

**‘Folk Belongs to the People’:  
Exploring Balkan Music in Sydney, Australia**

**Sophia A. Harris**

Bachelor of Visual Arts (Media Arts)

Bachelor of Arts (Anthropology)

Department of Anthropology

Macquarie University

Sydney, Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Research

Supervised by Dr Banu Şenay

21<sup>st</sup> January 2019

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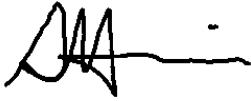
## **Abstract**

Australia's world music scene incorporates a great variety of music-making practices and performers, a growing subset of whom identify themselves and their musics with Southeast Europe and the Balkans. This music scene brings together diverse migrant and musical communities, performing regularly at both public and private venues in Sydney. Given the turbulent socio-political history of Southeast Europe and the ethnic tensions that have accompanied waves of migration from the region during the 20th century, my research investigates what role music, and this burgeoning music scene, might play in the social lives and relations between these diasporic groups in Sydney. How are memories of homeland(s) made present through musical performance? Can music enhance social cohesion and collective identification among disparate migrant communities? And if so, how are issues of cultural ownership, authenticity and hybridity negotiated in the multicultural space of the world music scene?

My research draws on participant observation and semi-structured interviews to explore the social spaces of music performance, as well as online and radio marketing materials which reveal the discourses surrounding music production. While previous inquiry critiques categories of 'world music' and questions the so-called 'Balkan craze' as a space for genuine cross-cultural exchange, my research suggests at the ways in which organisers and performers adeptly draw on and play with identity categories (such as 'Balkan') to generate shared emotional experiences, foster social cohesion and promote intercultural musical engagement in Australia.

## Statement of Authorship

This is to certify that the following thesis is all my own work, except where acknowledgement has been made to the work or ideas of others. It has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:  .....

Sophia A. Harris

## **Human Research Ethics Approval Number**

Ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Ms Sophia Harris under the supervision of Dr Banu Şenay by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Reference Number: 5201700906

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to the musicians, performers and enthusiasts who generously shared their experiences, insights and artistic passions with me.

I also thank Professor Michael D. Jackson for his mentorship, guidance and enthusiasm during the early stages of this project. My heartfelt gratitude also to my supervisor Dr Banu Şenay, whose feedback, patience and support has been invaluable to this project.

Many thanks to my fellow MRes students, the anthropology super cohort, for being the finest group of friends I could share in this journey with.

To my family and friends who have always been there with words of encouragement; in particular I am indebted to Sara Thompson and Alice Davey for providing brilliant company, willing ears, and needed diversions.

And to my dearest partner Wyatt Moss-Wellington, for tirelessly supporting me through what has been one hell of a year, all my love.

## **Introduction: Music, Emotion & Memory in Diaspora**

My initial interest in exploring Balkan music in Sydney came from a series of observations I made at musical performances. A regular attendee at ‘world music’ venues around the city, I was particularly drawn to Balkan music events for their lively atmosphere and danceable rhythms, becoming a dedicated follower of some of Sydney’s preeminent Balkan bands. But I was continually struck by the emotional intensity these performances seem to hold for other regular attendees. I would often find myself surrounded by groups of emotional revellers who seemed to know the lyrics to every song, which they would sing together with a sense of nostalgic longing. During the faster songs people would grab the hands of those around them and form spontaneous dance circles, squeezing in between tables and chairs to dance in unison the steps they had obviously danced many times before. These emotionally charged performances, and the responses they elicited in their audience, led me to wonder: what were people experiencing as they sang along and danced to this music? What feelings, thoughts, memories of people or places was this musical experience conjuring up? What role does music play in bringing this group of people together, in fostering social cohesion, in constructing social spaces and culturally familiar experiences?

