

# OTTOMAN INTIMACIES, BALKAN MUSICAL REALITIES



Edited by Risto Pekka Pennanen, Panagiotis C. Poulos and Aspasia Theodosiou

OTTOMAN INTIMACIES,  
BALKAN MUSICAL REALITIES

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# The Ottoman Past in Romantic Opera's Present: The Ottoman Other in Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin Opera

Tatjana Marković

My point of departure is the idea that nations are primarily signified by their narrations, which are based on the constructed or mythicized national past. These cultural memories from the distant or recent past were embodied also in the national traditions of opera. I will demonstrate this point through four representative case studies from Southeastern Europe, that is, from the Kingdoms of Serbia, Hungary and Croatia-Slavonia and the Principality of Montenegro. The operas are: *Balkancka carica, drama u tri radnje Nikole I knjaza crnogorskog* (“Balkan Empress, Drama in Three Acts by Nikola I The Prince of Montenegro”, Cetinje, Montenegro, 1891) by Dionisio de Sarno San Giorgio (1856–1937), *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (Zagreb, Croatia, 1876) by Ivan Zajc (1832–1914), *Na uran-ku* (“At dawn”, Belgrade, Serbia, 1904) by Stanislav Binički (1872–1942), and *Knez Ivo od Semberije* (“Prince Ivo of Semberija”, Novi Sad, the Kingdom of Hungary, 1910) by Isidor Bajić (1878–1915). I will show that the so-called national opera is national only because it is arbitrarily chosen as such, in accordance with the idea of self-representation, which assumes “us” and the Other.

In the four chosen Serbian (related to Serbs in Montenegro, Serbs in the Habsburg Kingdom of Hungary and Serbia proper) and Croatian operas, as well as in numerous operas from the Balkans, the Other is understandably embodied through Ottoman characters.<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman Empire (1299–1922) included, during the nineteenth century, the majority of the Southeast European areas, which nowadays form the states of, for example, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania. Other regions from the area, such as Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia and Slavonia, Serbian Vojvodina, and Banat of Temeswar (1849–1860), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918), were included in the Habsburg Monarchy, that is, the Austrian Empire (1804–1867) or Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918). Due to historical circumstances, the patriotic discourse of musical Romanticism in Southeast Europe or, in this case, the areas where Serbs lived (Serbia, Vojvodina and Montenegro) and also in Croatia-Slavonia, was expressed through the military *topoi* in choir and opera music.

These operas are modelled mainly upon the Italian Romantic opera, and certain national elements are introduced through genre-scenes, mostly dances. Various layers of Orientalism are also recognizable in all the operatic *texts* (libretto, music and iconography) of the aforementioned works. Although it is embodied through certain stereotypes and “fabricated constructs” in the relationship between East and West – “the Orient arouses anxieties and fears in almost equal measure with both imperialism itself and the social and intellectual conflicts of home”<sup>2</sup> – we cannot say that the Romantics from Southeastern Europe – “had highly individualized responses to their visions of the East,

<sup>1</sup> Western and Central Europe had “two main sources of influence: the Ottoman Empire, both its Turkish heartland and the Levant, and the ‘Moorish’ lands of the West” (MacKenzie 1995, 144).

<sup>2</sup> MacKenzie 1995, 31.

each a projection of their own fantasy worlds" like Byron and Shelley, for instance.<sup>3</sup> In opposition to this, the Romantics' Other was part of their reality, their own political and cultural context.

Due to this, the relation to the "Orient" in the Balkans was rather different from that of Western and Central European authors and composers. Keeping this difference in mind, I would suggest a classification of the chosen Serbian and Croatian operas according to the treatment of the Ottoman characters. Characteristic of all four operas is that "the 'cultural work' that is done by the arts when they evoke another society [...] is not necessarily as repressive and regrettable. [...] It should not, that is, be assumed that the worldview that musical and other cultural texts of this sort support is necessarily pro-imperialist."<sup>4</sup> In this manner, the Ottoman characters in the operas are represented as the Other; an unacceptable military ally or a lover, but still a respected enemy.

