

Nataša Tasić\*

# Goran Bregović – Ambassador of Balkan(ism)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/LC.2023.034>

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to Goran Bregović, one of the most recognizable musicians from the ex-Yugoslav region. Since his immense popularity has always been surrounded by controversy, this text provides two contrasting points of view and tries to resolve the dilemma: is Goran Bregović an ambassador of the Balkans or Balkanism? After the introductory section, the paper aims to analyze the representative elements of Bregović's artistic work, firstly applying the affirmative lenses and then through the critical ones. Considering that concerts are his main channel of communication with the audience, the performative aspect of his career is emphasized. Both affirmative and critical perspectives are grounded in the existing theoretical argumentation within academic discourse, publicly available information from various media sources, and the author's critical view of Bregović's work.

**Keywords:** Goran Bregović, contemporary Balkan culture, Roma music, performance, stereotypes, Emir Kusturica

25

LITTERARIA COPERNICANA 4(48) 2023

ISSNp 1899-315X

ss. 25–36

---

\* PhD, professor of applied studies at the Academy of Applied Preschool Teaching and Health Studies, Kruševac, Serbia. Her main research interests are state-organized ceremonies in post-Yugoslav countries and their correlation with the process of shaping national identity.

E-mail: [natasa.tasic@hotmail.com](mailto:natasa.tasic@hotmail.com)



# Goran Bregović – ambasador Bałkan(izmu)

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł poświęcony jest Goranowi Bregovićowi, jednemu z najbardziej rozpoznawalnych muzyków z regionu byłej Jugosławii. Ponieważ jego ogromna popularność zawsze budziła kontrowersje, niniejszy tekst przedstawia dwa przeciwstawne punkty widzenia i próbuje rozstrzygnąć dylemat: czy Goran Bregović jest ambasadorem Bałkanów, czy bałkanizmu? Po części wstępnej artykuł analizuje reprezentatywne elementy twórczości artystycznej Bregovicia, najpierw przez pryzmat afirmatywny, a następnie krytyczny. Mając na uwadze, że koncerty są jego głównym kanałem komunikacji z publicznością, podkreśla się performatywny aspekt kariery artysty. Obie perspektywy, afirmatywna i krytyczna, opierają się na istniejącej w dyskursie akademickim argumentacji teoretycznej, publicznie dostępnych informacjach z różnych źródeł medialnych oraz krytycznym spojrzeniu autora na pracę Bregovicia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Goran Bregović, współczesna kultura bałkańska, muzyka romska, performans, stereotypy, Emir Kusturica

“Above all, I am a Balkans composer, and the home address of my music is the Balkans. It is inspired by Balkans and written for the Balkans” (Mičeta 1999)

**W**ithin the ex-Yugoslavia region, Goran Bregović is often perceived as a highly controversial artistic figure. The public sphere is flooded with articles about him, and even a superficial look suggests that only a few of them are balanced, while the vast majority are either strongly apologetic or critical towards Bregović’s work. Consequently, it is really hard, maybe even impossible, to think and write about his work and stay neutral. In this paper, I will present both of these contradictory points of view and try to resolve the dilemma: is Goran Bregović ambassador of the Balkans or Balkanism?

The research employed qualitative methods: the analysis of the existing published work to explore what has already been written about this topic, and media archaeology to reveal Bregović’s self-representation, as well as the way he has been portrayed by media throughout his career. In addition, the investigation of Bregović’s concerts is based on historiographic approach, which is, according to Erika Fischer-Lichte’s performance theory, required when a researcher did not participate in the relevant performance: „whenever we study a performance solely through reference to sources and documents, without personal experience of the performance, it is a historiographic project” (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 48). Main sources for insights into the performances were video recordings available at the artist’s official YouTube channel.

# 1. Context & Bio

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War led to the crash of socialism as the dominant paradigm in Eastern European countries. In Yugoslavia, the collapse of the leading political and ideological narrative loosened the supranational ties that kept the country together. Nations and nationalistic narratives took over the public discourse and had the leading role in the civil war that spread across the country. Discontinuity with Yugoslav identity and the creation of national states became imperative. Former republics became new nations and each of them represented itself as completely different from its neighbours. The notions of forgetting the recent common history and establishing continuity with distant, often mythical past, were in the heart of that process.

