

## Music in the Identities of Ethnic Slovaks in Hungary

Lyudmila Nurse<sup>12</sup>  
Oxford XXI

**Music in the Identities of Ethnic Slovaks in Hungary.** The identity of the ethnic Slovak minority of Hungary is the main focus of the analysis in this paper. We have looked into the ways ethnic Slovaks in Hungary express their ethnic identities through music. Our analysis is based on multiple data sources created in the ENRI-EAST project for the study on cultural identities of the ethnic minorities in some Eastern European countries<sup>3</sup>. The data includes some results from the ENRI-VIS quantitative study, though most of the analysis is based on the data from the biographical study<sup>4</sup> and Cultural Identities and Music pilot study<sup>5</sup>. Although music is used in this analysis as a marker of ethnic identity, our approach is based on sociological methods and this paper does not cover musicological analysis of the musical material which was collected during the research.

**Key words:** Identities, music, Slovak, Hungarian, memories, national, ethnic

**Hudba v identite etnických Slovákov v Maďarsku.** Identita etnickej slovenskej menšiny v Maďarsku je ústrednou tézou analýzy tejto štúdie. V rámci článku sa pozrieme na spôsoby, ako Slováci v Maďarsku vyjadrujú svoju etnickú identitu prostredníctvom hudby. Naša analýza je založená na dátových zdrojoch, ktoré boli vytvorené v rámci ENRI-East projektu na štúdium kultúrnych identít etnických menšín v niektorých východo európskych krajinách. Údaje zahŕňajú niektoré výsledky z ENRI-VIS kvantitatívnej štúdie, hoci väčšina analýz je založená na dátach z biografických štúdií. Napriek tomu, že hudba je tu použitá ako element etnickej identity, náš prístup je založený najmä na sociologických metódach a tento príspevok nepokrýva muzikologickú analýzu hudobného material, ktorý bol zozbieraný počas výskumu.

**Kľúčové slová:** identita, hudba, Slováci, Maďari, pamäť, národný, etnický

---

<sup>1</sup> Address: Dr Lyudmila Nurse, Oxford XXI, the Old Coach House, Southern Road, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2ED, England.

<sup>2</sup> Acknowledgement: The author of this paper would like to thank the Hungarian national team for their valuable input in the biographical study field work and an early contribution to the design of the ENRI-music study, which was indispensable to the Cultural Identities and Music study.

<sup>3</sup> ENRI-EAST is an international project "Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities: Nations between states along the new eastern borders of the European Union" part of the EU Seventh Framework Programme. Quantitative survey ENRI-VIS was conducted in 9 Eastern European countries: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

<sup>4</sup> ENRI-East biographical study conducted in all 10 countries along the new EU border with the use of biographical methodology designed for the ethnic minorities in the Eastern European countries.

<sup>5</sup> The 'Cultural Identity and Music' qualitative study was designed to explore cross-generational and cross-cultural links between musical memories and national, ethnic, regional and European identities, their impact on families' life-styles and wellbeing. One of the main features of the methodological approach lies in deploying techniques for evoking people's memories about their favourite music in a combination of methods of quantitative study, qualitative interviews with three generations and focus groups with families about significant biographical aspects of people's lives, types of preferred music and their first musical memories that are associated with different generations' life courses in the ethnic communities along the new EU borders.

Studies into the links between music and ethnic /national identities in Eastern European countries have experienced a steady “renaissance” in the late decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with the geo-political changes experienced by the majority of the Eastern European countries after the fall of Communism. In particular, precise attention has been paid to the (re)construction and formation of identities relating to their nation-states. Although ethnic minorities in Eastern European countries had been affected by similar changes as the majority population, some of them had quite a different experience in the revival/survival of their cultural roots, depending on the historic and geo-political processes in Europe, which led to the formation of certain ethnic minorities in the wake of new border changes (Czekanowska, 1996, p. 95). Most Eastern European countries have histories of long term diasporic communities and/or border changes, and as happens to be the case with the ethnic Slovak minority population, the Slovaks had already lived in Hungary for centuries (see Órkény – Sik, this volume and also Sik, 2010 and Nurse – Sik, 2011) and therefore their relationship with their “new homeland” differs from the new migrants or immigrants in Eastern Europe or elsewhere in Europe. The case of cultural identities of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary is of particular interest to our project because of the patterns of cultural reproduction of this ethnic group and the shape it takes within a broader process of cultural reproduction and identity formation in Hungary after the fall of Communism, in a cultural space that was shared by this minority group with the majority population for several generations. Though in some respect culturally and linguistically, the Slovak culture is closer to the people of its new neighbour, Czech Republic, due to the language similarity and shared common Slavic roots, but there are also many undeniable historically and culturally important links between Slovaks and Hungarians (Hroch, 2003, p. 98).

### ***Music and the revival of ethnic identities in Eastern Europe***

Despite a rising interest in the study of music in the revival of national identities in Eastern European countries, most of the studies predominantly refer to the role and importance of music in the political discourse of new independent states with less attention to the people’s views on music and preferences. Our study primarily addresses music preferences from a bottom-up perspective, which is applied throughout the study.

