constellation of ensembles that are interrelated by way of their shared cultural preference and the parallel manner in which they initiate and follow trends. That these three scenes constitute everescent formations with quite structural emphases suggests the efficacy and flexibility of the

scene concept as collectivities take shape based on these three (and surely many other) types of social organization.

Aside from elucidating distinct aspects of the scene concept itself, the three scenes also make space for specific types of alternative belonging—with alternative being defined as neither supportive of nor oppositional to hegemonic formations and their ideologies, and belonging constituted by elements of both identification and participation. The alternative belonging of the techno DJ scene is characterized by a sense of identifying with and participating in an urban ontology that is by its nature limited to certain classes (i.e., middle-class and above), and cuts across many (but not all) barriers of ethnicity and patriarchal heteronormativity. Ideologies that idealize a future that is loosed from the constraints of the dystopian present enter the scene by way of Detroit techno and its practitioners, adapted and adopted by those in the Sektor 909 scene to make ephemeral spaces where politicized ethno-nationalisms cease to frame and dictate their lived experience. Those in the jazz scene participate in and identify with the jazz narratives that they have encountered as they (and the narratives) have travelled transnationally. They belong, then, to those jazz narratives, recounting them and shaping them as their pathways move into the future, unbound by the geo-political boundaries definitive of the state of their citizenship and unhinged from deterministic reifications of ethnicity and related musical and cultural manifestations. The ethno music scene is a site for a belonging that reaffirms a Yugoslav-era conceptualization of Macedonian national ideology where identifying as an ethnic Macedonian and participating in Macedonian society as such has more to do with embodying a Slavic heritage than an ancient Alexandrian one. The musicians in this scene deploy sonic signifiers of Aegean Macedonia and of Macedonia's Ottoman history, struggling with both the present and

the past as they seek to challenge—but sometimes unwittingly reinscribe—ethnic difference and relations of domination and marginalization.

In the making of these alternative belongings, the actors of these scenes are consistently demonstrating great sociovirtuosity. They are all multiply positioned, and they employ highly sophisticated levels of social and sonic skill in navigating overlapping structures by embracing the myriad contradictions of their world. This sociovirtuosity is crucial in maintaining their senses of belonging as alternative—neither supporting nor resisting dominant institutions or other formations, and thus necessarily engaging them. Whether it takes the form of the techno scene partnering with the Macedonian Philharmonic and the Ministry of Culture, jazz musicians teaching at the jazz academy at the party-founded university or performing for free at a so-called “jazz party” at the residence of the president, or ethno band musicians participating in commercialized representation of their preferred styles, sociovirtuosity is always exercised at the site of a number of apparent and real contradictions. Instead of allowing such contradictions to produce despair or apathy, sociovirtuosic actors continue to act, seeing possibilities in the contradictions themselves, pressing into them with their sonic and social practices rather than seeking their resolution.

Finally, the actors of these scenes are continually engaging in the co-production of acoustemology, sonically transforming existing places into evanescent spaces as they make music together. The DJs of Sektor negotiate the realities of subsistence, the economics of sound, and the ideologies expressed in their sonic preferences to make and remake the space of the Sektor scene at various locales in Skopje and beyond. They co-produce acoustemologies with one another and with their audiences, agentively transforming the places they inhabit into spaces for belonging that only exist while the beats of the DJs are pulsing and the electronic music

grooves are grooving. The musicians of the jazz scene inhabit other places—cafés like Menada and Magor, recording studios, concert stages, and more. Their co-production of acoustemology is the sonic site for the negotiation of their jazz narratives, negotiations that are situated in larger structures of ethnic relations, questions of labor and neoliberal capitalism, and the transnationality of jazz itself. As they collaboratively make sound understood to them and (sometimes) to audiences as “jazz,” the acoustemologies they produce make their places into spaces where they are grounded in the present moment, participating in a musical tradition that embraces contradictions while simultaneously imagining a world where doing so does not pose a problem. Lastly, the musicians of the ethno music scene co-produce acoustemologies together in the contexts of their bands, negotiating a number of traditional repertoires and other practices with contemporary styles to transform any place into a space where a Yugoslav-era notion of Macedonian national belonging can be experienced. Like most musicians in collaboration, they experience a love-war in their sonic practice of togetherness, holding firm to their goals and desires while making space in the sound for others to hold firm to *their* own goals and desires. This negotiation, this struggle—it not only builds bonds of musical intimacy and trust among the musicians themselves despite their differences (in position, in situatedness, in power) and despite the contradictions inherent in their disparate goals and desires. It also gives sonic expression to struggle itself, a sonic expression that is laden with an awareness of its ephemerality, tinged with an understanding that it is complicit in the continuation of hegemonic forces that dominate, separate, and marginalize. Even with that awareness of ephemerality and understanding of complicity, sonic practice keeps making and re-making spaces in the in between, where hope of greater and more lasting transformation can be sustained and reproduced again and again.

Epilogue

Since the end of my fieldwork in Macedonia in September 2014, much has changed, and little has changed. As I mention in Chapter 1, the fall 2014 mass student protests inspired a series of broader protests, the largest ones occurring in May of 2015, which were also motivated by the wiretapping scandal that exposed much alleged government corruption. Everyday life in Macedonia was no longer characterized primarily by fear, and formations that were resistant and oppositional rose to prominence in ways that they never had before in Macedonia. The prime minister and his government have conceded to local and international pressure, and processes are in motion to move towards a transitional multi-party government with a new prime minister, with new elections scheduled for the spring of 2015. But many people on the ground understand that it is not the particular party in power but rather the overarching system of power that has made Macedonia into a partyocratic society, and there is doubt as to whether the partyocracy might ever break down and how that might happen.