Overall socio-political turbulences also brought about the changes in cultural domains. Consequently, many of the ex-Yugoslav artists, including popular musicians, started profiling their cultural and artistic images towards the national paradigm. Few of them, who did not want to fit into the new boundaries, explored other territories. For Goran Bregović, the frontman and composer of *Bjelo dugme* (transl. *The White Button*), one of the most popular rock-and-roll bands in Yugoslavia, that other option was the Balkans.

In her work on “Balkanism”, Maria Todorova elaborated that the Balkans, as a reference for centuries, had a dominantly negative connotation and explored the political reasons behind that phenomenon (cf. Todorova 2009). Long-lasting stereotypes about the characteristics of the region and its inhabitants were nurtured within the region itself but also from outside of the Balkans (cf. Todorova 2009; Marković 2013). They included attributes like primitivism, violence, rudeness, arrogance, etc. However, there were also some positive ones, such as passion, naturalness, joyfulness, or authenticity (cf. Kiossev 2005; Čolović 2008).

For the political and cultural elites in the newly established post-Yugoslav societies, the cohesiveness of the term ‘Balkan’ was an undesirable umbrella as it undermined core nationalistic postulates. Even though contempt towards Balkan was common for all post-Yugoslav countries, there were some voices that “exploited myth of Balkan’s rebellion and heroism; values which were forgotten by the West” (Čolović 2008: 113). One of those voices inside the music sphere was Goran Bregović, who re-actualized the Balkans as a desirable cultural and emotional space.

Goran Bregović’s started his music career in the late 1960s as a guitarist in some local rock bands in Sarajevo. In 1974, together with several other musicians, he established *Bjelo dugme*, one of the most popular music groups in Yugoslavia. In the following 15 years, *Bjelo dugme* “broke all Yugoslav records in the number of albums sold and concert visitors and created what was rightly referred to as ‘Buttonmania’” (Marković 2013: 70). The end of *Bjelo dugme* and the overall changes in Yugoslavia were the period of transition for Goran Bregović from “being a rocker” to “being a composer”; from “being Yugoslav” to “being Balkanic” (Mikić 2017: 261).

He had often emphasized that his origins may be one of the possible reasons for the refusal of nationalism at a time when it was a supreme value in the ex-Yugoslav region. Born from mixed Serbian/Croat marriage, choosing sides was not an option for him, as he emphasized during an interview for the North Macedonian *Telma* television in 2019: “I have

technical problem with being Serb or Croat, for example” (Trajkovska 2019). He grew up in Sarajevo, a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional city that was a paradigm of co-presence and interconnectedness of different cultures. It seems that his shift from the Yugoslav rock star to “the artist with Balkan roots and ideas turned towards 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Bogdanović 2010), emerged, on the one hand, from the overall socio-economic turbulences in the region, and, on the other, from his need to successfully position himself in the new context.

There are four phases in his professional development, each reflecting the immense genre shift: “from rock to film, to pop, to world music” (Marković 2013). Bregović describes these artistic changes as the process of progress and maturation: “When I was young, I dressed my music differently, like from dippers into trousers. But now, my music is dressed more naturally. With trumpets behind me, I have more power artillery than with electric guitar” (Momčilović-Odobašić 2019). For him, these changes correlate with the new political situation and armed conflicts in his home country; because of the war, he had to instantly mature as an artist.

Most of Bregović’s film music was written just before or during the war. It was the beginning of his independent career as well as close cooperation with another famous artist from Sarajevo, the film director Emir Kusturica. Their joint creative work on award-winning movies such as *Time of the Gypsies* (1988), *Arizona Dream* (1993), *Underground* (1995), brought international recognition to Bregović and launched him globally.

Besides composing soundtracks, Bregović’s worldwide career included collaboration with respectable and world-known musicians such as Iggy Pop, Cesaria Evora (1941–2011), Kayah, Gypsy Kings, Ofra Haza (1957–2000), Jorgos Dalaras, etc. In the mid-’90s, he formed the *Wedding and Funeral Orchestra*: a mixture of Roma brass ensemble with percussions, Bulgarian folk singers, electric or acoustic guitar, often accompanied by a male choir and string orchestra. That unique music group was the beginning of a completely new epoch for him.

