



## ***Identity Formation and Music*** **A Case Study of Croatian Experience**

**Miroslav Mavra and Lori McNeil**

*Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus*

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miromavra@yahoo.com • lori.mcneil@liu.edu

**Abstract:** Croatian national identity has undergone countless transformations, struggles and wars in an attempt to preserve its sense of self. The Balkan Peninsula has endured the brutish oppression of several empires, countless conquerors, two world wars and devastating civil wars. The result of this turmoil has produced cultural, political and economic changes that have all contributed to the erosion of each nation's sense of individual, regional and national identities. As the primary focus of this research, we use Croatia as a case study to supplement the understanding of identity generally and nationalism specifically. Grounding our work in both a historical analysis and theoretical framework of identity and nationalism, we conclude that music was used as a primary tool in a conscious effort to achieve the political and nationalistic goals separating Croatia from the larger Yugoslav Federation. We support our arguments by examining identity development as an ethnic and nationalistic influence on one's sense of self and also by locating and considering those forces used to establish and develop the identity of a nation in crisis.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Across the centuries, Croatian national identity has undergone countless transformations, struggles and wars in an attempt to preserve its sense of self. The Balkan Peninsula has endured the brutish oppression of several empires, countless conquerors, two world wars and devastating civil wars. The result of this turmoil has produced cultural, political and economic changes that have all contributed to the erosion of each nation's sense of individual, regional and national identities.

It was in the late 1980's when the six republics comprising the Yugoslav Federation confronted the prospect of achieving national sovereignty. That is, the possibility of reconstructing a pure national identity in order to separate themselves from one another and essentially creating a clear image of the "other." Importantly, this possibility of national differentiation was quickly becoming recognized as an absolute necessity. This unofficial, yet powerful mandate in Croatia took many forms ranging from reconstructing the language to influencing the culture and traditions of all Croatsians.

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Miroslav Mavra completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology at Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus. He is currently pursuing his Master of Arts degree in Anthropology at CUNY Hunter College. Mavra's current research involves a comparative study of Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Lori McNeil is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus. The majority of McNeil's work focuses on issues typically related to women, children and other marginalized groups. Her recent work has been featured in the *Journal of Applied Sociology*, *Michigan Sociological Review* and *The Journal of Children & Poverty*.

Rarely do such contemporary examples of national identity formation exist providing potential sites for understanding this complex process. Thus, it is our goal to use Croatia as a case study, to supplement the understanding of identity generally and nationalism specifically as the primary focus on this research. As such, we will, first, examine identity development as an ethnic and nationalistic influence on one's sense of self, and, second, locate and consider those forces used to establish and develop the identity of a nation in crisis.

In order to achieve these goals, we will begin with a historical overview of what is known as modern day Croatia. This overview will be followed by a presentation of literature pertaining to identity of one's self as well as national identity. Next, the exercise of grounding this theoretical framework relating to identity will be employed. This application will occur by appropriating Croatia as a case study of both personal and national identity. This paper concludes with the weaving of the development of Croatian national identity together with the larger interdisciplinary theoretical framework on identity formation and nationalism. Based on the process described above, we will argue that music was used as a primary tool in a conscious effort to achieve the political and nationalistic goals separating Croatia from the larger Yugoslav Federation.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Croatia is a small and underpopulated country. It is a nation that has held onto its existence by a thread. Because of its precarious geographic location and diverse geographical area, the territory of modern day Croatia has been well sought after all through history. *Hrvatska*, or Croatia, encompasses the majority of the Adriatic coast to the south and shares borders with four Eastern European countries: Slovenia

to the west, Hungary to the north, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro to the east. All in all, 56,000 square kilometers of widely diverse landscape<sup>1</sup> make up the countries' current geographical composition

The Balkan Peninsula,<sup>2</sup> for more than a thousand years, has been held, and accordingly regarded, as a crossroads between the East and West. The Balkans—of which Croatia is a significant constituent—having been a part of the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Habsburg empires, has been devastated, rebuilt and continuously influenced by the confluence of divergent imperial forces and opposing tenets.

In the summer of 1991, the self-proclaimed independent Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav Federation found themselves in a war divided on ethnic lines; Serbs versus Croats, Catholics against Orthodox Christians, and neighbors killing neighbors. Although the worldwide general public, including the people of former Yugoslavia, seem convinced that Serbs and Croats are age old enemies, the fact remains that, until a series of events in the late 1920s<sup>3</sup>—which resulted in ethnic warfare during the Second World War—the South Slavs have lived peacefully and contemporaneously throughout history. Serbs and Croats have rarely thereafter been recognized for their striking similarities; instead it is the differences that stand between

<sup>1</sup> Croatia's relatively diminutive, yet heterogeneous land mass includes both the Julian and Dinaric Alps, 3,982 kilometers of coastline on the Adriatic Sea, the Pannonian Lowlands in the north, more than one thousand islands of varying size and five major rivers: the *Sava*, *Krka*, *Drava*, *Mura* and Danube rivers.

<sup>2</sup> A landmass surrounded by the Black, Aegean, Ionian and Adriatic seas constitute the five modern states of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and the six former republics of Yugoslavia.

<sup>3</sup> The assassination of Croat politicians in the parliament in Belgrade in 1928 is generally considered the point of initiation for the ethnic, political, religious and linguistic conflicts between Croats and Serbs.

them that have become the main point of contention. Rather than finding a sense of unity in their shared development as people, it was the few differences that held the most importance in the minds of the people.

## EXPLAINING IDENTITY FORMATION

### *Personal Identity*

Comprehensively, the concept of an “other,” in all its possible forms, invariably forges the construction of a self on levels ranging from individual to regional and national. An important application of our work is the notion of “social identity theory” developed by Henri Tajfel and J.C. Turner (1979). The central assertion stated by social identity theory is that an individual knowingly becomes part of a specific social group. That group’s characteristics, or identity, are then internalized, thus acquiring an individualized social identity that depicts their particular role within the larger society. Turner (1987) terms this process, the “self-categorization theory.” Tajfel and Turner (1986) demonstrated that by categorizing themselves as members of a group, the individuals would begin to display in/group favoritism. Moreover, individuals belonging to the in/group will begin to validate themselves, attempting to raise their self-esteem, by drawing comparisons between themselves, as a group, with an appropriate out/group; in other words, groups that have some relationship linking them together.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), “...the essential criteria for group membership, as they apply to large-scale social categories, are that the individuals concerned themselves and are defined by others as members of a group. ...Social categorization are conceived here as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individ-

ual to undertake many forms of social action” (p. 15). The development of a shared social identity not only allows for collective action but also provides the basis for a dominant group to impose their power over more subordinate groups.