It is often casually suggested that music provides a ‘universal language’ that can connect people across different linguistic, cultural and ethnic boundaries. Numerous philanthropic projects have attempted to capitalise on music’s potential to foster connection between people in the face of ongoing political, religious and ethnic tensions, such as the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra founded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim, which unites Israeli and Palestinian musicians as one ensemble, or the Musicians Without Borders organisation, which aims to harness “the power of music to bridge divides, connect communities, and heal the wounds of war”, with projects in Kosovo, Palestine, Rwanda, Northern Ireland and elsewhere (Musicians Without Borders, n.d.). The UN recognises the peace-building capabilities of music by routinely appointing musicians as Goodwill Ambassadors (‘Artists for Peace’), and music promotion has been a key tactic for many non-profit organisations working in conflict transformation (e.g., Min-On Concert Association). Assumptions about music’s universal appeal and its innate ability to unite people in the face of difference has contributed to a long history of efforts harnessing music to overcome boundaries and connect people. But to what extent, and



under what circumstances, does music facilitate social contact, understanding and cohesion, and when does it work to do the opposite and entrench notions of difference? Can we take it as given that music unites, or can it equally be used to exclude?

A growing body of research suggests that music has important potential for facilitating cultural understanding (Clarke, DeNora, & Vuoskoski, 2015), in that it can afford insight into other subjectivities and foster empathic connection. Theories concerning music's connective power originate in a diverse and disconnected range of disciplinary channels – from neuropsychological research on music and mirror neurons (Molnar-Szakacs & Overy, 2006), to studies of affect in ethnomusicology (Clayton, Sager, & Will, 2005), anthropological interest in the role of music in large-scale social movements (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998), and its implications for identity on an individual and collective level (Frith, 1996; Lidskog, 2016). Throughout these literatures, the case has been made in various ways for music as a uniquely emotional, connective and social phenomena that has the potential to bring people closer together and foster understanding across difference. Before introducing my own research into diasporic and intercultural music-making practices in Australia, it is necessary to survey and consolidate some key ideas about the relationship between music and emotion, identity and memory as they have been explored in several parallel fields of research. Together these themes speak to the way in which music and music performance serve as an active and constitutive force in social worlds, and provide an artistic channel through which the social might be acted upon and transformed.

## **Music, Emotion & Empathy**

Research from across the psychological literature suggests several mechanisms undergirding music's potential to enhance group affiliation. Findings from Tarr, Launay, and Dunbar (2014) suggest that for musicians, the synchronisation and coordinated effort involved in musical performance releases neurohormones associated with social cohesion and bonding. Similarly for dancing and music listening, sharing an intention to coordinate with others (Reddish, Fischer, & Bulbulia, 2013), predicting others' movements (Sebanz & Knoblich, 2009), shared attention to music (Wolf, Launay, & Dunbar, 2016), and attaining temporal synchrony (Hove & Risen, 2009) have all been shown to enhance emotional and social engagement with others, and even promote altruistic and compassionate behaviour (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2011). Moreover, music provides a powerful means of choreographing one's own emotional experiences, by selecting particular music to feel calm

or to cheer oneself up. Music also provides a tool to orchestrate or synchronise with the emotions of others, not only during shared listening and live musical performance, but also for its countless applications to manipulate mood in public spaces, media and advertising (see Frith, 2003).

During live performance and group listening, music allows large numbers of people to participate in “collective, synchronised embodied engagement” (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 21) that encourages both physical and emotional entrainment (Clayton et al., 2005). These qualities have seen music play a central role in many socially coordinated activities – such as work, worship and celebration – as it creates an environment for shared experience and helps to cue and coordinate group action<sup>1</sup>. As a cultural and artistic product, music can be considered uniquely “widespread, emotionally and physically engaging, social, participatory and fluidly communicative” (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 22), producing incredibly versatile experiences for its cognitive and emotional complexity, range of activities (composing, singing, playing an instrument, listening, dancing, etc.), types of engagement (listening alone vs. crowded festivals), relationship to movement and physicality, and its storytelling and narrative potential. Musicking<sup>2</sup>, in its countless iterations, is a space in which performers and audiences engage with real, simulated and imagined subjectivities of others.