The collapse of the state socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe created new dynamics in the sphere of music and culture. This very complex issue in terms of past identities, new identities and changing identities in the entire region was addressed in a series of publications. These dealt with the changes in the perception of music as a force for building renewed identities among the newly independent nation-states and their ethnic minorities. On the

one hand, music became more independent from the state, as it had very much been used as a political tool by the socialist governments (Mavra – McNeil, 2007; Andersson, 2007; Stokes, 1994; Levy, 2005; Buchanan, 2006). On the other hand, new waves of identity formation required music as “building blocks” for positioning the new nations in the new constellations of post-national cultures of Europe. Some of these building blocks serve the purpose of “revisiting” a nation’s cultural heritage (Bohlman, 2004); others make a statement about the global music industry – for example the Eurovision song contest, which, apart from sporting events, has been the most viewed event in the Central and Eastern European countries since the collapse of Communism. (Nurse – Sik, 2011, forthcoming)

### *Music preferences*

Though the study of music has always been considered as a specialist area of research by musicologists and ethno-musicologists, or music sociologists, the role of music has been widely analysed in relation to youth cultures and subcultures and also to cultural and social reproduction. For example, music tastes were analysed as an indicator of the relationship between tastes and class in France by Bourdieu in the 1960s (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu’s study of the cultural and educational capital and social origin included questions on the composers of a series of musical works<sup>6,7</sup>

Most music related studies in recent times are largely ethnographical or qualitative. The rise of studies on the relationship between music and nationalism in the countries of Eastern Europe coincided with a growing debate on the global/local role of popular music and cultural identities, transnational sound flows and industries. In a world increasingly dominated by the processes of globalisation, de-territorialisation, transmigration and forms of cultural hybridity, some scholars argue that these processes have somehow sidelined “conceptualisation of the national”. However, other scholars argue that globalisation does not render the nation obsolete and instead ***“the nation... remains a crucial but ambivalent category for understanding how cultural***

---

<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu (1984), *Distinction*, 5. “The interviewer read out a list of sixteen musical works and asked the respondent to name the composer of each. Sixty-seven percent of those with only a CEP or a CAP could not identify more than two composers (out of sixteen works), compared to 45 per cent of those with a BEPC, 19 per cent those with baccalaureate, 17 per cent of those who had gone to a technical college (petite ecole) or started higher education and only 7 per cent of those having a qualification equal or superior to a licence. Whereas none of the manual or clerical workers questioned was capable of naming twelve or more of the composers of the sixteen works, 52 percent of the artistic producers” and the teachers (and 78 percent of the teachers in the higher education) achieved this score.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

*texts and practices function in the construction of personal and collective identities*” (Biddle – Knights, 2007, p. 1). This statement can be supported by the numerous studies on the links between music and the rise of nationalism in some eastern European countries after the collapse of the socialist regimes and re-conceptualisation of national identities (Hudson, 2007; Frolova-Walker, 2004; Mavra – McNeil, 2007; Bolhman, 2004; Andersson, 2007).

In the absence of quantitative and qualitative studies which directly address the issue of the identities of ethnic minorities as they relate to music in Eastern Europe, we have developed our approach based on the theoretical analysis of the existing literature and information which is collected in the Minorities reports of the ENRI-East project, which also comprise the rest of the papers in the present volume (See Órkény and Sik). It is worth saying that most of the studies concerning the use of music in the re-creation of a sense of new national identity in Eastern European countries refer to the majority population or titular nations in those states, therefore leaving the role of music in the (re)creation of new ethnic minority identities largely under-examined.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to look at the ways music preferences of ethnic Slovaks relate to the ethnic minorities’ sense of belonging to the Slovak ethnic/national culture and place.

The design of indicators to measure the role of music in relation to the sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group and its specific “identifiable culture” (Nurse – Sik, 2011) was based on studies of peoples’ experience of music (De Nora, 2000; Bennett, 2005; Frith, 2003; Robertson, 1996) and also on the emotional nature of national identity (Smith, 1991; Guibernau, 2007). As DeNora (2000, p. 153) asserts, music is “vitalizing” – it is “part of the process through which the capacity to articulate and experience feeling is achieved...how it is made real in relation to self and other(s)”. Bearing this in mind, we have approached the analysis of the respondent’s music preferences in terms of proximity to their ethnic identities.

In this paper we shall be looking at the types of music each ethnic Slovak in Hungary associates with in their everyday practices and the ways in which the Slovak cultural heritage is being passed from the older to younger generations of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary. The quantitative study included four questions about people’s music preferences and involvement in music making.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The questions were: A structured/fixed response question: “What music do you most like?” with the following possible answers to choose from: ethnic origin music, country of residence music, music from other countries and no preferences. We have also allowed for people to say if they do not like music or didn’t have an answer. The next was a ranking type question about reasons for liking their favourite music. This was followed by a partially structured question on the genre of the favourite music and lastly a structured/fixed response question about respondent’s participation in musical/singing groups which are related to their ethnic origin.

### *Music choices of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary*

We have examined the respondents' music preferences by defining them according to the origin of the music: related to the ethnic minority, related to the music of the country of their residence, and related to global music, which is neither of Slovak or Hungarian origin. The results from the ENRI-VIS survey show that the Slovaks in Hungary "stood out" in terms of their preferences for the music of the country of residence (host country, Hungary) (See chart 1), which was distinctively different from the Hungarians in Slovakia and the rest of the ethnic minority studies in the ENRI-VIS survey (Nurse – Sik, 2011).