Another determining contribution to the understanding of identity formation is the concept of “narcissism of minor differences” presented in Freud’s (1930) pivotal work, *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud’s (1930) construction and juxtaposition of “self” and “other” is perhaps best exemplified by the following statement: “It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, as long as there are people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness” (p. 61).

Continuing in the social psychological tradition, Mead (1934) suggests that a “self” is constructed, defined and refined by the eventual “taking the role of a generalized other.” The “generalized other” involves the acquisition of those values and attitudes of a group or collected whole with whom one identifies. A complete self emerges only through the conscious effort of group identification. This practice of group affiliation can also be applied based on the concept of “groupism.” Groupism “is the readiness to form groups around any observed or imagined differences in bodily or mental characteristic; almost anything will serve: ...age, sexual inclination, [and] eye colour...” (Allott, 1998, p. 4). National and regional identity can only exist, however, if the constituent group possesses certain shared essential qualities specific to that particular people and their culture, which tend to be an amalgamation of created, imagined, and existent elements. The uniqueness of one’s identity is thus validated only when placed side by side an “other’s cultural otherness” (Povrzanović, 1995).

### *National Identity*

As was already suggested, social groups—such as those conceived on the basis of ethnic affiliation—construct, sustain and negotiate boundaries, those which define and maintain social identities of one group when opposed, and related, to another (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Ethnicity, as described, is not a property of a group but rather an aspect of a social relationship between interacting groups that consider themselves different from one another. Cultural attributes thus assume an important role in the establishment of identity. Language, arts, religion, traditions and diet, for instance, must be well understood in terms of their development and ‘authenticity.’ Bloom (1990) introduces the centrality of symbols into national identity formation and authenticity explaining that it exists as a, “...paradigm condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with the national symbols...so that they may act as one psychological group...” (p. 52).

As social scientists and scholars began to look at racial and ethnic relations, they observed how structural conditions played perhaps the most important role in developing prejudice among various groups and individuals. Out of this work arose several prominent theories, including group-threat theory, realistic group conflict theory, ethnic competition theory and ethnic segregation theory.

Group threat theory, stemming from Blumer (1958) and Blalock (1967), focuses on integration of minority groups based on two variables. First, the size of a minority population wishing to assimilate into dominant society influences the success of this process. Numerically smaller numbers of minority individuals are more positively received into a host society than are those whose numbers are larger. The second variable affecting assimilation is the state of the economy—stronger economies are

more likely to again more readily and positively assimilate minority groups into dominant culture than are struggling economies. Group threat theory is often applied to the United States in order to examine regional and temporal variations of racial prejudice.

Realistic group conflict theory reflects the ideology of symbolic racism (Blumer, 1958; 1969). This framework attempts to explain the disparity between people’s support for racial equality and their opposition to policies designed to increase integration and equality, such as affirmative action. Realistic group conflict theorists argue that “patterns of social inequality lead to competing objective interests between groups,” thus leading to “perceptions of incompatible group interests, a sense of fraternal deprivation, and perceived threat, all of which affect attitudes toward racial policies” (Kunovich and Hodson, 2002, p. 189).

In order to explain contemporary ethnic political mobilization and ethnic conflict, scholars employ ethnic competition theory (Kunovich and Hodson, 2002). This body of work suggests that modernization promotes competition between ethnic groups and that, as competition increases, ethnic political mobilization and ethnic conflict arise. This theory was primarily developed as a response to the ideas set forth by modernization theory, which stated that through modernization ethnic distinctions would disappear.

Finally, ethnic segregation theory combines and offers refinements to the ideas presented by the previous theories (Kunovich and Hodson, 2002). This perspective suggests that modernization promotes ethnic segregation and inequality, and thus promotes ethnic solidarity, ethnic political mobilization and ethnic conflict. Ethnic segregation theorists point to the uneven development produced by both modernization and industrialization. In addition, they argue that, when one group perceives that their life chances are less

than that of other groups, ethnic conflict and political mobilization occurs.

As a departure from the structural theories presented above, Michael Ignatieff (1993) utilizes Freud's framework to direct his work while simultaneously placing Freud's work into a macro perspective. In his book, *Blood and Belonging* (1993), Ignatieff begins with a general discourse on nationalism and canvasses six distinctive contexts in order to see how nationalism manifests itself in different regions and among different peoples. According to Ignatieff, nationalism can be broken down into three separate concepts. Nationalism, as a political doctrine, is the belief that the world is divided into nations—each with the right of self-governance and determination. As a cultural ideal, nationalism states that although individuals have many identities, the nation provides the people with their most important form of belonging. Lastly, nationalism as a moral idea is “an ethic of heroic sacrifices, justifying the use of violence in the defense of one's nation against enemies, internal or external” (p. 5). In addition, he introduces Freud's (1930) work of the *narcissism of minor difference*. The implied notion of Freud's theory is that a group of people necessitates amplification of the differences that separate them from others in order to preserve their sense of identity and individuality.

Therefore, individual, regional and national identity is often purposely rooted in ethnicity and nationalism—especially in societies where “authoritarian ethnic nationalism” (Ignatieff, 1993, p. 8) has been established. Ignatieff (1993) proposes that authoritarian ethnic nationalism takes root only where civic nationalism has never established itself. Ethnic nationalism, after forty years of single-party Communist hegemony—which destroyed all civic and democratic culture in the region—is therefore burgeoning in Eastern Europe. In addition to the three concepts of nationalism as identified by Ignatieff, it can further be

broken down into two types: civic and ethnic nationalism. The former maintains that a nation should be united through a common political creed that all people, regardless of race, religion, gender, language or ethnicity can form a community of citizens with equal rights, brought together by their shared belief in a set of political values. On the other hand, ethnic nationalism is not based on shared rights that bind people together, but rather on people's ethnic characteristics—mainly their religion, language, customs and traditions. Ethnic nationalism asserts that it is not the state that creates the nation, but the nation itself that creates the state.<sup>4</sup>

### CROATIA AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH MUSIC

In a country of 4.7 million inhabitants, occupying a relatively small landmass, the overt diversity of cultural traditions, history, dialects and life-styles of modern day Croatia can only be described as, aberrant. The juxtaposition of Austrian architecture in Zagreb with the Roman coliseum in Istria; the sonorous tones of Dalmatian *klapa* singing with the high pitched plucks of the Slavonian *tamburica*<sup>5</sup>, or the regional and sub-regional dialectal variants rampant in Croatia invites the query surrounding the nature of the people's identity. This work focuses not only on the complexity of identity formation through the use of music, but also under which specific social and political milieu does such a process occur.