If I were to try to identify a common, cohesive element across all the genres and phases of Bregović’s work, it would, for sure, be the use of traditional music sources. These tendencies started early and could be found in the music of Bjelo dugme, the opus which some rock critics of the time labelled as “shepherd’s rock”; they continued throughout the cooperation with Kustirica and are present even today. Of course, the numerous influences from both Western and Eastern musical traditions could be also found in Bregović’s work, but the ascendancy of the Balkans discourse is undeniable. Judging by his compositions, their concert performances, and many of Bregović’s interviews, it could be concluded that the artist treats the Balkans with ambivalence. He constantly emphasizes the variegation and plurality of the Balkans cultures, but at the same time, he speaks about their specific and almost metaphysical coherence.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to underline here that I will use the term Balkans carefully and fully aware that its use in a broader sense (that goes beyond geographic area) can lead to the reduction and simplification of the diversity of the human groups on the peninsula (cf. Kiossev 2005).

## 2. Goran Bregović – The Ambassador of Balkan Music

### Roma Music

At the heart of Bregović's work as an independent artist is his connection with the Balkans Roma music, especially the Roma brass music. This connection can be easily identified from the very beginning of his cooperation with Kusturica thirty years ago; it was gradually developed and improved throughout the time, and it is central to his work even today. The reason for this long-lasting dedication to Roma music could be found in the aforementioned interviews, which are often flavoured with moderate nostalgia for the socialist past and generally a positive attitude towards the socialist Yugoslavia and its supranational character. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the cross-national ties across the Balkans were broken and the existing cultural narratives of brotherhood and unity were disrupted. For Bregović, who did not want to fit into the new reality, another Balkans-wide cross-cultural link was needed. Having that in mind, the possible conclusion is that Bregović found this new cohesive ingredient for Balkans in Roma music. In November 2018, in the interview for *Radio Television of Serbia*, he explained his dedication to Roma tradition through the language perspective: "The language I used to use for my work disappeared, so today I write in Roma or some imaginary language. Roma is our last common language."

The influence of Roma music on Bregović's work cannot be reduced only to inspiration and instrumentalization, as his opus is vitally interconnected with it. By using compositional approaches such as recycling, rearranging, collaging or citation, he gives Roma music a new creative and authentic layer, which makes it recognizable and popular among a wide international audience. Moreover, through his music and global career in the past few decades, Bregović was promoting, and building a brighter image of not only Roma music, but also of the whole Balkan culture. For example, his arrangements of brass music from the region can be heard in festivals and nightclubs around Europe through both live performances and DJ sets (cf. Marković 2013). Also, Bregović's popularity has indirectly impacted the betterment of the material status of Roma musicians, who often perform his music and, through that, can earn a living. A British journalist claimed: "One of the things I'm proudest of, says Bregović, is that today is a Friday, and hundreds of Gypsy bands will be playing for tips, and they will play a lot of my songs. I like the idea that because of that, some kid will have marmalade on his bread" (Denselov 2019).

### Compositional Techniques

Bregović's decision to use compositional techniques based on recycling is often criticised and by some even defined as plagiarism. In response to these critical voices, Bregović usually points out the numerous masters of Western European music from different genres,

such as Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), George Gershwin (1898–1937), John Lennon (1940–1980), Paul McCartney (b. 1942) and further explains: “I’m not the only composer to have been impressed and influenced by Gypsies ... and what is the point of a tradition if we can’t take things from it?” (Denselov 2019). Some scholars support this position and underline that Bregović’s creative strength lays in the abovementioned compositional techniques - that is, by the revitalisation of the old Bjelo dugme hits and their combination with different traditional, classic or contemporary musical genres, “new hybrid forms” are created (Trifkovic 2004: 9). Bregović treats the traditional music of the other ethnic communities in the same manner as Roma music. Basically, by melting together music from different traditions and styles, he creates a highly inclusive music language that affirms multiculturalism.

## Performances

Throughout his career, Bregović has had thousands of concerts around the world. Despite their diversity, which is immanent in the visual and audio identity of the *Wedding and Funeral Orchestra*, as well as to the fact that each performance is a unique and unrepeatable event, the publicly available recordings allow us to reconstruct Bregović’s typical live show.