Music from the country of residence, Hungary, is among the strongest preferences among ethnic Slovaks, with the preferences for each type of music – Slovak, Hungarian or global – disaggregated as follows when asked to choose their sole favourite: local (Hungarian)-33%, ethnic origin (Slovak)-21; global -5%.

As to the reasons why people like this music, the ethnic Slovak respondents indicated that the music as such (its melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.), and music providing a means to relax and meditate, were seen as the main factors behind their enjoyment. In addition to these two reasons, Slovaks in Hungary also referred to the importance of music as related to childhood memories. Chart 2 presents reasons for choosing the type of music as their preferred type, which shows clear recognition and appreciation of music for its intrinsic quality, such as melody, harmony and rhythm; almost every fourth respondent (23%) referred to this element. Music as a means for relaxation and mediation was an important reason for another 18% of the ethnic Slovaks. Childhood memories of music are also among the strongest reasons for the choice of music, with a slightly lower percentage of choices determined on account of family memories and socialization. An almost negligible ratio of respondents referred to the fact that it "reminds of my country", but it remains unclear which country the respondents were referring to in this case.

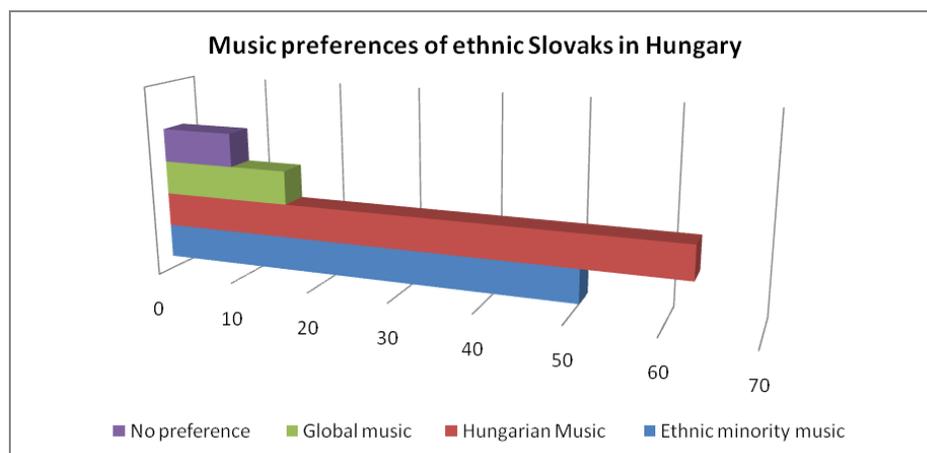
A combination of results suggests that this might be the country of their origin rather than the country of their residence, Hungary.

The choice of genres of music to which their favourite music belongs could be addressed in a special paper because of the complexity of this classification in the modern world of music. Our structured, fixed response answers scale was created by taking into account responses from the open-ended questions part of the Cultural identities and music study, as well as the results from the Song Trees project<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> The Song Trees approach developed by musician and educationalist Dr Chika Robertson for the Song Trees project in 2004 in the south of England, designed to encourage young people to

Chart 1: Music preference of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary (%)



Source: ENRI-VIS, 2009/10

As the results from the ENRI-VIS survey demonstrate, folk music is the clear favourite among Slovaks in Hungary: 63 % of the respondents singled out their favourite music as being folk music. Since we didn't ask respondents to enter a title of their favourite pieces of music, this choice means that it could be either Slovak or Hungarian folk music. 17 % "classified" their favourite music as light music. Overall, ethnic Slovaks in Hungary prefer folk and light music (musicals) significantly more than the other four ethnic minorities, which were part of the survey (Nurse – Sik, 2011).

Statistical results of music preferences by ethnic Slovaks in Hungary only produce a snapshot of the patterns of music choices without providing a deeper insight into the reasoning and "meaning system" behind the choice. The insight into the meaning system behind the choices was addressed in the complementary qualitative studies, which were conducted in Hungary among the ethnic Slovak minority throughout the Cultural Identities and Music study; this study also contained respondents from the ethnic majority population.

Our qualitative biographical interviews<sup>10</sup> were conducted among ethnic Slovaks in Budapest and Tótkomlós. Budapest, as with all capital cities in

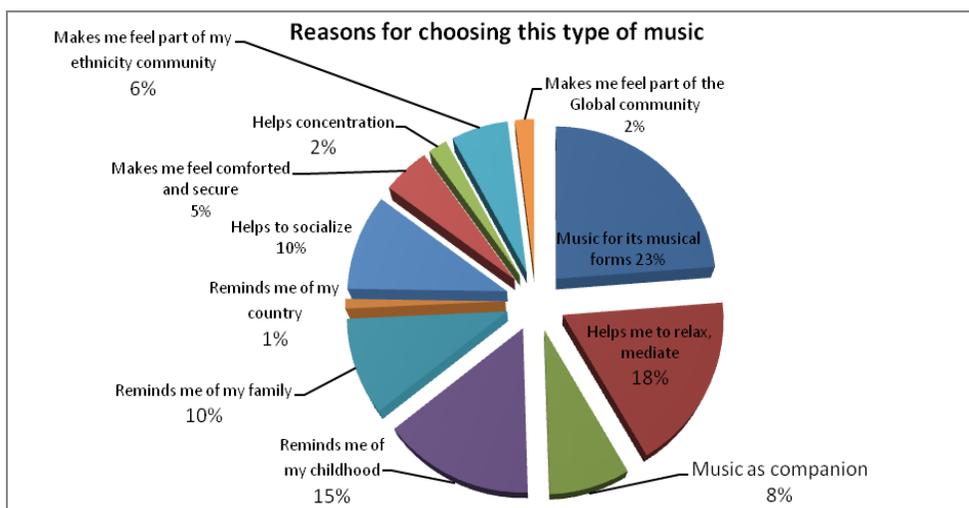
---

interview their parents and grandparents on their early musical memories and to create 3G families' "Song Trees", [www.songtrees.com](http://www.songtrees.com). This project created a virtual list of people's preferred music from their childhood memories to an adult life which was classified into musical genres.