Identity issues, we argue, were at the

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<sup>4</sup> While there are on-going debates and controversies as to the exact implications and meanings of the terms “nation” and “state,” we have strictly interpreted these terms, in order to minimize confusion, to represent the people of a country and the political system by which it is led, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> A long-necked plucked lute that was most likely introduced in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Turks.

crux of the independence movement in Croatia. Reinforcing a national identity among the population created a distinct line between the two warring parties. Divided on every imaginable line, Croats and Serbs took to the rhetoric of nationalism and ethnic purity. No difference was too small to exploit in order to create an 'us' versus 'them' mentality.

Despite, or perhaps due to, the constant struggles, wars and ideological transformations diffused through the Balkan Peninsula, a strong sense of national, religious and ethnic identity and affiliation developed rapidly among the people. This was so specifically with the tribes and nations that eventually became the former Yugoslavian state. Whether referring to Macedonians, Serbs, Bosnians, Croats or Slovenians, each 'group' has evolved and acknowledged traditions, practices and beliefs that comprise their specific cultural history and identities.

Thus, the love for one's culture—coupled with their malleability and aptitude to acclimatize foreign elements—is a contributing factor for the survival of a people, their identities, nations and day-to-day practices. In her prefatory summation, Jelavich (1983) expresses a similar view:

...although Balkan societies, either willingly or under duress, have accepted much from the outside world, it must be emphasized that even where foreign institutions and ideas were adopted, they were subsequently molded and changed to fit national traditions and prejudices. (p. xii)

In general, the sentiments expressed above address all the nations of the Balkan Peninsula as a whole. Her words, however, also pertain to each nation specifically and may easily be applied to the people of Croatia.

In order to better understand the ab-

straction of identity in relation to Croatia, one must also examine the function of ethnicity and nationalism within a cultural and societal framework. Social relationships tend to acquire an ethnic element when cultural variants affect the interaction between members of different groups. In Croatia, acute ethnic awareness<sup>6</sup> essentially began in the late nineteenth century with instrumental national movements, such as Ljudevit Gaj's *Ilirski Pokret*, or Illyrian Movement. These campaigns promoted cultural awareness and propagated the development of an independent Croatian State. Elements such as music, media, literature and education were used and manipulated to result in ethnic socialization—the development of actions, attitudes, values and perceptions of different ethnic groups. The very same mediums were also instrumental for the creation of an imagined community essential for the solidarity of a revolutionary movement, be it of a cultural, political or militaristic nature. The creation of an imagined community successfully promotes the necessary ideology<sup>7</sup> by which one's reasoning and actions are rationalized and given a sense of greater purpose.

Through the closer examination of music within a social and political fabric, possibilities of understanding the national, as well as regional, identities present in the nation became more comprehensive due to the cultural and traditional ties inherent in artistic expressions of thought and emotion. In Croatia, music, literature, poetry, dance, theater, sculpture and painting, along with language, religion, national self-awareness and customs play a significant part in the lives of the people and their un-

<sup>6</sup> Ethnic awareness is the discernment of one's own as well as other's ethnic groups—involving their customs, defining traits, history, traditions and other elements, which comprise one's identity.

<sup>7</sup> Ideology is defined as a system of discourses, beliefs, perceptions, rhetoric, ideas and practices which collectively serve the function to obscure what is real or truthful.

derstanding of their personal and ethnic identities. These varied aspects of life have, since the arrival of the Slavs, played an important role not only in politics and the countless struggles for the creation of an independent Croatian state, but relative to the preservation of the people's culture, values, way of life and, most importantly, their need to determine their own fate as a distinct people and nation.

The following attempts to deliver a new perspective on the connection between music and national identity, thus better illuminating the process in which a nation's culture and ethnicity can be manipulated for political and social gain. It then becomes necessary to observe the utilization of music by social participants in specific local situations to institute boundaries, the justification of these boundaries and to maintain distinctions between 'us' and 'them.' Moreover, the role of ethnicity and nationalism in relation to identity and music must equally be examined. To inquire, 'When does ethnicity become important?' and, 'How is music used by political actors to propagate a sense of self based on terms of ethnicity and nationalist rhetoric?' is essential for the understanding of Croatian identity as perceived through, and supported by music.

Martin Stokes (1994) provides insight to begin this work. He persuasively argues that by simply examining your private musical collection, you will notice highly specialized sets of places and boundaries. A brief reflection on our own musical practices drives home the multitude of identities that we possess. He continues, "[m]usic is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (p. 5). Interestingly, Stokes also points out that music presents a means for the unification of peoples, the breaking down of boundaries and promoting a sense of appreciation of different cultures and traditions.

Depending on how we are ordered by different social factors, music can either entrap us into a specific set of classifications, or it can leap across boundaries and actuate unexpected and expanding possibilities. The illimitable possibilities of music are significant to people's sense of identity because every individual can audibly recognize and identify with his or her notion of self by simply dancing to, performing, listening to, and thinking about music.

An important quality of music, as stated by Frith (1987), is that: "What music can do is put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social factors" (p. 147). Music therefore not only liberates people from certain social restrictions but allows people the propensity to choose and construct their own sense of identity...even if it does last only as long as a song.

This being the case, however, we suggest that the initial and primary goal for Croatia centered less on unity and liberation but rather on the issue of identity construction as tantamount. In fact, Jasna Čapo Žmegač in her 1999 essay, "Ethnology, Mediterranean Studies and Political Reticence in Croatia—From Mediterranean Constructs to Nation-Building," argues that a conscious decision was made to align Croatia with Mediterranean culture, while ignoring the Balkans, known also as the Dinaric cultural model. Efforts were focused on separating Croatian identity from the Balkan Peninsula, and more importantly, from the characteristics common to all South Slavic cultures. Creating a national identity based on regional identity, i.e., the Mediterranean, was quickly seen as problematic. megac states, "...the Croats do not relate their Mediterranean-ness with their national but rather with their regional identity" (p. 48). It was precisely the regionalism of the Mediterranean identity that prevented the development of a national identity. Thus, it is understandable that such a stance immediately triggered re-

gionalisms and a failure at the incorporation of regional identities into the national identity.