Bregović usually performs in giant concert halls or big open spaces. The performers on the scene are mostly static. They rarely change their initial positions and all the action and movements are happening within a limited space. Explosive energy, which is a common feature of Bregović’s concerts, is not generated by a vivacious performance but by the music itself. At first glance, such staging suggests that excessive theatricality is avoided, but the reality is that it hides well-thought-out performing strategies. The key actor of the performance is Bregović himself, who sits at the centre of the scene, dressed in a white suit and shirt. He usually plays the electric guitar, sings occasionally, and manages the whole show. The other performers are also dressed in a way that directly corresponds with their roles, while their appearance implies interculturalism. The Bulgarian folk singers, who became a trademark of Bregović’s shows, are dressed in folklore costumes and so are the Roma trumpet players. If a show includes the performance of a symphony orchestra or a choir, its members are dressed formally; namely, in dark suits and long dresses.

Bregović mostly performs abroad to the audience who wants to listen to, in his own words, “the music from minor, unimportant culture... nowadays it is exotic, it is called World music” (Momčilović-Odobašić 2019). Thus, his staging strategies and performances focused on promoting the diversity of the Balkans to non-Balkan people can be perceived as his response to that demand. The reconciliation of different discourses - from traditional through the urban one to the conventionally classical - is recognizable in both music and overall staging of his performances. The musical aspect of his spectacles can be described as a combination of energy, motoric rhythm, melancholy, *sevdah*<sup>2</sup>, noise and passion. According to the video recordings available at Bregović’s Youtube channel, the audience’s reception corresponds with the vibes emitted from the stage. Occasionally, these emotions are also articulated through Bregović’s shouts - e.g. “If you don’t go crazy, you are not

---

<sup>2</sup> A Balkan version of trans-experience (cf. Gligorijevic 2020).



normal!” – which is something of a direct call for catharsis. Unhampered dance, wild jumping, ecstatic screaming and the overall affective reaction of the audience all around the world are the clear indicators of the strength his messages have.

*Mesecina*, *Ederlezi* and *Kalašnjikov* are songs that became the sine qua non of Bregović’s concerts, the audience recognizes them immediately and reacts ecstatically. In this paragraph, I will focus on *Kalašnjikov*, as an exemplary song. It was composed for Kusturica’s movie *Underground*, but over time, it was completely detached from the original context and performed, rearranged, and reused numerous times. According to Bregović, *Kalašnjikov* is a sarcastic song in which musical and poetical techniques are applied to mock people who adore guns, but also to unmask the absurdity of war. The text mostly includes neutral syllables, wordplay, and onomatopoeia, while the music component brings vertiginous motoric rhythm, which can be described as “carousel-like logic” (Mikić 2017: 264). The popularity of *Kalašnjikov* is so immense that its performances around the world, almost without exception, represent the climax of the respective shows.

### 3. Goran Bregović – The Ambassador of Balkanism

#### Roma Music

Goran Bregović’s creative work can be defined as the World music, the genre in which borrowing ideas, including Roma music idioms, and its commercialization is a not unusual phenomenon (cf. Silverman 2011). Authors who apply this approach and regularly use Roma folklore tradition explain that their primary objective is to bring this valuable, but marginalized culture into the mainstream. The same argumentation is used by Bregović too. However, when such an approach and its benefits are analysed, it is important to pay additional attention to how Roma people, their communities, and culture are represented.

From the entire Roma cultural discourse, Bregović usually borrows only those particular elements that fit his artistic preferences. However, some critics note that they also fit his marketing and commercial preferences. This approach to folklore material is not rare in music, yet what Bregović did and is still doing today is the reduction of the whole Roma music discourse to the set of the fairytale-like scenes in which Roma culture is a space of freedom flavoured with passion, wildness, little violence and unadulterated joy. An illustrative example of how selective his approach is can be found in his own words. When asked if he ever performs at Roma weddings and celebrations, Bregović said, “They like to play the music that is a little sad and blue. I don’t like that; I like it happy and cheerful” (Marić 2018).