<sup>10</sup> We analysed 12 biographical interviews from Hungary, which were collected in year 2010 by TARKI sociologists. These 12 interviews were taken from 6 female and 6 male respondents who

Europe, is an ethnic “melting pot” and is also a city with a highly regarded reputation for music, both in Europe and globally. Another locality in Hungary where the qualitative study was conducted is the town of Tótkomlós – located in the southeast of Hungary where the ethnic Slovak community had lived for more than 200 years (Sik, 2010; Órkény and Sik, this volume) as a compact ethnic community. Tótkomlós was also a locality where the Cultural Identities and Music study took place, although this study was not conducted in Budapest. Data from both studies is analysed in this paper.

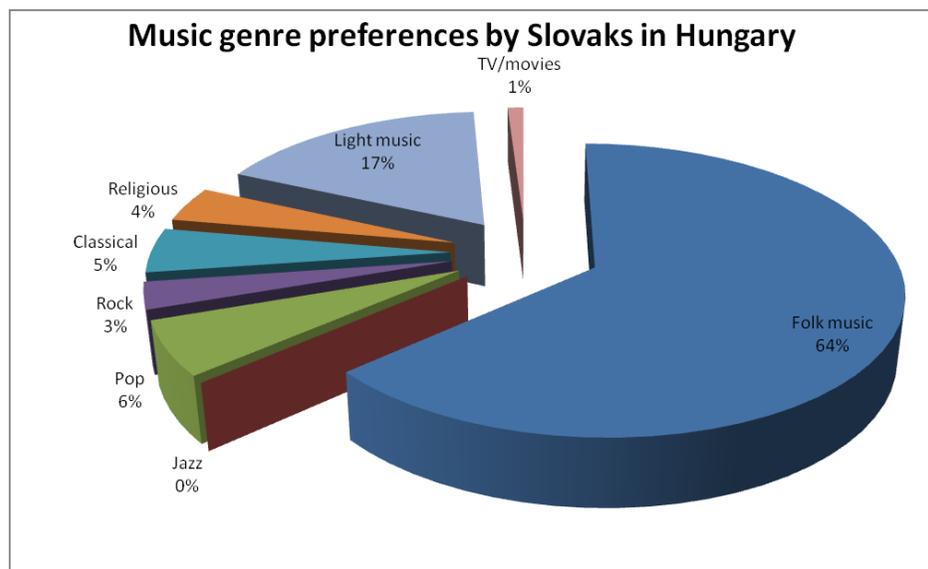
**Chart 2: Reasons for choosing this type of music by ethnic Slovaks in Hungary (%)**



Source: ENRI-VIS, 2009/10

represent different generations of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary, 4 of the biographical interviews were conducted in the town of Tótkomlós and 8 in Budapest.

**Chart 3. Music genre preferences by ethnic Slovaks in Hungary (%)**



Source: ENRI-VIS, 2009/10

### ***First music memories and favourite music by ethnic Slovaks***

The first musical memories of the ethnic Slovaks in Tótkomlós are mostly children’s songs and mostly Hungarian, which is also the case for the local Hungarians in the area. But the place where they first heard this type of music differs significantly: ethnic Slovaks refer to the public places, whereas ethnic Hungarians refer to their families and homes – private places.

The variety of sources of first music in the case of Slovaks is also greater as it includes more media sources – TV/radio and cinema (recorded music) – as compared to the live/sung/played music by parents and grandparents in the Hungarian community case, and also listening to tape recorders/CD/DVD (Nurse – Sik, 2011).

The Slovak families’ influence on the first music memories is reflected in how ethnic Slovaks remember their first experience of “Slovakness” through music and how they describe their ethnic identity:

**Liz<sup>11</sup>, Slovak woman**, (ENRI-Music study, 2009)<sup>12</sup>: “...well the truth is that I am a genuine Slovak and I say Hungarian, I connect to Hungarian, because I

---

<sup>11</sup> All names of the respondents who participated in various qualitative studies have been changed to protect their identity.

learnt and heard Slovak folksongs only in my childhood and never since that. Or anything that is Slovak. But I have to tell you that when I come to Mother's Day celebration to where my grandchildren invite me, they sing in Slovak and that hits me as well because they are very beautiful songs among those that they sing now.... This is nice, but I only hear these once a year and not every day. It would be different if we heard them on the radio or the TV”.

The importance of maintaining a Slovak cultural heritage is expressed by another woman of the same generation when she referred to the Slovak songs: **Ann, Slovak woman**, (ENRI-Music study, 2009), about Slovak songs: “... it is a way of preserving the language and the culture. It is necessary for that..