But while music can work to foster empathy by connecting us with others, it is by no means an unmitigated ‘good’, and can equally be used to generate feelings of animosity, or to draw boundaries which exclude and divide (Bergh, 2011; Laurence, 2008). Kent (2008), for example, highlights how music can be effectively harnessed to incite hateful, nationalistic, racist and violent sentiments which foster fellowship among some at the expense of those excluded or victimised. Moreover, tensions around cultural ownership, authenticity and difference are often channelled through music. For example Adela Peeva’s (2003) film *Whose is this Song?* underscores how the debated origins of a melody found across the Southeast Europe can add fuel to the fires of nationalism, and crystallise notions of ethnic difference which persist despite so much shared musical tradition. Music’s constructive and mitigating role in identity formation and group delineation means that music not only unites, but in doing so, may also serve to “reinforce defensive and even aggressive forms of identity” (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 85) which diminish openness and empathy to those outside of its reach. If music can equally engender animosity and

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<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Krueger (2016) suggests that music can ease demands on our cognitive processes as we routinely ‘offload’ some of our thinking onto our environment by using music to cue and coordinate behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> After Small (1998), I use the term ‘musicking’ to refer to the multitude of practices involved in musical composition, production, performance and consumption across private and public spheres.

entrench notions of difference, the question arises: under what circumstances is music able to foster openness and generosity towards others, and what are its limiting conditions?

## **Music & Identity**

Musical taste and listening practices can reveal (and be used to project) much about individual and collective identity, intimating where (and when) we come from, our cultural and linguistic inheritances, or our political views and interests. As DeNora points out, even ‘private’ music listening has important social implications in that it structures individual identity formation and signals group affiliation, and as such can be considered “part and parcel of the cultural constitution of subjectivity, part of how individuals are involved in constituting themselves as social agents” (2000, pp. 47-48). On the collective level, musicking involves the “co-production and consumption of cultural artefacts, specific social norms and group practices” (Lill & Dieckmann, 2013, p. 118) which background and shape social imaginaries. Musical practices are not static but characterised by flows of ideas, symbols and people, and are influenced by global markets and by the political projects of state institutions – they contain at once a range of social meanings and operate from the individual to the global level (Lidskog, 2016). Individuals can connect, engage and identify with different social imaginaries through music; ‘stepping into’, exploring and performing various identities in different musicking environments.

Music can be used to draw social boundaries as well as transgress them, to demarcate a social group (real or imagined), to shape and perform identities, or to contest and form new ones. As Lidskog concludes, “music provides an opportunity for the expression of identity, and it can facilitate the reproduction and transformation of established social identities” (2016, p. 3). The rise of the internet, transnational markets, mass migration and multicultural settings have contributed to an explosion of new and hybridised forms and identities, as musical worlds increasingly come into contact with one another. In such contexts, not only does music facilitate social interaction and maintain group identity, it can also “cross boundaries between social identities” and work to shape new ones (Lidskog, 2016, p. 2; Stokes, 1994), affecting how different groups of people interact with and relate to one another. The relationship between music and identity has long been of interest to ethnomusicologists and anthropologists studying music-making practices in diaspora. In this thesis I am interested in the ways in which identities are mapped onto musical practices, and the transformative efficacy provided by music to shift

and challenge identity boundaries. How do musical forms correspond with ethnic, cultural or national identity categories, and how are the destinies of musical traditions and identities linked in transnational settings?

### **Musicking in Diaspora**

At its heart, ‘diaspora’ describes a triadic relationship between a group of people or community, their host country, and a homeland from which they are displaced. Scholarship on diaspora has used the term variably to describe social structures, types of collective consciousness, and modes of cultural production (Vertovec, 1997), and members of diaspora engage with the homeland and conceptualise cultural identity in different ways and to varying degrees. But fundamental to diasporic consciousness are processes of identity negotiation between individuals, communities, nations, and places, and an awareness of being part of a transnational network that includes dispersed people retaining an interest in their ancestral homeland and its cultural distinctiveness. Thus, diaspora “is a social construct founded on feelings, consciousness, memory, and mythology, one that narrates and gives meaning to a particular group identity” (Lidskog, 2016, p. 4). Scholars of diasporic studies have suggested that maintaining connection to the homeland (through cultural artefacts, language, news, media, music, etc.) can strengthen identity and cohesion within diasporic communities (Erol, 2012) and contribute to a shared diasporic consciousness among members of a particular transnational group (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Boura, 2006). Strong collective identity within these communities does not necessarily entail isolation or antagonism towards other groups, rather the process of fostering a sense of collective identity is essential to orienting oneself within broader society and to making-home one’s host country (Hage, 1997). Access to cultural artefacts, knowledge, rituals, music, and so on, serve as resources for the ongoing (re)construction and (re)negotiation of diasporic identities. Musicking, with its implications for identity formation and social cohesion, is a central component of diasporic consciousness and maintains a dialogic relationship between dispersed peoples and their ancestral homeland (Boura, 2006; Klein, 2005).