Even though he is aware of the fact that “a little sad and blue” is a typical Roma music idiom, he profiles his music in a way that “invokes those elements of Balkan music traditions that conform to the international audiences’ stereotypical perception of the region, and

meets their expectations of what Balkan music should sound like” (Marković 2013: 261). Practically, whenever immanent characteristics of the resource do not fit his idea of the perfect material he decides to ignore it. By doing so, he is offering a mild version of the Roma cultural experience.

That would not be an issue if the Roma community is not one of the most marginalized in the Western world, with the vast majority of people living below the poverty line and facing systemic discrimination. The question that emerges is: does the romanticized approach mainstreamed by Bregović raise public awareness of these issues or keep them under the radar?

In her work on Bregović’s output, Aleksandra Marković revisited the well-known paradigm of Roma as the people who appropriate music from the traditions they are in contact with; the paradigm that is often used by Bregović, too. However, in her opinion, that paradigm is reversed in the case of Bregović as a non-Roma who “appropriate the Gypsy image and assigned their music with the Gypsy label in order to make it more appealing to the audience” and make more profit (Marković 2013: 211). It is worth mentioning that the majority of Roma people, especially those in Serbia, have an aversion towards Bregović and his work because he regularly uses their music without giving credit to their resources (Silverman 2011; Marković 2013). At the same time, he nurtures the patronizing attitude and defines the passive role that Roma people have had in creating their own music. Who benefits from Roma music appropriated by Bregović – the Roma people or the artist himself?

## Compositional Techniques

From the musicological point of view, the concept of borrowing from folklore tradition is not an issue. However, in Bregović’s work it is not only about rearranging, collaging, recycling, sampling, citation or “reusing old, sometimes already released tunes”, but the problem is that this rehashing advanced “to the level of main composition technique in his later work” (Marković 2013: 73). A musicologist Vesna Mikić agrees with this conclusion and claims that recycling and remediation are not strange in terms of the entertainment industry, yet appropriating “recycling strategy as the creative procedure in the making of “original” (film) music is not so common” (Mikić 2017: 263). In her more recent article, Jelena Gligorijević wrote about Bregović as a consistent borrower from the Roma culture, and elaborated that even some of his greatest hits, such as *Kalašnjikov* or *Mesečina*, are not his creations but the arrangements of songs written by some Roma authors like Šaban Bajramović (1936–2008), Boban Marković or Slobodan Salijević (cf. Gligorijević 2020: 143).

## Performances

The whole career of Goran Bregović as an independent artist is primarily turned towards an international audience. His music is sold globally and has millions of fans from all over the world. Even though the art offers numerous possibilities for challenging the existing stereotypes, his music is based on nurturing dominant narratives about the Balkans, its



culture and people. The stereotypes he exploits are mostly positive and used as a tool for meeting the audience's expectations. Those are variations of positive images packed and sold as high culture (Kiossev 2005; Čolović 2008). This “high culture package” is represented through the cooperation with the classical music ensembles, but also by respecting concert conventions.

By default, the distinction between the audience and performers at Bregović's concerts is clear. However, it does not change his intention to provide to the audience what is expected – a folk representation of the Balkans based on the stereotypes of Balkan's mentality. For example, he often simulates the atmosphere of Balkans kafana<sup>3</sup> by giving money to brass musicians at the stage, but never to the members of a symphony orchestra or choir, by drinking alcohol or provoking brass players to dance in the manner of the belly dancer.

According to Aleksandra Marković, “self-exoticizing is a crucial tactic intrinsic to this role-playing, conducted by Bregović and all other artists who decide to simulate, to perform the Balkans for their audiences for financial and other reasons” (Markovic 2013: 44). In the same manner, whenever he shouts “go crazy” to the fans, he calls them to sail on the well-known Balkan's stereotypes and let themselves go wild on the wave of “pleasures that are deemed less civilised, yet secretly desired by his ‘civilised’ listeners” (Marković 2013: 230). Interestingly, according to the available YouTube videos, the reaction of the audience across the Balkans to the same calls is far less affective than abroad.

The moment of the concert at which the “craziness” also becomes the “Balkanness” is the performance of the song *Kalašnjikov*. Although it sounds like a cheerful hurdy-gurdy song, *Kalašnjikov* should not be perceived out of the context in which it was created. Its chorus, which imitates the sound of firearms “bum-bum-bum” while the bloody civil war was still on, can hardly be considered an anti-war song but rather as an ode to war. It looks like that dancing, the perpetuum mobile character of the song, as well as gleeful musicians on the stage, through only one song, paints the known negative stereotype of the Balkans where war, conflict, and violence are the natural environment.