Construction for Skopje 2014 projects has continued unabated into 2015, and new elements are being added on a regular basis. The most recent addition is an enormous ferris wheel over the Vardar River next to the Stone Bridge, whose construction began in the summer of 2015. The physical domination of public space by the state has continued, with those taking oppositional or alternative stances unable to counter that with any physical constructions of their own. Even as oppositional stances have become more common and the alternative scenes of this study have undoubtedly shifted in many ways, the actors constitutive of the scenes continue to act sociovirtuosically, countering the state's domination of public space in the sonic making of their own ephemeral spaces. Ogi Uzunovski, Džijan Emin, and Derrick May have brought their orchestral techno project to several European cities, and notably to Detroit, performing Derrick's

techno music with Džijan's orchestrations with local orchestras, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Sektor 909 continued to operate throughout the year, but on September 3 its license to operate a summer club was revoked by the authorities, ostensibly to remove them as competition for other clubs owned and operated by those in the party/state's nepotistic network. Sektor's owners issued an official statement challenging the legality of the revoking of the license and circulated it widely on social media; co-owner Mački made public statements in the Macedonian press that outlined the political motivations for revoking the license, which were also circulated in the international electronic music community through outlets such as Resident Advisor.²⁴⁷

President Gjorge Ivanov has held two more jazz parties at his residence; Toni Kitanovski recently performed in a duo formation with drummer Goce Naumov at an event at Magor they titled "The Music of Humankind." Ljubojna has continued to perform in various multi-ethnic formations; Čalgija Sound System performed at the 2015 Off Fest, Macedonia's preeminent world music festival, which only occasionally features local bands. When students were "occupying" the university in a 24-hour sit-in that lasted several weeks during the time of the student protests, a former member of ethno band Baklava posted a video online of him and several other musicians playing and singing "Tvojte Oči Leno" for a large crowd of students at the site of the occupation. Somehow, the oppositional students were engaging with a song connected to Aegean Macedonia in a mode of resistance to a state that has also drawn on so much imagery related to Aegean Macedonia in support of its ends.

I mention these examples not to suggest any particular shifts or changes in these scenes—though many complex shifts have surely occurred along with shifts in the dynamics of hegemonic power in Macedonia. Neither am I evaluating the extent to which these scenes are

²⁴⁷ See <http://www.residentadvisor.net/news.aspx?id=31293> (accessed October 8, 2015).

still “alternative.” What I am suggesting is that the actors of these scenes (and the scenes themselves) exhibit continuities with, and breaks from, the ways that they made alternative belonging before the changes that began in the fall of 2014. As people make music and space for belonging, they adjust and adapt to the actions of the powerful, finding the elastic and ephemeral in-betweens, filling them with sound, and embracing the complexities and contradictions of their world.

GLOSSARY

dajre frame drum; cf. *def*

gajda bagpipe

izvor spring, source, or wellspring

izvorna muzika rural village music that was passed down by oral tradition

gradski urban, of the city

kanun plucked-zither

kaval rim-blown, end-blown flute

kemane bowed fiddle

narod people, nation, or folk

narodna muzika folk, national, or people's music, usually rural

pesna song

selski rural, of the village

starogradska muzika "old urban music"

tambura plucked/strummed, fretted long-necked lute

tarabuka goblet-shaped drum

tapan large, double-headed circular drum played with a heavy beater on one side and a slim stick or switch on the other; it is slung over the shoulder when played

tradicionalna muzika traditional music

turbofolk a musical genre that combines elements of electronic music with elements of folk music that often features overt eroticism and decadence, and is frequently positioned as "kitsch" or "backwards" but enjoys wide popularity throughout former Yugoslavia and Southeastern Europe more broadly; cf. *chalga* in Bulgaria

ut short-necked fretless plucked lute

zurla wooden double reed aerophone with a cylindrical bore that flares at its base; usually played in pairs by Roms accompanied by the *tapan*

APPENDIX A

ODAWALLA

By Joseph Jarman

ODWALLA came through the people of the Sun
into the grey haze of the ghost worlds
vanished legions, crowding bread lines—the people
of the Sun coated with green chalk
all kinds of warm light between them
destroyed for the silver queen of the ghost worlds
wild beast such as dogs gone mad and lechers—the wanderers

ODAWALLA came through the people of the Sun
to warm them of the vanished legions
and to teach them how they may increase their bounty
through the practice of the drum and silent gong
(as taught by ODAWALLA) / was realized

on seeing one another they transformed themselves into
one the hand the other the left big toe of KAW ZU PAM
(the one who creates the door through the passage on the hill of
QUAN BU KA) their purpose
to guide the people of the Sun as they sought knowledge of
the door through the grey haze

when SEKA saw the sound of the silent gong
SEKA sought to transform itself into the right hand
of ODAWALLA where COO BE SU rested while waiting
to move into the right big toe of KAW ZU PAM
(the one who creates the door through the passage on the hill of
QUAN BU KA) their purpose
to guide the people of the Sun as they
seek to leave, seek to leave, seek to leave, seek to leave
the grey haze

only RIMUMBA remained to find the place of the
drum and silent gong
such knowledge would enable it to enter into the inner organs of
KAW ZU PAM
(the one who creates the door through the passage on the hill of
QUAN BU KA) their purpose
to guide the people of the Sun. the grey haze.

ODAWALLA vibrated the movement of CAM BE GILL O POIU
causing the silent gong to sound silent. the body whole.

the grey haze

Sun people
drum
silent
gong—here now
here now
here now—between us
grey haze Sun
people

Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion, no. 3 (1976), p. 33.

Also appears in *Black Case: Volume I & II* by Joseph Jarman (1977), pp. 46–47.

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