Because of transnational flows, interactions between homeland and diasporic cultural production, and continual exchange across and between musical traditions, music does not merely ‘spread’ or travel from one place to another, but as both an aesthetic and social force it leaves an imprint in its wake which can influence, destabilise, shift and

develop cultural practices and identities. Rather than preserving fixed practices or mapping neatly onto bounded 'societies', music in diasporic settings tends to become hybridised, to transform and absorb new elements, and to reflect the new experiences of diasporic displacement, loss and longing (Baily & Collyer, 2006). People use music to renegotiate established identities and belongings, and to question and transmit shifting or hyphenated identities. Further, the same musical 'genre' may hold various meanings in different contexts (Lidskog, 2016). For example, the timing or type of migration will affect what musical practices become valorised in diaspora, and different generations of migrants will relate to music from their homeland in different ways and to varying degrees (Chapman, 2005; Klein, 2005). The study of music in diaspora can illuminate the complex and often haphazard way in which musical forms migrate alongside populations, but also how identities and meanings tied up with musical tradition are transmuted in new contexts.

## **Music & Memory**

As much as music shapes narratives around culture and identity, it also keeps alive the 'cultural memory' of homeland through the transmission of cultural knowledge, narratives and experiences across generations (Ramnarine, 2007). Music, and the styles, histories, and stories that it contains, transmits notions of the past into the future, engaging memory in the individual, collective and cultural sense. Cultural memory (that which is distanced from the everyday, such as origin myths), enables us "to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level" (Assmann, 2008, p. 109). Musical traditions, canonised repertoires and ritualised uses of song all form part of cultural memory, and serve as a vehicle for the transmission or 'passing on' of cultural narratives and knowledge across distances and generations (Aydin, 2016). Klein's (2005) research within the Maltese-Australian community highlights how music is seen as fundamental in transferring knowledge from first to second and third generation migrants whose diasporic identity is built around their parents' or grandparents', rather than their own, experiences of homeland. In her research on 'Ghana' folk music practices, Klein finds that cultural performance provides a means to enact (and transmit) identity and collective experience through narratives of homeland, displacement and loss. Through musicking, those in subsequent generations inherit a sense of diasporic being, dynamically negotiating between both their parents' and grandparents' histories and the dominant culture. Stories, histories, perspectives and collective experiences are uttered through song, carrying historical consciousness and cultural memory across generations (Lidskog, 2016). Thus,

narratives of homeland and cultural identity are not neutral, but are crafted, reshaped and transmitted through musical performance. Analyses of music in diaspora should examine these narratives and question their broader implications for how the past is memorialised, and to what ends.

Music also serves as a powerful cue for autobiographical memory on the individual level<sup>3</sup>. Music develops habits, embodied skills and ways of moving which assert themselves in response to particular sounds, such as knowing to stand or kneel when a musical refrain begins during a church service (Anderson, 2004). Hearing certain music can prompt us to automatically or involuntarily recall autobiographical memories, but we can also seek out music intentionally in order to reminisce or aid in recollection. Music reheard, intentionally or unintentionally, is a means of making present that which we have experienced in the past, providing “a device for unfolding, for replaying, the temporal structure of that moment” (DeNora, 2000, p. 67), allowing us glimpses of moments (and feelings) past inhabited. While music is tightly bound to autobiographical memory, the emotional topography of memories elicited by music varies greatly. There is considerable research within music psychology to suggest that nostalgia is an emotion often evoked by and associated with music listening (e.g., Barrett et al., 2010; Janata, Tomic, & Rakowski, 2007; Zentner, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2008). Nostalgia, in this context, is defined as a ‘bittersweet’ and blended affect that is related to both positive and negative emotional experiences and is often accompanied by a sense of desire and loss. The source of nostalgia related to music listening is idiosyncratic and triggered by the various associations individuals form between particular songs and autobiographical experiences, rather than through qualities of music itself (Barrett et al., 2010).