Nonetheless, the political and social push to unify all of Croatia under a single identity through a transformation of a regional to a national identity referred to above was undertaken. This theme is of particular interest to Croatian ethnomusicologists, Jasna Čapo Žmegač, and Joško Čaleta. In "The Ethnomusicological Approach to the Concept of the Mediterranean in Music in Croatia," Čaleta (1999) points to the role of music and power in the context of the 1991 war and how such themes assisted in the construction of a new national and cultural identity. "With the rise of the new state of Croatia," he writes, "there was a need to re/define national identity. Mediterranean identity grew from a typically regionally-based identity to an important factor in the formation of the national identity of today's Croats" (p. 185). This process, while generally viewed as positive, did have some negative effects. A new national identity in some cases developed at the expense of other regional identities.

These general themes are also explored by other researchers including Martin Stokes (1994), Dušan Janić (1995), Chris Hedges (2002), and Naila Ceribašić (1995). The analysis put forth by Stokes (1994), in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, deconstructs the relationship between ethnicity, place and music. He suggests that ethnicities are understood in terms of the construction, maintenance and negotiation of boundaries, and not the social or cultural characteristics within such a boundary. Ethnic boundaries, therefore, define and maintain social identities, which exist only in opposition and relativities to other groups. Accordingly, music can be used by social actors in specific situations in order to erect boundaries, and to maintain distinctions between two groups. Thus, Stokes (1994) postulates the view of music as intensely

involved in the advancement of dominant classifications and social formations, particularly in new nation-states. Modern, burgeoning states place much importance on music because, when forms of communication are inadequate, radio becomes an important means of propagating a variety of messages, including those that promote social cohesion and national unity.

In sum, the viewpoints presented here are contrary to common historical models describing the development of the arts which generally coincide with times of peace. Instead, artists continued to steadily develop and influence the individuals' life in Croatia during political and economical hardships. With the ever-changing political and social climates in Croatia after the War(s), the arts were not always left to their own vices to develop organically. Instead, the arts—specifically music and dance—were forced to develop according to the needs and wants of the countries leaders and their socio-political goals. The following section serves as an exemplar of the manipulation process of contemporary Croatian identity to which we refer.

## MUSIC AS AN INSTRUMENT OF UNIFICATION

One of the most important national symbols of Croatian identity is the *tamburica*,<sup>8</sup> sometimes called the *tambura*,<sup>9</sup> a

<sup>8</sup> The *tamburica* is a long-necked, pear-shaped plucked lute. The term for this instrument is a diminutive of "*tambura*," which is an ancient Persian instrument, estimated to have been brought to the Balkans during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by incursions of the Ottoman Empire. The instrument is reputed to have reached Croatia and Slavonia by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Today, the instrument can be found across Croatia, existing in various shapes, with varying number of strings and in various tunings.

<sup>9</sup> Although these terms are synonymous, *tambura* mainly refers to the solo practice of the instrument, while *tamburica* is used mostly in reference to ensemble or orchestral applications.



plucked lute brought to Bosnia and Serbia in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Bonifačić, 1998). *Tamburica* ensembles first began to form throughout the regions of former Yugoslavia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely in the northeastern and central parts of Croatia called Slavonia. There are three major trends concerning *tamburica* ensemble.

The first trend, “*tamburica* folk ensembles” (Bonifačić), is characterized by few members in the ensemble, musical illiteracy, free and spontaneous performances and a weak connection with political events. The second trend includes “amateur *tamburica* ensembles/orchestras” (Bonifačić). They were very active in Croatia, and tended to be nationally aware and politically active. Formed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, these ensembles became engaged promoters of the Croatian National Movement. The third trend, “professional, musically trained orchestras” (Bonifačić), came into being in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and was established by radio stations operating out of larger cultural centers in former Yugoslavia.

Croat ethnic awareness became tantamount to, and was embodied within, the Illyrian Movement in the early 1800s. The Illyrians<sup>10</sup> strategy was to use the *tamburica* as the national symbol, that with which a native composer can write music based on traditional folk tunes, and the nature of the language in the lyrics could express national identity. This strategy was incorporated into most public events and performances. According to Bonifačić (1995), the *tamburica* was chosen for this purpose for two reasons: (1) the instruments diverse roles as both a rural and solo instrument and as an urban and rural ensemble instrument, and (2) Solo *tambura* and *tamburica* ensembles were so widely spread among the South Slavic groups that it was both

convenient and easily recognizable. Due to both the Illyrian Movement and the Croatian National Movement, the Habsburg Empire subsequently banned the use of the instrument, thus giving rise to anti-assimilative ideology among the South Slavs, which provided the *tamburica* with a purpose. Playing the instrument as a means of resistance to the Austrians and Hungarians became prevalent until the beginning of World War One.

To support the glorification of the *tamburica*, a government-backed ensemble, *Zlatni Dukati*, was created. Ruža Bonifačić (1995), in an article published in *Collegium Antropologicum*, explores this relationship. The group originated in Slavonia in the mid 1980s releasing a recording of patriotic songs featuring the *tamburica*, based on the folk tradition of the Pannonian region.

*Zlatni Dukati* also formed a tight relationship with the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)—headed by Franjo Tuđman, who led Croatia into the war for independence in 1991. The group’s participation in the party’s advertising and campaigning broadened their popularity. Their public performances of patriotic songs became a meaningful symbol of the country’s new, democratic future. After the war began, the official mass media aggressively promoted the group’s recordings, which led to a wave of new patriotic songs being recorded by hundreds of artists. This contributed heavily to the gradual formation of a new national identity in the newly independent nation of Croatia. Bonifačić (1995) credits *Zlatni Dukati* as having been “one of the initiators of the revival of Croatian patriotic songs, and even more—of the *tamburica* as a Croatian national symbol” (p. 75).

In the group’s early years, they had a broad appeal to both Croats and Serbs because of their liveliness and high standard of performance. Although *Zlatni Dukati* was once very popular in Serbia, their new association with Croatian independence and identity in 1989 resulted in increased

<sup>10</sup> Referring to those involved in the Illyrian Movement (1830-43) which sought to unify the South Slavs on cultural, and political grounds.

popularity in Croatia. Conversely, the possession of their cassettes by members of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (JNA) became liable to punishment by Serb authorities.

