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## Defining Nations Musically. Some Perspectives

In November 2020 – July 2021, as member of the research group initiated and coordinated by Valentina Sandu-Dediu for the New Europe College project *Nationalism and its Effects on Music in Central and Eastern Europe since the Second Half of the 19th Century*,<sup>1</sup> I was discussing with my colleagues Antigona Rădulescu, Nicolae Gheorghîță, Costin Moisil from the National University of Music Bucharest on various aspects of musical nationalism. We were mainly interested in how it affected music in Romania, but we quickly realised the necessity of a larger perspective, one that would investigate similar currents in Europe, and so on June 25, 2021, the New Europe College organised the online international conference *Defining Nations Musically: Discourses on Nationalism in 20th Century European Music*.

Five of the lectures then given<sup>2</sup> are collected in this issue as an example of the way that nationalism affected music in Western and Eastern Europe, often in the context of totalitarian political regimes.

Harry White's study reveals important emphasis shifts in the last century with regard to defining Ireland musically. The "Romantic" reception of Irish traditional music was replaced by new models of cultural transmission and of generating a national identity both in Europe – in Germany in particular –, and in the American-Irish space, all of which the author presents in detail.

<sup>1</sup> This research group was supported by a grant of the Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation – UEFISCDI (PN-III-P3-3.6-H2020-2020-0035), within the *Prize for Excellence in Research* awarded to New Europe College.

<sup>2</sup> The full program here: <https://nec.ro/events/defining-nations-musically-discourses-on-nationalism-in-20th-century-european-music/>.

Anna Dalos talks about Zoltán Kodály's musical pedagogy, reflecting on its relation to the historical context. Drawing a parallel between Nazi-Fascist-inspired Hungarian nationalism of the 1940s and Kodály's views on "Hungarian-ness", she shows how developing musical skills (ear training, sight-singing, etc.) came to be seen as a symbol of national unity in Hungary.

Bringing up the former Yugoslavian geographical area, inhabited by very different nations and minorities culture-wise, Melita Milin looks at the impact of the many-faceted nationalism on musical creation. With special attention to the period between 1945 and 1960, she describes how the socialist state, stepping back from the soviet model quite early on, tried to reach, both through composition and through musical mediatisation, two essentially incompatible goals: highlighting *national identities* within the federal state, and aspiring towards unity and the construction of a *Yugoslavian identity*.

Two of the lectures comment on aspects of Romanian musical nationalism in the communist years. Nicolae Gheorghiuță thus underlines the state's efforts to define, by musical means too, *the national elements*, with military bands playing an important role in the process. The author discusses the "new" repertoires of the Romanian Military, accessible and standardized following the abolition of monarchy and the communists' seizing power, using a common melody said to be of "folk" origins and profoundly "Romanian". The production of military marches clearly shows how the nationalist ideas and themes of the time were assimilated and pushed.

In her turn, Antigona Rădulescu proposes a brief re-evaluation of Romanian communist musicology. Starting from a case unrelated to the "national agenda", she reviews (the few) Romanian-language musicological sources on Bach prior to 1990 and identifies several supra-themes that ideologically distort the writing on the great composer, from obsessions typical of soviet socialist realism to the glorification, in the terms of the Protochronist doctrine, of the "national specificity".

English version by Maria Monica Bojin