I was actually engaged in a conversation yesterday with a woman who has lived here for nine years and who is entirely Hungarian, she can't even say a word in Slovak, and she was convinced that she wouldn't ever get to learn it. Anyway, she said that tears come out on her face whenever she watches people singing and dancing in a dance group and she said that she will take her children to the Slovak school too, in order to provide this experience for her children, whom she couldn't experience herself ...”

The first music memories are also strongly presented in the biographical accounts of ethnic Slovaks. Most of the respondents explain their first encounter with Slovak and Hungarian songs through their parents and grandparents and also through their own experience of music making by playing musical instruments in orchestras, singing in choirs, or attending music festivals.

### *Identity through music description*

One of the general observations in our qualitative study: biographical interviews and Cultural Identities and Music study, was that music does, indeed, play a very significant role in local Slovak and Hungarian peoples' lives, their families and communities. The most striking observation is how much experience our respondents had in terms of active involvement in music, by playing musical instruments, singing in choirs, accompanying choral singing, and dancing. This active participation in music making and music-related activities could be one of the reasons why so-called musical questions do not present any difficulty to the respondents. The only difficulty seems to be in describing what genre or aspect of music they like the most. Since the size of this publication doesn't allow us to look at the full variety of the music-identity relationship identified in the ENRI-East study, we shall focus our analysis on

---

<sup>12</sup> All quotations used in the text are translations from the original Hungarian/ Slovak languages. The translations were made by the Hungarian national team and no further changes have been made.

the results of the qualitative survey, which was aimed at identifying peoples' music preferences and the reasons behind them. Biographical accounts of the ethnic Slovaks in Hungary will reveal more clearly what people had in mind when stating their music preferences and how these choices corresponded to their sense of ethnic group belonging.

Folk music comes out as a favourite music genre by the ethnic Slovaks in Hungary (See Chart 3). Symbolism of folk music as rooted in the quality of the land and reflecting upon the national character of people was addressed in numerous studies on the revival of folk music in the West (Collins, 2007; Brend, 2007; Stokes, 1994) and in Eastern European countries (Bohlman, 2004; Mavra – O'Neil, 2007; Buchanan, 2006; Czekanowska, 1996).

Most symptomatic of this revival was not only the use of traditional tunes, which have been arranged for modern pop and rock musical instruments according to modern musical forms, but most importantly re-engaging new folk music in the process of the re-formation of new national identities (Andersson, 2007; Bolhman, 2004, 2011; Czekanowska, 1996; Slobin, 1994 ). This process did not escape Hungary, where the revival of folk music in fact went through several stages (Frigyesi, 1996; Lange, 1996).

Therefore, we approached analysis of the biographical interviews and of the special musical survey in Tótkomlós with this process in mind. In the quantitative survey questionnaire, the type of folk music was not specified, but this was revealed in the interviews. Folk music in general, and folk music of Hungarian origin, seems to be among the preferred music to which ethnic Slovaks refer in their choice of favourite music (See Charts 1 and 3). We have looked at this aspect in relation to respondents who identified themselves in broader terms as:

- Hungarian with Slovak ancestry
- Slovaks who live in Hungary

People relate to folk music in various ways, with some relating it to their childhood memories. Most of the Slovak folk music-related practices are also referred to as something they did in the past: during their school days and even at the kindergarten. By contrast, some respondents refer to the experiences with Slovak music as being connected to their parents and grandparents – their families. One of the striking observations here is the ease with which people talked about folksongs which are from the Hungarian and Slovak culture/language. The bilingualism is a part of our respondents' everyday life of musical practices: from passive to active consumption of music. For example, from listening to one's grandmother singing in both languages, radio programmes in both languages, and listening to modern music, where tunes are in both Hungarian and Slovak languages.

*Peter, a retired Hungarian man of Slovak origin,*<sup>13</sup>

Q: And do you often listen to Slovak folk music?

R:” I did it before, but I don't do it often. I often play with the (*he gives the name of it*) orchestra, mostly I lecture and they play Slovak music as well and every kind of folk music. So I know it from a bit closer because of this and I have some records, but it wasn't part of my education and not even my daily life”.

*Szandra, a Hungarian woman of Slovak origin, is describing her experience with Slovak folk music as an orchestral musician and a folk dancer:*

“I was a member of the orchestra, I am a folk dancer too because of the Slovak school and that community remains for me forever. I can go back whenever I want to. We just talked about it recently that there was a big festival last year; they called me back, because I am not in the orchestra as an active member for almost six years but if they call me anywhere, I am going to sit and go with them with pleasure...“...so we grew up in a complete Hungarian environment. The thing that we learnt songs from my grandmother and the fact that we went to the Slovak school. But no, basically no. I don't feel Slovak...”

Q: And you listen more to Hungarian or Slovak music?

A: “...Well, rather Hungarian. The orchestra, not the symphony,... the brass bands are Slovaks as well. These polkas that we played and many marches. Well, I like these as well. These are Slovaks. Adam<sup>14</sup> and whoever wrote them with the trumpet, it's very good as well. This is polka-kind as well. I like these as well, we listen to these, because if we have the CD from the orchestra, then we listen to it. So I don't say that I don't listen to Slovak music at all. Last time there was something at the Slovak house, a program and we went there with [*Name*] and the students from the Slovak school were singing and the tape recorder accompanied them. And these were Slovak songs as well. They were very cute, these are children's songs as well, but I don't know them, but my daughter loved it. She danced. So I don't really know what is a Slovak music, because as I said we don't really listen to Slovak music...”