### Case Study 1: The Muted Other

*Dionisio di Sarno San-Giorgio*: Balkanska carica, drama u tri radnje Nikole I knjaza crnogorskog ("Balkan Empress, Drama in Three Acts by Nikola I The Prince of Montenegro"), 1891

The composer Dionisio de Sarno San-Giorgio<sup>5</sup> explained in the preface to the vocal score of his opera that

[E]verywhere in the Slavic literary world, this celebrated and famous theatre play is regarded as the most beautiful flower in the glorious wreath of the Prince-Poet for its wonderful verse as well as its great content. The play has not been intended to be set to music. But since I found in it many places of wonderful lyrical beauty, and also several choruses similar to the ones from classical Greek dramas and the dramas by the Italian Metastasio, I decided to set some parts of the drama to music. [...] I took as much from the drama, as it was allowed in order to evade too long an action. Yet, this work could not be performed on the stage, partly because it lacks continuity needed for musical drama, partly because of its length and many *a solo* characters; and if it would be necessary to stage it, many numbers would need to be shorten in order to reduce the singers' efforts, especially the Tenor's.<sup>6</sup>

Such a position of the composer makes apparent that he wrote his opera only as his (political) dedication to the Montenegrin ruler, in whose country he was a diplomat, and also that he was aware of the shortcomings in the dramaturgy and did not expect to see the work performed. Further on, San-Giorgio said: "The most beautiful award for my

<sup>3</sup> MacKenzie 1995, 31.

<sup>4</sup> Locke 1998, 106–107.

<sup>5</sup> Dionisio de Sarno San-Giorgio was an Italian diplomat in Montenegro and Serbia, as well as a composer and organizer of musical life. After studying in Naples and Florence, he arrived in Kotor, Montenegro in 1886. Over the next six years he contributed considerably to the development of local musical life but, since his efforts did not have significant results he moved to Belgrade where he was also active as a diplomat, as well as consul of Spain, between 1893 and 1932. He spent his last years of retirement in Kotor and donated about 400 of his compositions to the Kotor Archive. Unfortunately, the scores of his two other operas, also in the Serbian language, *Gorde* and *Dane*, are lost.

<sup>6</sup> De Sarno San-Giorgio n.d., 1. Translation T.M.

work would be if I am lucky to receive His Excellency Prince Nikola The First's graceful acceptation and respect for it. I am proud of his highest permission to write my name at the end of this modest work.”<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the composer named his opera *Balkanska carica, drama u tri radnje Nikole I knjaza crnogorskog* (“Balkan Empress, Drama in Three Acts by Nikola I the Prince of Montenegro”).

San-Giorgio's treatment of the Ottoman characters in the opera should be viewed in the mentioned context. The theatre play by Nikola I Petrović is signified by the identification topics of Serbs from Montenegro, and these are: (1) the epic narrative of history, usually in the form of recitation to the bowed lute *gusle* accompaniment, (2) men and women are heroes and warriors in the name of patriotism, and (3) the Serbian Orthodox church, which is also recognizable in the cover design of the opera edition (see Fig. 1). By choosing the lines almost exclusively from the roles of the two main characters in the drama, Stanko Crnojević and Danica, with the supporting roles of Ivan Crnojević, Uglješa and Marta, the composer did not shed enough light on the plot, and therefore the libretto itself does not provide a sufficiently clear idea about the connections between events, the motivations of characters as to why they act in a certain manner, or the wider late fifteenth-century political context.

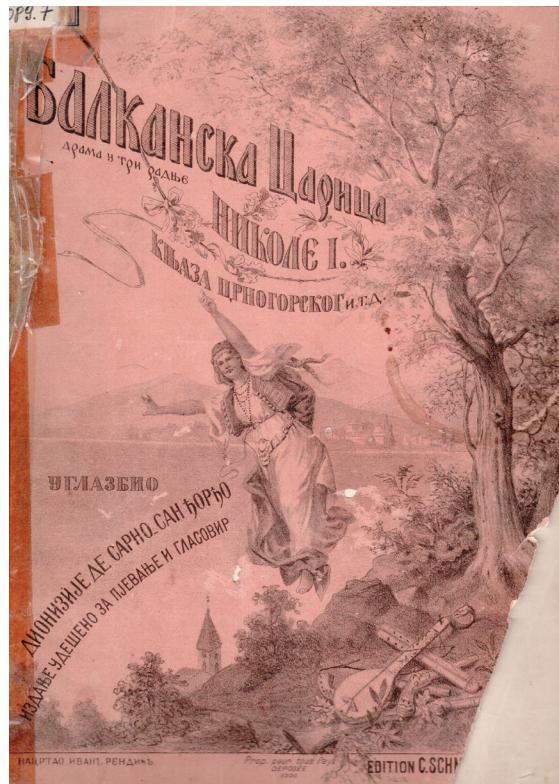


Fig. 1. Dionisio de Sarno-San Giorgio, *Balkanska carica, drama u tri radnje Nikole I knjaza crnogorskog* (“Balkan Empress, Drama in Three Acts by Nikola I the Prince of Montenegro”), the front cover.