## 4. Stretto Before the Conclusion: Two Dispute Views on Three Letters From Sarajevo

“At the concert in Belgrade, I'll play *Mesečina* and *Kalašnjikov* and the rest. It won't be like forcing Serbs onto violin concerto. It's easier to force Serbs to join NATO than to go to a violin concert. It will be cheerful”, said Bregović in an interview for *Nedeljnik*, while he was announcing the Belgrade premiere of his new project *Three Letters from Sarajevo* (2019). It is a multi-movement piece with a structure similar to the classical violin concerto, performed by a symphony orchestra, choir, and the *Wedding and Funeral Orchestra*. At first

---

<sup>3</sup> Traditional Balkan bistro which usually serves alcoholic drinks.

glance, the conservative ambiance of the composition is relaxed, with songs in a typical Bregovic festive manner. These songs are performed immediately after each of the three letters-movements, which are the backbone of the piece. *Three Letters from Sarajevo* is not music about the city. According to Bregović, this city is a metaphor for our time in which it is possible that today's neighbours shoot each other tomorrow just for practicing different religions (cf. Rosić 2019). Through three violin playing techniques (oriental, klezmer, and classical) as well as through three letters as different movements, performed by violinists from Morocco, Israel, and Serbia, Bregović portrays three cultures.

At the beginning of the concert, the whole concept is illustrated through a short story about a man who stands in front of the Wailing Wall for decades and unsuccessfully prays for peace. The story's moral is that people must rely on themselves and learn to live together despite differences. The *Three Letters from Sarajevo* is a piece that promotes multiculturalism and sends a strong message of peace. This idea and approach definitely support the affirmative image of Goran Bregović as an ambassador of the Balkans and its music.

On the other side, it could be that the interaction between classical and popular genre with the usual "savage" atmosphere at his concerts instigated Bregovic to invite the audience to the Belgrade concert of the *Three Letters from Sarajevo* almost as if saying, he knows that they do not like classical music, but they need not to worry, I will also play what you expect from me. This media snapshot can be easily positioned within the "Ambassador of Balkanisms" section, as it confirms Bregović's consistency in nurturing stereotypes about the region and its people. Furthermore, a comparison of Serbian people's attitude towards NATO, the unpopular military alliance on the one hand, and classical music on the other, can be considered as pejorative. It completely neglects the whole corpus of Serbian classical music and its position in it as well as its influence on cultural life of the region in the last more than 100 years. When he talks about the possibility of today's neighbours becoming the worst enemies, Bregović consciously omits to challenge the role of politicians and masters of war in the conflict, and reduce it to the level of ordinary people and their relations. Furthermore, he emphasizes their incapability for building a civilized community in which the differences are respected.

This narrative is also transposed into the music. Bregović insists that the styles and playing techniques of performers from three cultures are completely different, so he places them in three separate movements with clear boundaries. This raises the question of whether such an approach truly implies openness and coexistence or rather accentuate the differences among people.

## 5. Conclusion

This text has a highly fragmented structure and is conspicuously ambivalent in expressing an author's point of view. It is a result of the contradictory treatments of Bregović's work in the public sphere as well as of the fragmentation and post-modernity of the overall discourse in which he is positioned (cf. Marković 2013). The apologetic part of the text offers a positivist perspective that treats music and its creator as an autonomous phenomenon. At its heart, it is a descriptive approach based on available recordings of Bregović's performances, media

sources, and the author's self-promotion. Conversely, the counter-arguments are based on the theory and critical analysis which treat Goran Bregović as a music creator and a public figure inseparable from the broader context. That part of the text reveals and challenges the commodification of the imaginary Balkan soundscape (cf. Dumnić-Vilotijević 2018).

It is quite certain that the reader has already assumed which of these two perspectives is more appealing to me. While conceptualizing the structure of this article, I faced a personal "fight for neutrality" as I come from Niš, the city of Šaban Bajramović, one of the greatest Roma musicians. He was amongst the main sources of Bregović's inspirations and musical ideas. However, Bregović's reputation in Niš is tarnished, mostly due to creative approaches and the commodification of cheaply obtained inspiration (cf. Feld 2000) from South Serbia.