Interest in the relationship between music and nostalgia has developed concurrently in ethnomusicology, suggesting that music can evoke and intensify nostalgic experiences among young migrants and those in diaspora (Khorsandi & Saarikallio, 2013). Among Lao people living in diaspora, for example, Chapman (2005) describes how the sound of the *khèn* (bamboo mouth-organ) can conjure emotional memories and nostalgia, as the sound itself has become subsumed in the embodied experience of ‘being Lao’, even for those lacking direct exposure to the homeland. Immigration can effect a profound sense of loss, anxiety and exclusion (Akhtar, 1999), and reminiscence often produces an idealised notion of home or homeland (Tummala-Narra, 2009). Shared nostalgia for a lost homeland can be

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<sup>3</sup> And evidence from neuropsychology suggests that musical memory is surprisingly robust, preserved even in the face of some types of dementia and cognitive impairment (e.g., Cuddy & Duffin, 2005).

considered a 'linking phenomenon' that fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging, and in turn nurtures shared identity (Khorsandi & Saarikallio, 2013). In diasporic settings, the phenomenon of musically-evoked nostalgia has both an emotional and a political topography. The shared emotional experience of nostalgia can bring people closer together, but the object of nostalgia (homeland, the past) can be conceptualised and memorialised in numerous ways. If music shapes and transmits narratives about the past, what aspects of the past are prioritised or idealised?

### **Music in/as Culture**

What is clear from this brief overview of the social functions of music is that it is an enormously powerful, pervasive and multi-faceted phenomenon; a bonding force that can foster both inclusion and exclusion, develop identities, demarcate boundaries, carry cultural knowledge, cue autobiographical memory, and choreograph emotional experiences. Musical performance and listening are deeply social, with implications for how we construct ourselves as social agents and how we relate to others. These qualities render musicking a valuable resource for diasporic communities, as music can connect them to homeland cultural production, to knowledge and narratives of the past, and can provide social settings in which communities come together. Through music, "the past is not only remembered but also shaped" (Lidskog, 2016, p. 12), and thus it has performative and transformative potential which plays an active role in the social fabric of communities.

These socially constitutive functions of music support recent trends within ethnomusicology which recognise that music is much more than just notes (Stokes, 1994). While earlier periods in the academic study of music valued research which appreciated music for 'music itself', pioneering work in the anthropology of music has seen a paradigm shift towards cultural studies of music (Shepherd, 2003, p. 71). This shift can be attributed to the increasing engagement of anthropology and ethnomusicology in music studies, and the normalisation of ethnographic and anthropological methods to investigate the social worlds and networks in which music is produced and circulated. Central to these strands of music studies is that music cannot be considered merely reflective, but is also constitutive of culture and subjectivity, or to put it another way, music is not just something which happens in society, society "might also be usefully conceived as something that happens in music (Stokes, 1994, p. 2). As such, attempts to study musical forms separately from the contexts in which they are produced (and reproduced) are insufficient.

Musical practices provide an extremely rich environment for research because they can reveal much about how social meaning is created, and allow insight into other subjectivities (Cook, 1998). Music structures social space and simultaneously provides “the means by which this space can be transformed” (Stokes, 1994, p. 4). It plays a dynamic, complex, and often contradictory role in cultural constructions, but is also a tool for enhancing connection and emotion which people use to perform identity narratives. Further, music is not comprised of static objects or symbols to be studied in context, but rather it forms a context in which other things (social, political, etc.) are made possible. Given this, the most interesting question is not ‘what does music do?’, but rather ‘how do people use music to bring into being a particular social world, and why?’ Addressing this question entails a focus on the settings in which communities come together around music, in particular on live music performance and group dance activities. Moreover, it calls for analysis of the discourses that accompany musical performance and their influence on the social contexts in which music ‘happens’.

