

Musicology Today

Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest

Issue 3 (55) July-September 2023

Title: On Censorship and Other Ways to Control Music (II)

Author: Florinela Popa

E-mail: popa.florinela@unmb.ro

Source: Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest / Volume 14 / Issue 3 (55) / July-September 2023, pp 161-162

Link to this article: musicologytoday.ro/55/MT55editorialPopa.pdf

How to cite this article: Florinela Popa, "On Censorship and Other Ways to Control Music (II)", *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, 14/3 (55) (2023), 161-162.

Published by: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București

Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest is indexed by EBSCO, RILM, ERICH PLUS, and CEEOL

Florinela POPA

On Censorship and Other Ways to Control Music (II)

After a first exploration of the manifestation and effects of censorship in music, with examples from Ireland and Romania, *Musicology Today* brings to the forefront new aspects addressed at the international musicology conference *The Control of Music. Effects and Consequences of the Institution of Censorship on Music Culture and Education in Europe (late 19th century – 1990s)*, held at the National University of Music Bucharest, on October 27-28, 2022, and coordinated by Professor Nicolae Gheorghiuță.

Three of the studies included in this issue question various forms of control over sacred music. In the first of these, Ivan Moody investigates the many facets and implications of censorship on Orthodox church music. After the historical problem of the clash over the centuries between artistic-musical freedom and ecclesiastical rules, the author examines the impact of nationalism on Byzantine music with the emergence of the new nation-states in the Balkans in the 19th century. He then focuses on the incompatibilities between sacred music and communist ideology, which was authoritarily imposed in the 1940s in Eastern European countries of Orthodox tradition, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia (as part of Yugoslavia). He does not avoid Russia either, for which the Soviet era meant the suppression of religious music, followed by an inflation of musical works with sacred texts as a result of the political changes of the 1990s.

Cătălin Cernătescu focuses on a somewhat paradoxical phenomenon manifested in post-war Romania, deeply marked by communism and its related atheism. It is about the flourishing of Byzantine musicology in the 1960s – totally unexpected after the anti-ecclesiastic persecutions of the previous decade – in the context of its alignment with the communist nationalism promoted by the state. The documents from the archive of the Union

of Romanian Composers and Musicologists analyzed by the author illustrate the official encouragement of Byzantine music research, seen then as a proof of “cultural and linguistic continuity, exceptionalism and originality in music creation”. At the same time, the documents under investigation prove the insidious infiltration of ideological manipulation and censorship into the writings of scholars in the field.

Melita Milin traces the dynamics of religious music in socialist Yugoslavia, which, although disconnected from Moscow’s propaganda network in 1948, had an ideological path similar to that of the other Eastern European communist countries. Yugoslavia’s “composite” structure, which brought together ethnic groups of Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim faiths, was all the more reason for political vigilance over sacred music. Given its potential for deepening nationalism, it was treated for decades as a subversive, oppositional force, as the author points out. Milin’s study also exemplifies how censorship acted on religious works, but also efforts to include such music in concert programs despite unfavorable political circumstances.

Another register related to control and censorship in music is covered by Anja Bunzel. Based on an examination of numerous music and art encyclopaedias, she analyzes the inclusion in these sources of female musicians who were active in the context of 19th-century Czech music culture. The author focuses mainly on the criteria and patterns for the selection of female musical personalities, noting, for example, that “there is no single one woman that is included in all encyclopaedias”. In the absence of concrete evidence, Bunzel does not speculate, but neither does she rule out the possibility of “institutional censorship and state-led propaganda for any of the publications”.

In her turn, Karina Şabac gives an overview of an extensive musical archaeology project launched at the National University of Music Bucharest, aiming, broadly speaking, to identify and bring to light – including through CD recordings – some 19th century piano scores. Many of these works were dedicated to or composed under the patronage of the Romanian Royal Family, which explains why they were censored during the communist period. Şabac’s study also documents some aspects of the Romanian music “market” in the 19th century, such as the first pianos and music shops in Bucharest and the publication of musical works in the country and in important European centers (Leipzig, in particular).