In 1990, a period of great political tension among the republics of former Yugoslavia, a second album called *Horvatska domovina* (Croatian Homeland) was released. After the war began in 1991, most of the rousing, patriotic songs on the album became national hits. According to Ruža Bonifačić (1998), "[t]he members of the ensemble applied to volunteer in the Croatian Army. The rejection of their applications confirmed the awareness of the institutions in charge of the powerful propaganda role of patriotic songs and the activities of the *Zlatni Dukati* in a war-time situation" (p. 138).

Several songs from their overall repertoire stand out as having had achieved wide popularity. *Ne dirajte mi ravnicu* (Leave My Plains Alone) grew into a song of protest and resistance. The "plains" refer to the Slavonian flatlands where the war was at its fiercest, and from which the majority of Croatian refugees emigrated. When performed live, or aired on television, scenes of Slavonia's peaceful past were shown side-by-side with images of the war and refugees to further incite anger in the public. Another song, entitled *Vukovar*, *Vukovar*, addressed the embattled and besieged town of Vukovar, hoping to encourage not only the citizens of the town, but also the Croatian army to win back their land. This song became particularly important during the war due to the status of Vukovar as a symbol of Croatian resistance to Serbian domination. It was widely felt at the time that if Vukovar could be recovered, then the entire war could also be won.

The success of *Zlatni Dukati* inspired hundreds of groups, bands, and ensembles to form. The *tamburica* folk tradition permeated through most musical genres represented by the 1990's music scene. The

*tamburica* has been used as a national symbol for decades and any group that employed the use of the instrument generally received the approval and support of the ruling party. Thus, we argue that the *tamburica* as a national symbol of Croatian identity is a forced political and social construction rather than an organic development—that which would be truly representative of the culture and heritage of Croatian ethnic identity.

Evidence supporting this claim is validated by the acknowledgement that almost immediately after the end of the war in 1995 the *tamburica's* popularity became to rapidly wane. People's interest in the instrument and its particular musical tradition was only supported as long as there was reason. The instrument was nonetheless promoted as the national instrument, and accepted as such by people, until the death of Franjo Tuđman in 2000. Since then, it is still regarded as the official national instrument, but has virtually ceased to exist in the public sphere—giving way to the importation of music from Europe and America.

### CREATING IMAGINED BOUNDARIES THROUGH MUSIC—AUTHENTICITY, WAR AND UNITY

A discussion of authenticity provides insight to the issue of music and identity. Thus, taking 'authenticity' as an example, we see how nomenclature is frequently applied to qualify the uniqueness and value of something or someone. In terms of organized sound, authenticity cannot be regarded as a property of music, musicians or their relationship with the listening public. All music is derived from the same source: artistic creativity, imagination and conscious effort, and therefore, cannot be 'inauthentic.' Folk music, for instance, is no more of a legitimate representation of people's cultural identity than is urban

music. The usage and manipulation of such terminology, however, leads people to such assumptions—closely interlinking the notions of authenticity and identity.

The use of nomenclature in a digressive and figurative manner accords the term 'authenticity' great persuasive powers. In terms of music in Croatia, the labeling of styles, accompanying dances, instruments and themes as 'authentic' to Croatian culture, coupled with history strictly focuses on the dissimilarities inherent in the overall musical construction of Croatia. This forges and validates not only a unique sense of identity among the people, but also intense feelings of nationalism and ethnic differentiation. A classic example of such manifestations is the forced adoption of the *tamburica* as the national instrument of Croatia. It was during the recent period of warfare that the *tamburica* was importunately inducted into the daily lives of Croats throughout the country. *Tamburica* music was consistently played on the radio and orchestras were filmed for television. Bands wrote neo-traditional patriotic songs using the instrument causing its persistent incorporation into political, social and traditional rituals.

The *harmonika*, conversely, became an 'inauthentic' instrument due to its general association with Serbian music and popularity among the Serbs. This anti-popularization of the instrument occurred with complete disregard to the fact that it has been widely used in Croatian music for nearly two hundred years.<sup>11</sup> Tajfel and Turner (1986) refer to this instrument classification as part of a categorization process applied to an outgroup, that which often results in the construction of negative stereotypes. Although this instrument can be found throughout most of Croatia, namely Istria, Northern Littoral, Dalmatia and

other areas in Northern Croatia, it has never been regarded as a characteristic attribute in Croatian music. In Serbia, however, it found a more significant status among their musical practices and is common to all regions. Consequently, the general Croatian populace regards the instrument as solely representative of Serbia music, culture and people. Thus, they have successfully created the image of the "other" and forged yet another ethnic differentiation to validate an imagined community of Croatianness.

This same differentiation process was undertaken with the *tamburica* and the *mandolina*, two traditional instruments commonly found in Croatia. As noted earlier, the *tamburica* was relegated to the status of being the national folk instrument and a symbol of resistance against the Federal state. It became an authentic symbol of a distinct Croatian identity. Paradoxically, the *mandolina* became inauthentic and was disregarded and widely ignored due to the fact that, along with the Croats, the Serbs too played the *mandolina*. The process of authenticity is further explained by Tajfel and Turner (1986) suggesting that society is characterized by flexibility and permeability and because of this we suggest that those symbols used for group representation also are imbued with these same attributes. In essence, this forced identity construction applied to the *mandolina* effectively relegated the *mandolina*, as with the *harmonika*, as symbolic expressions of the "other."

Down on the Mediterranean coast, a region called *Dalmacija*, a different model of identity formation through music can be found. Unlike the *tamburica*, however, the identity construction surrounding *klapa* developed organically. Within a Croatian framework, Bezić (1999; 1996; 1988), effectively puts national and regional musical trend into a historical context by examining the various and underlining aspects of how music interacts with people. Bezić accom-

<sup>11</sup> The *harmonika*, or accordion, was introduced to Croatia in the nineteenth century and was quickly accepted and adopted into traditional music practices.

plishes this through an examination of the connection between the ancient custom of *kolenda* singing and the more modern *klapa* singing pervasive throughout Dalmatia. The organic development of a singing style called *klapa*, and its subsequent role as a form of cultural representation, affords a different perspective on the question of identity and music. Bezić presents this example to demonstrate the process in which musical traditions evolve and influence culture and society.