<sup>7</sup> De Sarno San-Giorgio n.d., 1. Translation T.M.

In the drama itself, the characterization of the Ottomans is based on the nineteenth-century (author's) perspective of the heroic mediaeval mythical time. Understandably, Nikola I Petrović tended to promote Serbian national history, as well as the continuity of the Montenegrin statehood. The image of a small, heroic Montenegro, known as the "Serbian Sparta", is emphasized by references to the states that were political partners of the country, and also states like Albania which asked for the help of Montenegrin warriors for protection against the threat of Ottoman conquest. The penultimate scene, called "The Battlefield", is an image of the battle between Montenegrin and Ottoman armies. In spite of the overwhelming power of the Ottoman soldiers, Montenegrins win the victory due to their fearless fights.

The Ottomans are referred to as the enemies, butchers, merciless wolves and the Islamic threat to Christianity.<sup>8</sup> Maria Todorova touches upon such images: "The enormous output of anti-Turkish propaganda obviously created a stereotyped image of the Ottoman as savage, bloody, and inhuman, and produced a demonized antagonist epitomizing the hereditary enemy of Christendom".<sup>9</sup> In spite of such negative characteristics of the Other, the Montenegrin heroes respect the most important qualities in their own hierarchy of values: the heroism of the Ottoman warriors, their "swords which cut well" and "lances which fly straight" and, consequently, their power, as expressed in the libretto. It is precisely this power that is a fatal temptation for Stanko Crnojević, the younger son of the Montenegrin ruler Ivan Crnojević: eager to struggle and become a famous hero, he feels neglected as a younger brother, who has no chance of making independent decisions, and is frustrated with the lack of possibilities for ascending the throne in the future. The turning point in the drama is the meeting of Stanko and the representative of Sultan Murat II, Ibraim-aga (Ibrahim II of Karaman), who succeeds in convincing him to join the Ottoman troops in exchange for the position of future Balkan king. Unable to accept such a development, and his offer to become the Balkan empress some day, Danica commits suicide, proving that patriotism and honour are the most important aspects in the life of a true Montenegrin woman.

San-Giorgio shifted the focus of the opera from a wide patriotic and political context of the original theatre play to a more personal love story.<sup>10</sup> In the opera, judging from the libretto, the main reason for Stanko's joining the Ottoman camp is to overcome the obstacles on his path to marrying Danica, which he could not do in Montenegro because of her modest origin. That said, the musical concept of the opera is grounded both in the eighteenth-century Metastasian (Neapolitan) type and the early-Romantic Italian opera. The three acts contain a sequence of arias by Stanko, Danica and other characters. As in all the operas considered in this paper, and also in numerous Romantic operas, the central genre scene or the *khorovod* has a significant role; in order to celebrate the Montenegrins, it contains folk songs performed by a choir and *kolo* circle dances (see Fig. 2).

<sup>8</sup> Danica: "Naša je vjera lijepa, prava, / a turska nije no zla, krvava". (Our [Orthodox, T.M.] faith is beautiful, true / and Turkish is evil, bloody) (Petrović Njegoš 1989, 143).

<sup>9</sup> Todorova 1997, 86.

<sup>10</sup> This concept is similar to Stanislav Binički's opera *Na uranku* ("At Dawn", 1904). It also focused on a love story placed in the context of Serbian-Ottoman dichotomy.