*Kassai, a Slovak young man*

Q: What kind of folk music? Hungarian or Slovak?

A: “Rather Hungarian...but then, Slovak too, as well as Hungarian. The standard, that everyone knows. I am not a big expert.”

---

<sup>13</sup> As with the previous excerpts, all quotations used in the text are translations from the original Hungarian/ Slovak languages. The translations were made by the Hungarian national team and no further changes have been made. All data in this section is part of the ENRI-BIOG 2010-2011 study.

<sup>14</sup> Possibly a reference to Adam Barthalt's polka music. Adam Barthalt is an American musician and performer, founder of the Adam Barthalt Polka Bands.

*Jánosné, a Slovak woman*

Q: And Slovak or Hungarian?

A: "Now, I can't even tell you Slovak... No, there are some... we studied some Slovak in the kindergarten as well, there was already Slovak education, but it was optional, not everybody studied it. Now everybody, all the children studies Slovak in the kindergarten in Komlós. So it was mixed. Mostly Hungarian, but there were some Slovak songs".

*László, a Slovak young man,*

"...Well... I also dance folk dances, and due to dancing I also travel to Slovakia, we have performances there.

Q: According to this, you don't learn exclusively Slovak dances there, do you?

A: No. We learn other dances as well. Now, we've learnt Slovak ones only, but here, in Tótkomlós we learn "Komlós"-dances, the old ones which were danced in those times when our ancestors moved down here. We also dance well, so Hungarian dances, but usually Slovak ones.

Q: And did you go to another kindergarten, to a Hungarian one?

A: Well, after all, Slovak is taught in every kindergarten. Little rhymes and songs are taught everywhere, to a certain extent, and sometimes there's an opportunity to talk as well, but of course it's not as serious as it is at school, it is just a little preparation to find out whoever likes it, and if someone might go to the Slovak school.

Q: Were there Slovak pieces among them?

A: Yes, of course. There were several Slovak dances, and there were polkas as well which we danced...danced... I mean, we played (*them*).

*Erdei Ferencné, a retired Slovak woman*

*(The conversation is about this lady's experience of folk songs as she learnt them by while listening to her grandmother singing)*

Q: "Both Slovak and Hungarian?"

A: Both of them, yes. Well, the Hungarian we learnt at school, and the Slovaks, I learnt from my grandma. Because I went to a Hungarian school, I couldn't participate in Slovak folk dances, but the girls went to the Slovak school, and they learnt both there. And the grandchildren as well, both the Hungarian and the Slovak folk dances, so they learnt everything. So, this is our life story.

Q: What is the first song you remember? What is your first memory?

A: In my childhood? "Kis kút, kerekes kút van az udvarunkba. /De szép barna kislány van az szomszédunkba. /Csalfa szememet rá se merem vetni. /Fiatal az édesanyám, azt is kell szeretni." This was in my childhood, the Hungarian one. And the Slovak one, "Anička, dušička" – because both my mother and my grandmother was called Anna – "kde si bola (she continues in Slovak).

A: Anna, that's right, and both my mother and my grandma were called Anna, my daughter as well (laughing). So, these were the first little songs, and then there were the balls, and there were more serious Hungarian songs, and Slovak songs for dancing, but the Slovak ones for dancing were not...they were rather the Hungarian songs for dancing, which were already on TV as well, and the girls also, and we got used to them, because we didn't know such Slovak songs. Because that genre was not used here, but the Hungarian ones, instead.

Q: Did I understand right, that your first memory is a Hungarian song?

A: Well, for me, it's all the same after all. As for the song, it is the Slovak one first, because, when I went to school, I didn't know a single word in Hungarian, when I was in the first class

We used to take part in the traditional Slovak wedding dances, when the bride wore black clothes. And we also used to dance in other villages in the surroundings, like in Bánhegyes..."

*Eszter, Slovak woman, lives in Hungary*

Q: "... Slovak or Hungarian folk music?

A: It doesn't matter. At random. Whatever I have heard, learnt, or know. Whatever comes into my mind".

*Forgács, a retired Slovak man*

A: "And of course I try to listen to our own programme, the Slovak programme, which is two hours every evening. It has music as well. But sometimes I like the music, it relaxes me... the programmes on MR4, these are the minority programmes (*he means ethnic minority*) from the morning every two hours. For example the Croatian music, the Balkan music. But I like the German as well, it's close to me, it got through the Czechs to the Slovaks, the polkas have tradition... So... Nowadays I started to listen to the Hungarian songs if I am in Szeged, people are getting totally stupid (laughing), but I have CDs in the car, my son's Metallica and all the kind of music.

Q: And do you listen to Slovak music?

A: Yes, sometimes. I usually buy Slovak CDs in Slovakia, mostly pop music and I listen to them".

*István, Slovak man*

A: "... Upon a pine of nostalgia, we recorded a CD – better to say, a cassette around that time – for us, and we used to strive for consequence in bilingualism throughout the whole period. All numbers had both a Hungarian and a Slovak version, generally. We were recorded in the radio studio of Szeged in 1988, before the system changing. Our Slovak program was recorded there for which I still assure responsibility, both for the lyrics and for the music

Q: Do you remember what you liked listening to in your childhood?