*Klapa* singing offers a different course of development in music, which in turn, acts as a cohesive force binding not only regional identities, but extending out onto the national stage as a symbol of Croatian heritage. The evolution of *klapa* singing is representative of an organic, self-promulgating entity that came to depict a Croatian identity through its adoption, usage and acceptance by individual players, rather than by political institutions. Town by town, region by region, *klapa* singing first came to be a primary source of identity and pride for the Dalmatian coastline, and then later as a musical genre endeared by Croats. Although *klapa* did not play any prominent role in the 1991 war, it did help foster the definition of being a Croatian long before, and continues to do so even today.

Whereas the popularity of the *tamburica* has waned, there has been an explosion in folk festivals throughout Croatia featuring *klapa* singing, as well as other forms of traditional, usually local, musical forms. Because the latter developed along a natural and organic process, it found a place in people's practices. In 2004, *klapa* singing is seen as quintessentially Dalmatian, but also invokes images of Croatia as a whole, and is even enjoyed and appreciated once again in Serbia and Bosnia.

When examining the relation of ethnicity and identity, and how they are accordingly put into play through music, we must be aware that music is one of the less inno-

cent ways these concepts are regulated, enforced and resisted. Although music is not as perceptible as outright violence, war and oppression, it is precisely the connection that music has with society that deems it a powerful and determinant force concerning these issues. In the 1990s, the predominant political situation—revealed through conflicting power relations, the disintegration of the federation, the establishment of new countries and the ensuing warfare—isolated the theme of music and dance within the context of ideological, social and political struggles and revolution. The role of music in the construction of identity thus became a pertinent matter in the political and daily lives of people on both national and regional levels.

In order to fully understand not just how but why music became a necessary and essential tool used by both political and social agents, it becomes imperative to illuminate the close relationship between ethnicity and nationalism, and that all attempts to recreate and reinforce a mythic Croatian identity are based almost solely on the ethnic composition of the nation. Because nationalism is usually ethnic in character, it can therefore be conceived of as a discourse of identity that is first culturally invented or reclaimed, and later geo-politically enhanced.

Importantly, Ceribašić (1995) asserts that popular music can become a powerful point of differentiation, one of “competing discourses and confronted states” (p. 94). He defines two main genre sub-groups of newly composed folk music. The first is comprised of music based on mainstream musical trends with quasi-patriotic lyrics. The second group relies on the musical content of past folk tunes, but rearranged to fit the sound of newly composed folk music. The author goes on to point out that the war-like image of Serbia and the feminine/victim image of Croatia are portrayed in each nation's national instrument. In Serbia, the *gusle*, is seen as epitomizing the

tribal and patriarchal nature of Balkan culture, while the *tamburica*, Croatia's national instrument, relates the image of the cooperative and peaceful laborer, or the hospitable and peaceful villager.

When one thinks of music in such a manner, music then becomes a tool, which not only acts as a form of entertainment and artistic expression, but also as an "extraterrestrial essence" (Stokes, 1994, p. 10) that manages, regulates and negotiates social and political relations. The often heard sentiments regarding music as a unifying force capable of bringing people together can and does exist—however, not to an extent that matches the relationship music has with opposite notions such as violence, propaganda, war and as a vital arm in the proliferation of state cultural policy.

Within the context of politics and war, Svanibor Pettan (1995), an ethnomusicologist and research scholar at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Institute in Zagreb, identifies three basic functions of music during this period: to provide encouragement for those fighting on the front lines and those hiding in bomb shelters; to provoke and humiliate the enemy; and to call for the involvement of the general public, the Diaspora and those in exile. Music also served as a means to express perceptions of, as well as experiences in, the war. In addition, it also served as a communication link between opposing sides. Many of the songs produced by one side generated a response by the other, usually with the purpose of being antagonistic. In one example, an incident confirmed by the International Human Rights Organization found that in the Keraterm detention camp in Bosnia-Herzegovina, prisoners were forced to sing Chetnik Songs by Serbian forces in order to humiliate and degrade them.

Pettan (1995) goes on to divide the entire war-related musical repertoire available on commercial recordings into two distinct categories: "official," and "alternative." The former consists of recordings

produced by registered companies, sold in stores and having met high standards of sound quality. The latter recordings, in contrast, were of unknown authors, available only through street sellers and generally poor in sound quality. They were also, in some cases, political or lascivious in nature—generally aligned with radical ideology while the former shared and supported the views held by the Croatian government. Both repertoires did, however, include songs about famed political figures from Croatia's past, as well as victims of the war in progress at that time. This is not to imply that artists who began in one repertoire did not cross over to the other. The most well known example is the song *Bojna Čavoglave* (Čavoglave Battalion) by Marko Perković, more commonly known as "Thompson." A small company initially recorded it, gaining popularity through word of mouth until it was adopted by the "official" state sponsored music industry. Thompson's message, however, did not change and continued to appeal to the radical ideology of nationalism and rural values.

Since the onset of fighting in 1991, the two competing forces, Croatia and Serbia, adopted differing musical strategies both in the broadcast media and on the streets and battlefields throughout the region. While Serbia adopted music-making practices more similar to that of the Partisans of World War Two, under Marshal Tito, Croatia promoted more heterogeneous music genres. The diverse musical pieces found on Croatian media and at festivals, and concerts included domestic operas, rock, funk, punk, dance and rap, as well as the traditional, albeit polished, *tamburica* and *klapa* orchestras and ensembles. "As a reaction to the aggression against Croatia, a specific amalgam, a sort of "all-embracing" homeland music formed, with the objective of strengthening internal cohesion and national homogenization" (Ceribašić, 1998, p. 129).

Although many varieties of music were present in the country, the prevalence of the more traditional forms ultimately became the leading force in reconstructing regional and national identities and in achieving a sense of ethnic unity. These new traditional songs, often called newly composed folk songs, utilize traditional tunes combined with current messages in the text—often invoking traditional literary figures and vocabulary in order to celebrate heroic fighters battling their enemies. This genre began in 1943, but reemerged in 1991 as an influential focus of the wartime repertoire, mainly because of the promotion and elevation of the *tamburica* as a national instrument, symbolizing a unique Croatian identity.