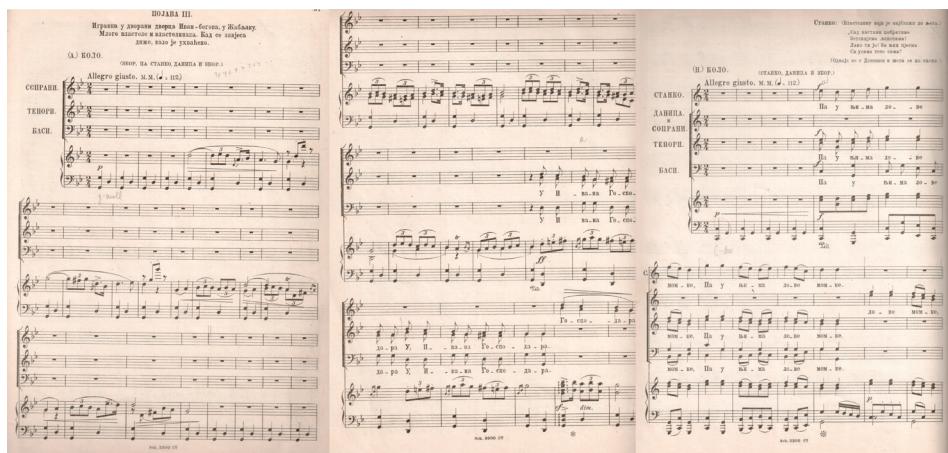


Fig. 2. Dionisio de Sarno-San Giorgio, *Balkanska carica, drama u tri radnje Nikole I knjaza crnogorskog* ("Balkan Empress, Drama in Three Acts by Nikola I The Prince of Montenegro"), Scene 3: Dance in the hall of the Ivan-Beg's castle, Žabljak. Sequence of the *Kolo* dances, A and H.

The composer omitted all scenes where the Ottomans participate in the stage action; he treated them as the hidden and muted Other. They are presented only indirectly, through the words of Montenegrins. Therefore, the Other's words and sound representation are "occupied" by the dominant political perspective, which also prevents musical differentiation or characterization. The conventions of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian opera show that the Western point of view sheds light on the Montenegrin-Ottoman dichotomy and on the Serbian-Montenegrin national identity.

## Case Study 2: The Amazed Other

### *Ivan Zajc: Nikola Šubić Zrinjski, 1876*

As with numerous Romantic national operas, the most popular nineteenth-century Croatian opera, *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* by Giovanni von Zaytz, alias Ivan Zajc,<sup>11</sup> presents the patriotic subject through the struggle between the national heroes and their enemy.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the national military forces are led by Zrinjski, a Hungarian general of Croatian origin in the service of the Habsburg Monarchy, while Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent himself and his vizier, Pasha Mehmed Sokolović (Sokollu Mehmed Pasha) led the Ottoman army. This antagonism can be understood in the context of the struggle between the

<sup>11</sup> Giovanni von Zaytz was born in the Austro-Hungarian city St. Veit am Flau (It. Fiume, today Rijeka in Croatia), to where his father Johann von Zaytz, a military conductor from Prague, had moved with his band. Giovanni von Zaytz was a composer, conductor, music teacher and entrepreneur. He studied at the Milan Conservatory (1850–1855) and had to refuse the offer to take the position of a conductor in La Scala; instead, he returned to Rijeka (Fiume) to continue his late father's work. In 1862, Zaytz moved to Vienna and began a successful career as an operetta composer. Eight years later he moved to Agram (Zagreb) and became a conductor at the Croatian Opera, music teacher and leading entrepreneur of musical life. Furthermore, he composed operas and other works in the Croatian language.

<sup>12</sup> This opera reached the status of the most popular Croatian opera, since it was performed 1317 times between 1876 and 1990 and since 1992, in Zagreb alone, 609 times (see Paulik 2005, 95).

Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which is emphasized by the sultan's intention to revenge Emperor Maximilian by conquering Vienna. Before that, the sultan has a great desire to conquer Szigetvár, despite the warnings of his advisors that the famous hero Zrinjski is there and it would be better to avoid a battle with him. Being old and ill, the sultan soon dies, but Mehmed Sokolović does not reveal it before the battle is over. Later on, Zrinjski is praised by his soldiers as a Croatian hero. The opera ends with the scene of the beginning of the battle, in which the choir, which is still popular even now, *U boj!* ("To the Battle!") is followed by a short instrumental number called "Catastrophe", implying that Zrinjski and his circle will not survive the struggle.

In the drama *Zriny* (1812) by Theodor Körner, Croatia-Slavonia was regarded as a Hungarian territory, though with a certain degree of self-governance. Therefore, the plot of the drama, which praises Hungarian patriotism, was revised for the opera in order to present Zriny as a Croatian, rather than a Hungarian, hero.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, librettist Hugo Badalić added many references to Croatian bravery which did not previously exist; when the opera was premiered in Zagreb in 1876, the poster did not even mention that the libretto was based on Körner's German drama, as John Neubauer points out.<sup>14</sup> However, in his thorough analysis, Neubauer presents only the Hungarian tradition of the Zrinyi myth, thus ignoring the long Croatian history of constructing the myth. Therefore, he interprets Badalić's motivation in exploiting Körner's drama as follows: "Basing the libretto on Körner's *Zriny* gave it an Austrian pedigree that the Hungarians, the junior partners in the Monarchy, would be hard put to challenge".<sup>15</sup> This conclusion is acceptable but not quite satisfying if we keep in mind that the cult of Zrinjski was established in Croatian literature immediately after the Siege of Szigetvár: the only existing report of the siege – *Podsjetanje i osvojenje Sigeta* – was written by Zrinjski's chamberlain Franjo (Ferenc) Črnko, who was among the very few surviving soldiers. Until 1876, when Zajc composed his opera, the Zrinjski cult was not only firmly established but also revived by historiographers and politicians such as Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvaternik of the *Stranka prava* (Party of Rights).<sup>16</sup> As Badalić himself explicated:

[...] In his drama, German poet Theodor Körner elaborated that material, regarding our Nikola as a Hungarian, in accordance of the contemporary attitude. It seems needless to prove to a Croat, of which race and tribe Nikola Šubić is; moreover, due to the names of his officers and soldiers, even our enemy will admit that the Sziget crew was purely Croatian. I would not like to argue with anybody; even Hungarians have, at least in the past, called our Nikola 'a brave Croat.' I would only like to mention that I used Körner's plot – and how? Everybody will see: I do not need to be judged for it.<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with the above statements as well as with the numerous performances of the opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski*, it seems that John Neubauer's view that the German nationalism of Körner's drama has been "quietly 're-nationalized'" in the opera is not justified.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Marković 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Neubauer 2004, 522.

<sup>15</sup> Neubauer 2002, 230.

<sup>16</sup> Štefanec 2009, 399.

<sup>17</sup> Badalić 1876, 3–4. Translation T.M.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Neubauer 2004, 522.

Let us return to the opera stage. The Ottoman camp is presented not exclusively by the sultan and his vizier Mehmed Sokolović, but also by many other characters: the sultan's doctor, Levi Mustafa; Ali Portuk and Ibrahim Begler-beg, the sultan's advisors; Turkish soldiers; Timoleon, a keeper of the serail; the five women from the harem named Osmanka (an Ottoman girl), Sokolica (the Falcon-girl), Meira, Fatima and Zuleika; as well as odalisques, eunuchs and keepers of the serail. In other words, the entire world of the Ottoman court is there. As my recent research shows, the composer actually added an extensive part of his earlier Viennese operetta *Nach Mekka* (1868) to this opera, or more specifically to the drama; the material served as the basis for the libretto. Such a cast of characters contribute to the representation of the Other in a multi-layered fashion, including not only the public (male and military) but also the private (female and sensual) spheres of sultan's life. Therefore, here, the Other mirrors the Western European image of the Oriental world, which is seen as a mixture of cruelty, despotism, a thirst for fighting, sensuality, seductive corporeal dancing and the beauty of the harem women.

In contrast, the Croatian camp is presented by two couples from one family: Zrinjski with his wife Eva, and Zrinjski's daughter Jelena with her fiancé Juranić. Thus, Zrinjski is a brave soldier, national hero, faithful husband and a father of three children. For him, military honour, patriotism and faithfulness to the Habsburg Emperor are the most significant ideas, for which he is ready not only to sacrifice himself, but also to sacrifice his sons. As such, his enemies regard him as undefeatable. Moreover, openly showing their admiration, the Ottomans are amazed by his courage.

The presentation of both camps, the Croatian (Habsburg) and the Ottoman, is set in a juxtaposition, symmetrically, within the framework of three acts and eight scenes (21:17 musical numbers, and two in which both appear together, cf. Fig. 3.) The spectators alternately follow the atmosphere and preparations for the final battle in each camp. In the second act of the fifth scene, the two lines cross each other in a unique, direct meeting between the representatives of the opposing sides, Mehmed and Zrinjski. The characterization of the two groups includes arias, ensembles, choirs and genre-scenes, although they are staged differently. While the sultan and Mehmed Sokolović are presented mainly through their own arias, or through their dialogues or ensembles with other male characters (male choir), and the separated female world is embodied in a female choir or dances (instrumental numbers), Zrinjski is mainly portrayed in the context of his family, and also with his soldiers and people (mixed choir). Both rulers are characterized musically as heroes. The sultan's words are set mainly in *sostenuto grandioso* or *allegro grandioso* tempi with horn, bassoon and timpani accompaniment, and a motif referring to his military successes often follows his appearances.

Zrinjski's enthusiastic calls to battle include conventions of the heroic idiom, such as trumpet fanfares or *unisono tutti* of the male choir and the orchestra. He has only two arias, the intimate *Romance* (his farewell to the beautiful, shiny city before the war destroys it, with a hint of the inevitable catastrophe, accompanied by a solo oboe motif with the augmented second signalling the approaching arrival of the Ottomans) and the *Oath* (he asks his Croatian soldiers to be brave, to fight for King and freedom, expressing his own readiness to fight until death), see Fig. 4.