Having all this in mind, an attempt to conclude such an ambivalent story in a neutral tone is hard, or maybe even impossible. After all, there is no neutral approach, as absolute neutrality is not inherent to human behaviour and that is one of the essential premises of the performance studies (Jovičević [&] Vujanović 2007). So, at the end, I will offer one of the possible conclusions: the Balkan region is, in all its shapes, manifestations, and incarnations (Todorova 2009), much more complex and delicate than it is represented through the eclectic music of one of its most prominent ambassadors.<sup>4</sup>

## Bibliography

- Bogdanović, Ljiljana 2010. "Goran Bregović. Volim ovu užasnu zemlju". Interview with Goran Bregović. *Pečat*, 8 January 2010.
- Čolović, Ivan 2008. *Balkan – teror kulture*. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.
- Denselov, Robin 2019. "Balkan Brass is punk – more madness than music". Interview with Goran Bregović. *Guardian*, 27 February 2019.
- Dumnić-Vilotijević, Marija 2018. "Contemporary Urban Folk Music in the Balkans: Possibilities for Regional Music History". *Muzikologija* 25: 91–101.
- Feld, Steven 2000. "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music". *Public culture* 12/I: 145–171.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erica 2014. *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Gligorijević, Jelena 2020. "Contested Racial Imaginings of the Serbian Self and the Romani Other in Serbia's Guča Trumpet Festival". *Arts* 9/II: 52.
- Jovičević, Aleksandra [&] Ana Vujanović 2007. *Uvod u studije performansa*. Beograd: Fabrika knjiga.
- Kiossev, Alexander 2005. "The Dark Intimacy: Maps, Identities, Acts of Identification". In: Dušan I. Bjelić [&] Obrad Savić (ed.). *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Kovačević, Olivera 2018. "Da Možda Ne: Bregović – Glas Balkana". Interview with Goran Bregović, on 1 November 2018. *RTS Da Možda Ne – Zvanični kanal*. Available at YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Orrc1jBS\\_E0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Orrc1jBS_E0) [22.11.2023].
- Marić, Milomir 2018. "CIRILICA – Goran Bregovic – Od Bijelog Dugmeta do Orkestra za svadbe i sahrane". Interview with Goran Bregović, on 26 November 2018. *TV Happy*. Available at YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8CHFj9t03k> [22.11.2023].

---

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank the reviewers for careful consideration of my paper, as well as their thoughtful comments and suggestions which helped me in improving the quality of the text.

- Marković, Aleksandra 2013. *Sounding stereotypes: Construction of place and reproduction of metaphors in the music of Goran Bregović*. PhD thesis. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- Mičeta, Luka 1999. "Adresa mi je Balkan". Interview with Goran Bregović. *NIN* 2557, 30 December 1999.
- Mikić, Vesna 2017. „Recycled/Remediated/Reformatted: Goran Bregović’s appropriation of the music industry strategies in pop song (post)production”. *New Sound* 50/II: 258–267.
- Momčilović-Odobašić, Ivana 2019. "Recite Al Jazeera: Goran Bregović". Interview with Goran Bregović, on 5 August 2019. *Al Jazeera Balkans*. Available at YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Ifu-fuLRe4iE> [22.11.2023].
- Rosić, Blanko 2019. „Lakše je uterati Srbe u NATO, nego na violinski koncert: veliki intervju sa Goranom Bregovićem”. *Nedeljnik*, 1 January 2019.
- Silverman, Carol 2011. "Gypsy Music, Hybridity and Appropriation: Balkan Dilemmas of Postmodernity". *Ethnologia Balkanica – Journal for Southeast European Anthropology* 15: 15–32.
- Todorova, Marija 2009. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Trajkowska, Olivera 2019. "Vin Vin: Intervju so Goran Bregović". Interview with Goran Bregović, on 7 February 2019. *Telma TV*. Available at YouTube: <https://youtu.be/mtPPg8WMy8E> [22.11.2023].
- Trifković, Nela 2004. *Balkan as a metaphor in the film composition of Goran Bregovic*. MA thesis. Perth: Edith Cowan University.