### MUSIC AS AN INSTRUMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Music is a potentially powerful element of culture that can act as both a unifying and separating force among people. This transfiguring quality of music can, in specific situations, be manipulated precisely because it is simultaneously a representation of people's identity, ethnicity, culture, traditions and history, as well as a product of these very constituents. Music is a social factor that influences and involves all members of society. The political and social realities of the past decade in Croatia show that music has been used to propagate feelings of nationalism, an image of the 'enemy—as other,' ethnic partitioning and even as a motivational tool for soldiers on the battlefield.<sup>12</sup>

Within the cultural boundaries of Croatia, however—especially after 1997 when the war in Bosnia came to a relative end—music was also used to aid and assist in the reconstruction of the nation, to ease suffering and develop understanding and unification among peoples. In most societies ravaged by war, verbal communication

tends to break down, allowing music to be a critical unifying factor among the people. Music mitigates the pain brought about by violent struggles and often becomes the key to survival for individuals coping with post-traumatic stress, as well as for communities striving to reconstruct their cultural identity. Music has shown to even possess the capability to eventually promote greater understanding and tolerance between the very same peoples who once fought so vehemently against one another.

Tomislav Ivčić popular song, *Stop the War in Croatia*, adds to support to Ceribašić (1995) postulations. Ivčić's, *Stop the War in Croatia*,<sup>13</sup> quickly became the best selling song during the period of war in Croatia. Through lyric, Ivčić explicitly implores neighboring countries to mitigate the degenerating situation in Croatia. The expectation, or assumption, that Western European nations would interfere in the conflict existed merely as a faint glimmer of hope. Rather than calling for the armed intervention of an international military power, Ivčić's song called upon people to understand the devastating effects of nationalism and ethnic partitioning.

While an overwhelming number of patriotic songs urging people to fight emerged during the period of warfare in

<sup>12</sup> Marko Perković's song *Bojna Čavoglave*—inspired by his experiences defending his home village, *Čavoglave*—is a rock tune based on a seven beat meter common to traditional Balkan music. The lyrics encouraged soldiers to fight bravely and addressed the Serbian enemies in an aggressive and threatening manner. The video clip also portrays Croatian soldiers singing and simulating military exercises in a realistic manner. Interestingly, the songs popularity and increasing demands from Croatian soldiers on the front lines resulted in abnormally frequent airplay of the song and video clip by the state media.

<sup>13</sup> Text: "Stop the war in the name of love/ Stop the war in the name of God/ Stop the war in the name of the children/ Stop the war in Croatia// We want to share the European dream/ We want democracy and peace/ Let Croatia be one of Europe's stars/ Europe, you can stop the war."

Croatia, attempts to use music as a means of curbing the forthcoming violence were made. Between the months of March and May in 1991, the *Hrvatski komorni orkestar*—The Croatian Chamber Orchestra—held several performances under the title, “Concerts of Peace and Hope.” Among the musical pieces performed, the orchestra included Mozart’s, Coronation Mass, and Mokranc’s, Divine Service of St. John Chrystom. By performing compositions related to the Catholic and Orthodox Christian faiths, the musicians hoped to unite both Serbs and Croats in their desire for a peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, the events that unfolded shortly thereafter deemed their attempts ineffectual.

### CROATIAN IDENTITY FORMATION AND MUSIC: A PERSONAL RETROSPECTIVE

*As a first-generation Croatian born in the United States, my own name, Miroslav Mavra, serves as a marker of my “otherness.” My dual identity served as the initial precept for undertaking the issue of identity, comprising both personal and national, and how, within the framework of war and politics, such constructions of self lend themselves to culture, intra- and inter-ethnic group relations and politics.*

*As a teenager, I was unaware of the intricacies of the conflict, nor did I care. Eventually, as the war passed and the years went by, I began to search for my own sense of identity. I immediately turned to what I had once shunned away from in my younger years: my family’s Croatian heritage. Weddings, festivals and other social gatherings involving Croats had a whole new appeal to me. As I was slowly rediscovering my roots and my family’s history, I was also searching for a place among my new community—a way that I could better understand and identify with a people, nation and culture that seemed so familiar and so different at the same time.*

*Since I was a small child, I have found peace and tranquility in music. I viewed my attachment to both modern and traditional Croatian music as a natural progression in my life. Furthermore, the music allowed me to find my natural place among my hereditary connection to the people of Croatia. I can still recall the countless festivals, family gatherings, weddings and even funerals where my heart swelled with a sense of pride and belonging when the band’s song fired up the audience into a frenzy of dancing, spinning and drinking.*

*I was fourteen years old when the war in Croatia broke out in 1991. I did not experience the war first hand. Instead I watched the news stories on television from my parents’ home in New York, and occasionally my family would receive some news from our relatives in Croatia. Memories of coming home from school, finding my parents and their friends cursing and yelling, with their fists in the air, at the CNN commentator as he explains the countless images of devastated villages still linger on in my mind. This is what I remember of the war.*

*I, myself, would argue that my personal desire for reunification with my lineage could lead to the recognition of my identity and place within the confines of Freud’s “narcissism of minor differences” by simply creating divisional boundaries of an autochthonous nature amongst myself and those outside my hereditary ethnicity. The hope, however, remains that the resolution of my pursuits will rather be that of greater understanding, and repulsion from, the destructive nature of heightened nationalistic and ethnic contempt.*

*Although I have continuously visited Croatia throughout my life, it never occurred to me that my identity could be any more than that of a ‘New Yorker.’ This was the emergence of an intensive period of introspective analysis of the identity imparted to me by my family’s extraction. The ensuing three years were a time of confusion and self-discovery. Aside from feeling a positive, renewed sense of being, as though my entire existence has been redefined, negative attitudes and views of the “other”—which in this case were the Serbs<sup>14</sup>—grew to be*

*as important to my sense of identity as my initial acceptance of my cultural heritage. The uncompromising views of that time rather quickly transformed my perspective of the Serbs as people into 'my enemies.' They symbolized the direct opposites of me within the context of my newly redefined identity. To be against 'them' was to ratify one's sense of self.*

*Following a distant war in which a large portion of my family was directly involved, I fell victim to nationalistic sentiments spread among the larger Croatian community. A period of self-awareness and subsequent identity crises accentuated my sense of reality and, evidently, caused me to feel anger and disdain toward people that I have never met.*

*Today, I am still struggling with my identity.*

*Too young to have ever dealt with the complexities inherent to having been born in New York as a Yugoslav and a Croatian, instead, my search of a personal identity emerged in tandem with my native soil in the throws of its own identity crisis. Although aware that Croatia as a culture, as a people and as a defined group has existed for centuries, the dramatic events of the past century have forced the very notion of Croatianness to be questioned.*