<b>Act I</b>		Introduction
	Scene 1	1. Introductory duet (Levi, Suleiman) 1½. Recitative (Suleiman) 2. Aria (Suleiman) 3. Duet (Mehmed, Suleiman) 4. Finale 1 (Soli and choir)
	Scene 2	5a. Duet (Jelena, Juranić) 5b. Romance (Jelena) 6. Duettino (Jelena, Eva) 7. Terzet (Jelena, Eva, Zrinjski) 8. Quartet (Jelena, Eva, Zrinjski, Alapić) 9. Sextet (Jelena, Eva, Juranić, Paprutović, Zrinjski, Alapić)
	Scene 3	10a. Military choir 10b. Dance with lances through a big ring 10c. Battle dance 11. Quintet (Jelena, Eva, Juranić, Zrinjski, Alapić, choir) 12. Oath (Zrinjski)
<b>Act II</b>	Scene 4	13a. Turkish camp in front of Szigetvár, mixed choir 13b. Couplet (Timoleon, choir) 13c. Mixed choir and Oriental dance 13d. Ballabile Andante 13e. Arabian dance 13f. Fantastic Oriental solo dance with ensemble 14. Duet (Mehmed, Suleiman) 15. Finale 4 (mixed choir, dance)
	Scene 5	16. Ensemble (Juranić, Paprutović, Zrinjski, Alapić) 17. Recitative (Zrinjski) 18. Romance (Zrinjski) <b><u>19. Duet (Mehmed, Zrinjski)</u></b> <b><u>20. Finale 5 (Ensemble, choir)</u></b>
<b>Act III</b>	Scene 6	21. Terzet (Suleiman, Levi, Mehmed) 22. Duet (Suleiman, Levi) 23. Prayer and death of Suleiman 24. Allegro arioso (Mehmed) 25. Ensemble. Finale 6 (Mehmed, Mustafa, Ali Portuk, Beglerbeg)
	Scene 7	26. Duet (Jelena, Eva) 27. Recitative and lullaby (Jelena) 28. Dream (Jelena, choir of fairies; dialogue of Jelena and Juranić) 29. Recitative (Jelena). Duett (Jelena, Juranić)
	Scene 8	30. Duet (Eva, Zrinjski) 31. Terzet (Eva, Juranić, Zrinjski) 32. Finale 8: To the battle (quintet and choir) Allegory (Catastrophe)

Fig. 3. The scene sequence of *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* by Ivan Zajc (1876) is based on the score manuscript (The Music Collection of the Croatian National and University Library in Zagreb) and piano score edited by Nikola Faller. Light gray represents the Turkish scenes, while the Croatian scenes are in dark gray. The two numbers, 19 and 20, are underlined and in bold as the only meeting point of the representatives of the two camps.

Fig. 4. Ivan Zajc, *Nikola Šubić Zrinski*, No. 12: Zrinski's Oath.

Br. 13e Arapski ples

93

Allegro moderato marciale.

Fig. 5. Ivan Zajc, Nikola Šubić Zrinski, No.13e: Arabian Dance.

The presentation of both groups includes characteristic genre scenes: the Croatians perform a male battle dance (*bojna igra*) with lances, while the Ottomans amuse themselves with exotic female dances (see Fig. 3, numbers 13b–13f). Among the latter, only *Arapski ples* (“Arabian Dance”, see Fig. 5) contains the augmented second as a conventional musical mean of music Orientalism.

Importantly, the depiction of the preparations for the battle in both camps also includes the recognizable motif from the beginning of the *Kaiserhymne*, which the composer quotes as a symbol of the Habsburg Monarchy, for which Zrinski and his soldiers fight and heroically give their lives. The composer treats the motif as the *leitmotiv* for Zrinski’s bravery, and it leads us to the main message of the opera: in the beginning, it

“explains” that the opera is about the bravery of Nikola Šubić Zrinjski, the Habsburg-Croatian general. Subsequently, when appearing in diminutive form before Suleiman’s decision to take the Ottoman army to Szigetvár, the motif can be understood as a signifier of the approaching battle. The *Kaisehymne* is quoted for the last time at the beginning of the last duet of Zrinjski and Eva in the eighth scene (number 30). At the end of this duet, the motif appears for the first time in the vocal part (Eva i Zrinjski in octaves, *fortissimo* with *tutti* orchestra).