A: Yes. I was mad about all the big Hungarian rock bands. I was a fan of the Piramis, the P. mobil, the Beatrice, and of Hobo. We were regular visitors of the Youth Park of Lőrinc, where there was Hobo on stage on one week, and Beatrice on the other. Everything that was hard...I was there on the very first party of the Korál, in the Youth Park several times a week. When there was rock music there, I participated. I've grown up on that music, basically, on this Hungarian melodious rock and everything that was harder than that...towards punk..."

### ***Emotional response to music***

Emotional responses to music evoke deeper insights into what it means to the respondents, stretching from very personal emotional feelings about Slovak and Hungarian music (which people very often find difficult to choose a favourite between) to music of different origins – European and global music. The respondents mostly described their feelings when they listen to music as positive and touching, but these feelings were not confined only to the Hungarian or/and Slovak music or folk music. This corresponds with the finding of the quantitative study that music *per se* is very much appreciated among the Slovak ethnic minority in Hungary:

*Peter, a Hungarian man:*

Q: And what kind of feelings do you have when you listen to music?

R: "Good. Good feelings. As I said I like folk music and the new way of playing folk music as well and of course many other things as well. I like urban music too, music that they play in coffee houses, old and new music as well. But from the new covers of the folk music I like very much all nations' music. I don't feel closer to the Slovak music than to a southern Slavic or even to Romanian or this Turkish-Romanian, but it doesn't matter. Even if it's European, Western European... I like other music as well."

*Szandra, a Hungarian woman:*

Q: When you play these Hungarian or Slovak or any kind of folk songs. Do you feel any...?

A: "No, not really..." and then she clarifies her response:

A:...But the music doesn't give me identity. I don't feel myself more Hungarian or when I play German plays (*pieces*) I don't feel myself more German. No."

*Jánosné, a Slovak woman*

Q: And which music touches/gets you more? The Hungarian or the Slovak? If we talk about folk music.

A: "If it's folk music... Well, I don't know. To tell you honestly that I can't decide. I like both.

Q: Both?

A: Yes, both. I like the Slovak folk dance, I like both...

Q: But Hungarian or any kind?

A: Every kind, of course. But mostly German. So mostly foreign. There are a few Slovak only. A few only. Not too many. The orchestra usually plays from Slovak composers as well, for example polkas and different plays, but what are in these scores, that they are studying from, there are a few only.

Q: And if you had to choose among folk music would you rather choose Hungarian or Slovak music?

A: I don't know. I don't really know. I like the Slovak folk music, there are nice folk songs and the children are singing a lot these songs but besides that I know more and better the Hungarian”.

If any piece of music could have shown strong national connections, then the national anthem is *the one*. National anthems came up as strong favourites in the choice of favourite music in the Cultural Identities and Music study conducted in Tótkomlós; however, there were also a lot of references to the national anthems in the biographical interviews. One of the significant observations made by our team during the Cultural Identities and Music study and analysis of the biographical narratives is the extent to which the quality of music is appreciated by the respondents:

*Jánosné, a Slovak woman*

Q: And which anthem touches you more if you hear them?

A: “... Well, they are totally different. So the Slovak is much more rhythmical, it's more like a march. And the Hungarian, is... it's very rare that it has a very slow anthem and that's why I like both. Here on (*national*) holidays we have both. And both are important for me. I can't tell. Obviously, if I had to put them in an order, the Hungarian would be the first, I think this is how it's normal, but I like to listen to both.”

*Szandra, Hungarian woman of Slovak origin,*

Q: ... I wanted to ask which national anthem makes your heart beating stronger. The Hungarian?

A: “(speaking and laughing) The Hungarian. I know the Slovak as well; I could even sing it, but not now, because we played it with the orchestra many times, but... The Slovak anthem is beautiful as well, but the Hungarian. And I like very much also the Transylvanian anthem. I am not too much for Transylvania and I'm not the kind who wants to put together the whole Hungary, but I like it very much. We've been to a wedding at the neighbour's, they played the Transylvanian anthem and it's so beautiful. They were singing it so..., it was very touching. It was very beautiful. And I understand it. I know what the

Slovak anthem is about, because we learnt it, but it's different when it's in your own native language, even if it wasn't the Hungarian, but the Transylvanian. It was beautiful. The Hungarian, of course. I am Hungarian...

But there were some comments about the relationship between identity and music which emphasise the importance of music itself and the ability "to play it beautifully. The feeling that music gives you..."

### ***Conclusion***

In our pilot study we tried to establish empirically preferences for certain type of music by people who self-identified themselves as ethnic Slovaks in Hungary and Hungarians of Slovak ethnic origin and to find whether these preferences are linked to the culture of their ethnic origin. It is challenging to establish such a link because of the ways people express and "self-identify" their identity in terms of their formal citizenship and cultural/ethnic origin. Also important is the melodic nature of music itself, which appeals to people's emotions and very often could not be expressed in plain language.

It is clear that in a single sociological study, which mostly included ethnic Slovaks, we cannot separate the factors which contribute to the formation of ethnic identity of ethnic minorities as compared to the ethnic identities of the ethnic majority of the people in Hungary, who for generations have lived next to each other and are in broader terms exposed to similar influences that arise from education, media, joint community practices and overall global influences. The case of the Slovak community in Hungary clearly describes this. In ethno-musicological studies in this area, Philip Bohlman describes the phenomenon of "mixed and remixed" repertoires of folk music, as a result of "the extensive musical exchange between cultural groups" (Bohlman, 2004, p. 211). If small villages and small towns have very often two or more names why should favourite tunes not have two lyrics in different languages? Some of the tunes our respondents seemed to be familiar with were from their young years, which they learnt at school or in their own families, or heard from the radio or music festivals; these are of shared by both the Slovak and Hungarians communities' members.