### **(The Dilemma of) World Music**

Increasing focus on diasporic music-making practices within ethnomusicology has accompanied concern and debate around the development of so-called ‘world music’. While I will address the history of world music as a musical and marketing category in more detail in Chapter One, it is worth noting here some of the central critiques that have plagued the term since its popularisation in the 1980s. The term was first developed in the UK as a marketing label for the purposes of advertising non-Western music (or music not addressed by a pre-existing ‘genre’) in record stores and live performances. Since then it has expanded to become something of a movement, bound together by an embrace of ‘multiculturalism’ and musical hybridity, and adopted by diverse artists to describe and market their musical practices. World music has been addressed within ethnomusicology in tandem with globalisation and transnational markets, reflecting anxieties around identity in a world “increasingly shaped by movement and migration” (Stokes, 2003, p. 111). Questions of musical authenticity, hybridity and their potential commodification dominate discussions of world music’s validity and possible harmfulness in its construction of non-Western music as ‘other’. Feld (2000) argues that the terminological division between ‘world music’ and simply, ‘music’, serves to reinforce the assumption of Western musical traditions as the norm against which global musics are cast as ‘other’. Connell and Gibson (2004) similarly criticise world music, asserting that it perpetuates the cultural and



economic imperialism of Western markets, whereby musical exchange is decidedly unidirectional and exists to satisfy the demands of Western audiences. For this reason, world music is critiqued as promoting cultural appropriation at the expense of non-Western musicians and audiences (Bishop, 2003), and encouraging a “fetishization of marginality” which romanticises and commodifies the extent to which non-Western cultures (and musicians) are exotic, distinct, isolated and unchanging (Connell & Gibson, 2004, p. 354). World music markets, Keogh (2015) suggests, have a prejudicial influence over what kinds of non-Western music and identities are marketed<sup>4</sup>, placing pressure on performers to present themselves and their work within established frameworks of authentic and acceptable cultural difference. Further, becoming branded with the ‘world music’ label presents a double-edged sword for performers, as it simultaneously provides access to a global audience but also distances their work from the realms of mainstream music, relegating them to the category of ‘otherness’ (Bishop, 2003).

On the other hand, the development and marketing of world music has been motivated by an “academically liberal mission” aiming to oppose Western music institutions’ domination of the discourse over what ‘music’ is and can be, and to strive towards a pluralisation of Western music markets (Feld, 2000, p. 147). Stokes jibes that world music discourse “wraps in a warm language of mutually beneficial, politically benign exchange the exploitation of non-Western sounds” (2004, p. 55). While the problems inherent to world music cannot be brushed aside, these broad-ranging critiques fail to adequately address the motivations of ‘world music’ performers and promoters themselves, and assumes the homogeneity of their audiences. Slobin (2003) has challenged world music’s critics for their assumption that there is an overarching ‘system’ at work, and has suggested that research should refocus on ‘micromusical’ projects to analyse how musicians “negotiate levels, and give shape, form, and meaning to new musical scenes in a global context” (Stokes, 2004, p. 49). Stokes similarly reflects a more nuanced stance on world music, arguing that the cultural imperialism hypothesis is insufficient to explain the global circulation of music today, and that processes of musical “extraction, commodification, appropriation, and exploitation” are rarely simple or straightforward (2004, p. 56). In order to grasp the trajectories and transformation of musical practices across cultural and national borders, we must “restore a sense of human agency” (Stokes, 2004, p. 65) and

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, it is not only global music markets that assimilate or control musical identities and narratives. Anna Piotrowska (2013) elucidates how “Gypsy music” has been co-opted in the national musical identity of countries in Eastern Europe; encompassed as national culture while Romani musicians are simultaneously ‘othered’ and exoticised.

attend to the motivations and experiences of musicians and performers themselves. It is this sense of human agency that I hope to cultivate in this thesis, by centring the way in which musicians connect with, shape, or defy the discourses of intercultural music-making, as active participants rather than passive responders to commodification and the pressures of global music markets.