### Case Study 3: Sharing the World with the Other or Self-Orientalization

*Stanislav Binički: Na uranku (“At Dawn”, 1904); Isidor Bajić: Knez Ivo od Semberije (“Prince Ivo of Semberija”, 1910)*

The first Serbian operas were premiered at the beginning of the twentieth century: *Na uranku* (“At Dawn”) by Stanislav Binički<sup>19</sup> and *Knez Ivo od Semberije* (“Prince Ivo of Semberia”) by Isidor Bajić.<sup>20</sup> The libretti of both operas were written by the leading nineteenth-century Serbian dramatist Branislav Nušić.<sup>21</sup>

In the opera *Na uranku* (“At Dawn”), the patriotic subject is embraced in the romantic plot, treated as a *verismo* tragedy played out against the background of the Serbian-Ottoman opposition. The story of two rivals (the Serb called Rade and the Turk called Redžep-aga), who are in love with the same girl (a Serb called Stanka who loves Rade), is situated in a patriarchal Serbian village at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Turk, upset by the girl’s rejection, decides to take revenge on the young couple and interrupts their wedding ceremony by revealing a long-held secret: Rade is illegitimate by birth. Since the sin of his mother Anda – the fourth character of the opera – is unjustifiable in the given society, a tragedy is inevitable. Thus, the final climax, typical of the *verismo* dramas, is marked by Rade, who is unable to forgive his mother and therefore murders her.

The dichotomy between the Serbs and the Ottomans is even more evident in the opera *Knez Ivo od Semberije* (“Prince Ivo of Semberija”), in the story of the Turk Kulin-beg, who pursues a group of Serbian slaves through the area ruled by the Serbian Prince, Ivo. The prince and the local people try to release the slaves, offering to give the Turks all their money in return. Kulin-beg liberates all the prisoners except the beautiful Stanka. Determined to free her as well, Prince Ivo gives away his house, property and even

<sup>19</sup> Stanislav Binički received his musical education and started composing very early. After finishing his studies at the Munich Music Academy, he returned to Belgrade in 1899 and established the symphony orchestra *Vojni orkestar* (Belgrade Military Orchestra), conducting it for five years. As one of the founders of the Srpska muzička škola (the Serbian Music School), he worked there as a singing instructor. In 1920 he founded Belgrade Opera, and was its first director. A very successful composer, Binički contributed remarkably to the Belgrade musical life.

<sup>20</sup> Isidor Bajić was born in Habsburg Vojvodina, today part of Serbia. He studied music at the Budapest Music Academy and subsequently, 1901–1915, taught at the Velika srpska pravoslavna gimnazija (Great Serbian Orthodox High School) of Novi Sad, where he founded a music school (1909) and initiated the publication of the Srpski muzički list (Serbian Music Magazine) and the Srpska muzička biblioteka (Serbian Music Library). In the early twentieth century, he published two textbooks on music theory and piano playing. Bajić also collected Serbian folk melodies.

<sup>21</sup> See Marković 1997; *id.* 2005.

his weapon, ignoring his mother's anxious warnings. When the Turk refuses to release Stanka despite all of these offers, Ivo takes the final step by giving away family treasures: a silver icon and a *kandilo* (a kind of oil lamp, an Orthodox religious symbol). His mother, witnessing this scene, falls dying; moved by the mother's death, Kulin-beg releases Stanka. Apparently, the group of slaves signifies the Serbs who are ready to sacrifice all their possessions and even their lives to free themselves from slavery. In both operas, the Serbian people, embodied in the choir, take an active role in the plot. It is interesting that a mother dies in both operas, presenting the ultimate loss.

In this context, the Ottoman world of both the operas represents the opposite to the realm of the Serbian people. The Serbian-Ottoman dichotomy is introduced in the opening act of the operas through the Islamic call to prayer of the *muezzin* which is immediately followed by musical motifs related to a Serbian national dance (*Na uranku*) or by an *echo* (modal melodic pattern) from an Orthodox chant (*Knez Ivo od Semberije*). The *muezzin's* call is a melismatic melody with the repetition of Allah's name (see Fig. 6). In comparison to this, musical material based on folk melodies symbolizes the idyllic life of a Serbian village (church festivities, harvest, folk dances and wedding) mainly through choral parts and the orchestra.



Fig. 6. Stanislav Binički, *Na uranku* ("At Dawn"), Muezzin's call to prayer.