*When I return to Croatia I wonder just how I fit into that society. Simple questions lack any discernible answers. What makes me Croatian? Can it be as simple as the language, the traditions, and location? Empirical evidence points to similar questions arising in the thoughts of many Croatians themselves, as supported through news and magazine articles, artistic expressions and day-to-day conversations.*

*The people across former Yugoslavia have experienced numerous identity transformations over the last century, almost always with disastrous results. Efforts exerted either by an*

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<sup>14</sup> *Consequently, this personal phase coincided with the 1991 war between Serbia and Croatia, which heavily influenced feelings of indiscriminate animosity and hatred in myself, my family, as well as in most Croatian immigrants in America, by and large, towards the Serbian people.*

*empire, kingdom, puppet state or federation to redefine and subjugate the local populations across the Balkans all failed. And now that each ethnic group has established their own sovereign states, I wait to see how they reconstruct their constituent characteristics as identifying markers of nationality.*

*In 2000, a Serbian friend came to visit me in Zagreb and stayed for several days. My family, friends and colleagues received her warmly. In public, however, our experiences were not the same. Because there is no way to disguise her accent, or dialect, her only option, when we would come upon a crowded tram or the occasional group of football hooligans, was to keep quite for fear that she would be identified as a Serb.*

*In recent years, this hostility has largely dissipated—although not forgotten among nationalists, and other hardliners—to where today it is not uncommon to see Serbian tourists during the summer season.*

*I share this growth and follow a path parallel to that of my country. Learning not only who you are, but also how to become what you are, is a process as arduous and endless as any noble pursuit. These are my personal reflections regarding the war time years in Croatia—this work not only serves as a personal journey, but also as an exercise in the demystification of ideological sentiment and the reification of the process of identity creation and sustenance.*

## CONCLUSIONS

In 1991, nationalistic politicians, both Croatian and Serbian, found ways to manipulate the *narcissism of minor differences* (Freud, 1930), making their own side appear as blameless victims, and the other side as callous murderers, thus setting the essential basis for the violence that ensued—thus giving rise to the development of an ethnic identity. In the words of Paul R. Brass (1991):



...there is nothing inevitable about the rise of ethnic identity and its transformation into nationalism among the diverse peoples of the contemporary world. Rather, the conversion of cultural differences into bases for political differentiation between peoples arises only under specific circumstances, which need to be identified clearly. (p. 13)

In former Yugoslavia the stage was set for an ethnic based civil war through several decades of internal conflicts. As Tajfel and Turner (1966) hypothesized, years of discontent, political upheaval and a growing disparity between the rich and poor incited individuals to identify themselves with their ethnic group in favor of the national Yugoslav identity. Under Yugoslavia even identifying yourself as a Slovenian or a Croat first and a Yugoslav second was liable to draw a multitude of consequences. Thus, fueling feelings of dissent and revolt aimed at the notion of a unified South Slavic identity.

This left only the manipulation of Freud's (1930) *narcissism of minor differences* to spark the collapse of the nation-state and the dissemination of nationalistic paranoia among the population. The state of affairs in 1990<sup>15</sup> paralleled Brass's (1991) "specific circumstances," which prompted the political differentiation among similar peoples.

With the escalation of armed conflicts, fallible as well as politic, fear began to take hold in people's minds. They wanted to know who they could trust and rely on for their safety during the chaotic state of political and economic break down. Ethnic na-

tionalism provided the safe haven people were looking for—one rooted in those of your own blood (Ignatieff, 1993). Nationalism and ethnicity as suggested by T. H. Erikson (1993), can thus be viewed as cognate notions and, therefore, conceived as culturally invented or reclaimed notions of identity.

When considering the complex nature of Croatia's interminable history, countless political modifications, struggles, spiced ethnic constitution and social relations, one cannot claim that music possesses either an overtly momentous, or instrumental role throughout the country's development. Yet, music cannot be written off as completely insignificant. Both popular and folk music in Croatia have been utilized and manipulated for a variety of purposes, ranging from instilling fear and allegiance in the hearts and minds of the populous to providing a source of hope and comfort during periods of economic hardship and warfare. The potential of music's politically and socially provocative nature was so highly recognized during Croatia's struggle for independence that musicians, politicians and citizens across the country were of the opinion that, "...music can under some circumstances be considered a 'weapon'" (Pettan, 1998, p. 910).

It is this very provocation and power which songs and poetry possess that has been underestimated and under-examined in the fields of social sciences that draws our attention to the topic. Perhaps the analysis of music in relation to nationalism, ethnic identities, war and politics will not provide answers as to why certain situations develop, are resolved, or could have been averted. Music, regardless of its effectiveness as an analytical tool, is, however—along with poetry, theater and visual arts—also a reflection of society, culture, traditions and history. It can provide an avenue to explore the humanist nature of people's lives and historical events. In the words of Theodor W. Adorno, taken from

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<sup>15</sup> In 1990 the Socialist Republic of Croatia held their first multi-party elections, which brought Franjo Tuđman and his party, *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* or the *HDZ*, into power and was followed by a referendum in which 94 percent of the voters chose independence from Yugoslavia.

his 1961-62 lectures on the sociology of music, "...even quite distant cultures... have the capacity to understand one another musically" (Blum, 1994, p. 250).

Due to difficult historical progressions and adverse reactions to important social questions, the latter classification of music's use is a more accurate reflection of Croatia's contemporary realities. Although positive examples of the unifying characteristics of music are acknowledged and examined, our primary argument focuses on the relationship between music and people's sense of identity from the personal to national level. The underlining issues rest upon the 'use' of music in terms of reconstructing, preserving and disseminating people's sense of identity

The importance of music in Croatia's distant and recent past should not be exaggerated, but should simultaneously be appreciated for its potential and ability to act as a powerful force in periods of both peace and war. The identity of Croats has many characteristics, each of which was influenced by a multitude of developments. By focusing on music, we do not intend to imply that other cultural phenomena and political influences played diminished roles in the process of identity formation. Language, the fine arts, dance, theater, religion, literature and many other societal and human elements equally contribute in creating the unique identities that comprise the regions, nations and ethnicities present across the globe. We look forward to additional contributions made to both the specific theme of Croatian identity, and the larger issue of identity formation, nationalism and ethnicity.

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