## **The Current Project**

Throughout my own exposure to the varied ‘world music’ scene in Sydney, I have come to identify a particular subset of music practitioners and groups who describe themselves and their music through identification with the Balkan Peninsula and other parts of Eastern Europe. This broad Balkan music ‘scene’ incorporates a range of musicians, bands, choirs and folk-dance groups that attract members from within various Eastern European communities in Sydney, as well as enthusiasts who have no ancestral connection to the music and dance involved. While some groups meet and perform exclusively within a particular cultural or ethnic community, performing mainly at private functions (such as weddings) and community clubs (such as cultural or religious associations), most meet at the crossroads between cultural groups, performing at multicultural music festivals and public music venues that showcase a range of musical practices and attract diverse audiences. As such, many performers of Balkan music come into contact with, and are active participants within, Sydney’s ‘world music’ scene as they seek venues to perform at, collaborative opportunities and wider audiences for their work. Many of the same musicians and performers operate throughout both community-specific and world music circles, forging ever new line-ups and collaborations that demonstrate their immense versatility with materials from a range of musical traditions, and render the boundaries between diasporic and world music communities quite porous.

Throughout the first half of 2018 I undertook multi-sited fieldwork centring on live music performed and marketed under the banner of ‘Balkan’ in Sydney, Australia. Due to the embedded and multilayered nature of this community and its members, my research navigates networks of musicians, organisers and audiences who are not a bounded group but overlap in their interests, identity categories and the way themselves and their musics are positioned within discourses of Australian multiculturalism and world music. Given the complexity and multi-levelled relationship between individuals, communities and their artistic practices, my research methods have been manifold. Participant observation at a

range of events including concerts, cultural festivals and folk-dance classes has illuminated the ways that people engage with one another through musical performance, as well as the rhetoric and techniques that performers use to create a certain kind of experience for their audiences. These events largely take place in bars and dedicated music venues in inner-west Sydney, as well as community halls and public entertainment spaces. Research into the musical historiography, key composers and song lyrics has helped to contextualise these performances within the socio-political and musical discourses in which they are produced and reproduced. To analyse the rhetoric surrounding musical performance, I also draw on a range of online and radio materials that are used in the marketing of music events and help to maintain the 'scene' through online engagement. These include band websites and Facebook profiles, gig advertisements, concert reviews, newspaper articles, and online and radio interviews with performers.

Finally, I draw on rich qualitative material from semi-structured interviews with performers, instructors and audiences engaged with these musical practices, which provide a more nuanced and personal understanding of the role that music plays in their lives. All semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately one hour, though I also gained insight from brief and casual conversations with participants at music events. Among those I spoke with are musicians and singers involved in the performance of 'Balkan' and world music in Sydney, people involved in folk-dance for enjoyment and performance, and enthusiasts who are regular attendees at Balkan musical events. Those interviewed represent first and second-generation Australians from a range of Southeast European backgrounds, as well as musicians who have no ancestral connections to the region but are expert performers and promoters of its musics. The value of this mixed methodology is that it affords insight into the personal motivations and experiences of diverse interested peoples, situating these accounts alongside marketing narratives and broader discourses within the community and international music markets.

Given the turbulent socio-political history of much of the Balkan region, and the ethnic tensions that have accompanied waves of migration from Eastern Europe during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I wondered what role music, and this burgeoning music scene, have played in the social lives and relations between these diasporic communities in Australia. Can music provide a force of unity and collective identity for disparate migrant communities? And if so, how are issues of cultural ownership, authenticity and hybridity negotiated in the cross-cultural space of the 'world music' scene? What creative and social potentials are opened by this space?

This thesis is organised around three chapters. Chapter one begins with a brief overview of world music, its development in Australia, and its impact on diasporic and intercultural musical engagement in Sydney<sup>5</sup>. In particular I focus on musicians who market their music as 'Balkan', and consider how issues of identity, belonging, cultural ownership, authenticity and hybridity are negotiated through everyday interactions between performers and audiences within these musical networks.