From a musical point of view, the Serbian and the Ottoman worlds are not strictly separate in either opera. The lack of clear separation is due to the characteristics of Serbian traditional music. Namely, certain musical devices are related to the standard vocabulary of Romantic West-European opera numbers (such as the duet of Rade and Stanka) and, consequently, the references to Serbian folk music actually obtain the role of an intersection for the sounds of the two worlds. The Serbian folk tunes are in the Balkan mode with the augmented second, or in the Gypsy mode with two of them; the interval is one of the most perceivable references to “Oriental” music. In the light of the implied westernization of Serbian folk tunes, which is determined by their harmonization in major-minor system rather than in latent harmony, the setting consists of elements signifying the East and the West. This use of harmonization confirms the opinion that the exotic does not mean “merely distant (indeed, distance is not even a necessary prerequisite),” as Jonathan Bellman writes.

The exotic equation, therefore, goes well beyond familiar versus unfamiliar, and it is in large part the attendant cultural connections, tensions, and suggestions that make such stylistic blends as compelling, alluring, and ultimately troubling as they are. [...] Exoticism is not about the earnest study of foreign cultures; it is about drama, effect, and evocation. The listener is intrigued, hears something new and savory, but is not aurally destabilized enough to feel uncomfortable.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, however, I disagree with Bellman's opinion about music: “The suggestion of strangeness is the overriding factor: not only does the music *sound* different from ‘our’ music, but it also suggests a specifically alien culture or ethos. To the fertile imagination, a different culture or distant place suggests far more than the sum of its external music indicators [...]. Musical exoticism above all seeks to state the otherwise unstatable.”<sup>23</sup> Obviously, in the case of self-Orientalization akin to the Russian attitude to the “Orient”, the Other does not necessarily have to *sound* different.

The operatic genre scenes – the wedding and the religious festival in honour of St. George – are also based on folklore material, and such scenes have much in common with those of Glinka (the wedding in *Ruslan i Ljudmila*), Borodin (the *Polovtsian Dances* in *Prince Igor*) and others, in as much as they are formed as separate musical numbers within a through-composed flow. Whereas the main role in the dramatic line of Binički's opera is given to the *Hor seljaka i seljanki* (“Choir of the Peasants”) in charge of the wedding preparations, indicating that the genre scene belongs to the Serbian people, in Bajić's opera the celebrations signify two discourses: festivities after the Orthodox church service and the Turkish celebration in *Igra čočeka* (“The Čoček Dance”).

In both operas, the realm of the Other, related to the Ottoman invaders, represents a discourse of the Oriental East. In the words of Bryan S. Turner, the Orient appears within this discourse as “strange, exotic and mysterious, but also as sensual, irrational and potentially dangerous”.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Bellman 1998, xii–xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Bellman 1998, xii–xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Turner 1994, 44.

## Conclusion

The Balkan – or Serbian, Croatian and Montenegrin – opera shows different manners of self-representation of the local nations, in regard to their Other. Therefore, the typical images and narratives are signified in accordance with the two distinct manners of relating to the notion of Orientalism, understood ultimately as “a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)”.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the Habsburg province of Croatia-Slavonia, the Ottoman characters are presented as respected, but at the same time dominant, and as a “different” Other.<sup>26</sup> In areas under a long period of Ottoman dominance, this characterization is much more “exotic”, since the cultural and musical traditions were in direct contact; their musical depiction is actually halfway between the Occidental and Oriental conventions. From the Western point of view, the Serbian opera shows a way of self-Orientalization or “the exotic self”<sup>27</sup> in the intersection of exoticism and folklorism which is akin to the Russian tradition.

Therefore, Western European composers,

at the high point of imperialism in the late nineteenth century [...], began to discover in eastern music the opportunity to extend the language of their art. In an age when so many old conventions were breaking up, in music as in all the arts, composers found new tone rows, fresh harmonic and rhythmical potential, a different sound world, particularly of percussion and wind, which they could adapt to their own purposes. Their exposure to oriental music was at first limited, and they were in no sense accurately reproducing it, but they were securing stimulation from it, revitalising their craft in the process.<sup>28</sup>

However, this practice could not be utterly applied to the Southeastern European opera, since the Ottoman past was obviously considerably more present in the Balkan musical cultural and artistic – romantic – present.

<sup>25</sup> Said 1978, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Meaning “the Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’. However, the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with his own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental’s world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West” (Said 1978, 40).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010, 199–223. The treatment of the Other in the Serbian opera is more similar to the Russian attitude, although not quite the same: “Balakirev did not see the Oriental style as a means for representing a separate, alien people, and Other, in current parlance, but as an essential component of musical Russianness” (Frolova-Walker 2008, 153).

<sup>28</sup> MacKenzie 1995, xv.

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