Ethnic Slovaks in Hungary generally preferred Hungarian music which is also connected with the fact that the Slovaks learn and speak Hungarian language and are also exposed to the Hungarian media programmes. But it would wrong to assume that the place of the Slovak music has diminished in the lives of ethnic Slovaks in Hungary. It is very prominent in the respondents' memories as associated with their childhood and youth, with their families and Slovak schools, with Slovak folk dance culture and also their strong preferences for good quality music. The schoolchildren from the study

expressed interest in local Hungarian and global music, with an emphasis on music with “good tunes”.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andersson, M. 2007. *Singing as a cultural identity*. In European culture and European Journalism.
- Biddle, I. – Knights, V. 2007. *National Popular Musics: Betwixt and Beyond the Local and Global*. In Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location, ed. I. Biddle and V. Knights, Ashgate p. 1-15.
- Bolhman, P. V. 2004. *The Music of European Nationalism. Cultural identity and Modern History*. ABC-CLIO World Music series.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984, 2010. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge Classics. London and New York.
- Brend, M. 2007. *The Folk Revivals*. In *The Folk Handbook. Working with songs from the English tradition*, 2007. Buckbeat Books, NY: USA.
- Buchanan, D. 2006. *Performing Democracy. Bulgarian music and musicians in transition*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Collins, S. 2007. *Foreword, The Folk Handbook. Working with songs from the English tradition*. Buckbeat Books, NY: USA.
- Czekanowska, A. 1996. *Continuity and change in Eastern and Central European Traditional Music*. In Slobin, M., (Ed) (1996) *Retuning Culture. Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp 92-98.
- DeNora, T. 2000. *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frigyesi, J. 1996. The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement. In Slobin, M. Editor (1996) *Retuning Culture. Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp54-75.
- Frith, S. 2003. *Music and everyday life*. In: *The Cultural study of music. A critical introduction*/edited by M. Clayton, T. Herbert, R. Middleton. London, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Books, p. 92-101
- Frolova-Walker, M. 2004. *Music of the soul*. In National Identity in Russian culture, ed. S. Franlin and E. Widdis, Cambridge University Press, p. 116-131.
- Guibernau, M. 2007 *The Identity of Nations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hroch, M. 2003. *Social Precondition of National Revival in Europe. A comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hudson, R. 2007. *Popular music, tradition and Serbian nationalism*. In Music, National identity and the Politics of Location, ed. I. Biddle and V. Knights, Ashgate p. 161-178.
- Lange, B. R. 1996. *Lakodalmas Rock and the Rejection of Popular Culture in Post-Socialist Hungary*. In Slobin, M., (Ed) (1996) *Retuning Culture. Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 76-91.
- Levy, C. 2005. *Who is the ‘other’ in the Balkans? Local ethnic music as a different source of identities in Bulgaria*. In: Whitely, Bennett and Hawkins (eds) *Music*,

- Space and Place. Popular music and cultural identity.*-(Ashgate popular and folk music series), Aldershot: Ashgate
- Mavra, M. – McNeil, L. 2007. *Identity formation and music. A case study of Croatian experience.* In *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-knowledge*, V, and 2 Spring 2007, 1-20.
- Nurse, L., Sik, E. 2011. "Cultural Identities and Music: identity of place and cultural identities of generations. Hungarian 3G case study" in (2011, forthcoming) Axford and Higgins, (eds) "*The Globalization of Culture and the Culture of Globalization*", Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Nurse, L. – Sik, E. 2011. *Identities and Music, ENRI-EAST tender paper, manuscript.*
- Robertson, P. 1996, *Music and the Mind*, London: Channel 4 Television
- Sik, E. 2010. Minorities report, ENRI-EAST Working paper.
- Slobin, M. (Ed.) 1996. *Retuning Culture. Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Smith, A. 1991. *National Identity*, A Penguin Book. Politics. Current Affairs, 1991
- Stokes, M. 1994. Ed. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music. The musical construction of place.* Berg. Oxford/New York.

**Dr Lyudmila Nurse** is Co-Founder and Director of Oxford XXI and leader of the Cultural Identities and Music study in the ENRI-EAST project. She was a senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences until 1996. She worked in the longitudinal project "Paths of generations" in 1982 – 1992 and later in biographical studies analysing dynamics of generational changes in social and cultural reproduction in post communist societies. She has since been also involved in the international monitoring, evaluation and social and cultural development consultancy projects for the World Bank, DfID, national and local governments including contribution to the UN World Youth report in 2004, and also to the Council of Europe's International review of National youth policies process in Romania and Lithuania. Since 2008 Lyudmila is an observer to the European Cultural Parliament. She is also a scientific advisor to the Music Mind Spirit Trust, UK in collaboration with which she developed methodology for empirical inter-generational study in identities and music.

Dr Lyudmila Nurse  
 Oxford XXI  
 The Old Coach House  
 Southern Road  
 Thame  
 Oxfordshire OX9 2ED  
 England  
 e-mail: lyudmilanurse@oxford-xxi.org  
 Tel: +44 1844 218836