Chapter Two will consider the role of music in evoking experiences of nostalgia among Southeast European migrants in diaspora, and examine how music works to transport audiences and construct places real, remembered or imagined. Through a review of advertising materials and live performances, I analyse how performers elicit nostalgic affect in their audiences, and how a shared experience of nostalgia might connect participants during musical encounters.

Chapter three will consider the political dimensions of musically-evoked nostalgia and consider what narratives and ideas about homeland and the past are being conveyed through Balkan folk music. In doing so I analyse the discourses surrounding Balkan music performance and consider parallels between the ideals of Balkan nostalgia and the embrace of diversity for which world music advocates strive. In this way, I consider how nostalgic narratives of the past might serve as a creative resource with which musicians transform social worlds in the present.

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<sup>5</sup> While Australia is host to a diversity of music-making communities, for the purposes of this thesis I focus my overview on Southeast European immigration and its influence on diasporic and world music practices in Sydney.

## Chapter One: World Music, 'Balkan' Identity & Musical Interculturality

World music (Frith, 2000) is unlike any other music genre in that its origin can be traced to a particular moment. In 1987 a group of 11 independent record company representatives met at a London pub to discuss the growing demand for recordings by non-Western artists and the problematic lack of a category under which to stock such music in high-street record stores (Denselow, 2004). They settled on the term 'world music' as a marketing label to help sell their material; namely "music that isn't at present catered for by its own category", incorporating "diverse forms of music as yet unclassifiable in Western terms" (quoted in Frith, 2000). This decision and subsequent marketing campaign solidified a wave of interest in music from non-Western artists, spurred earlier by Peter Gabriel's first WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) festival in 1982, the success of Paul Simon's 1986 album *Graceland*, and after Bulgarian women's choir Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares had taken the world by storm. Those present at the meeting were aware of the descriptive problems associated with the term and had debated various alternatives, concluding that while the musical forms their labels represented were too diverse to be adequately addressed as a genre, what they shared was a "passionate commitment...to the music itself" (quoted in Frith, 2000, pp. 305-306). Indeed, as Frith argues, what united the 'world music' market was not similarity of style, but a commitment to displayed expertise in certain musical traditions, with record sleeves containing detailed artist biographies and researched explanations of musical practices and their cultural or historical roots.

### A Brief History of World Music in Australia

The rise of world music in Australia has, in many ways, mirrored that in other places, and "successive waves of immigration have made it fertile musical ground", both for the ongoing practice and pedagogy of traditional musical styles, but also for countless cross-cultural collaborations "that are made possible in a successful multicultural society" (Jordan, 2010, p. 3). In his edited collection *World Music: Global Sounds in Australia*, music journalist Seth Jordan attributes the flourishing of Australia's world music scene to a history of immigration and the establishment of thriving migrant communities. While interest in European folk-dance traditions had been present in Australia since as early as the 1940s, the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw waves of immigration and a shift to Australia as an increasingly multicultural society. By 1955, one million migrants had arrived

from across Europe following the Second World War, while later waves in the 1950s and 60s saw many immigrants to Australia from Eastern European countries, including 14,000 Hungarians following the 1965 uprising (Jordan, 2010). Wherever diasporic communities were established, people brought music to fulfil social, religious and cultural needs, setting up cultural clubs, associations and churches to which musical performance has been central. Longstanding musical traditions within these communities saw the establishment of groups such as Kengugró<sup>6</sup>, an Australian-Hungarian folk-dance ensemble formed in Sydney in 1986, who continue to play a vital role in the social fabric of diasporic communities.

From the early 1970s these movements were supported by a national shift to ‘multiculturalism’ in government rhetoric and policy, particularly during the Whitlam administration, which saw programs instituted at the state and federal level to celebrate cultural diversity and multicultural arts practice (Jordan, 2010; Smith, 2009). Throughout the 1980s, the presence of thriving migrant musical communities provided the groundwork for new intergenerational and intercultural alliances, bringing together diverse musicians into ‘polyethnic’ groups who were developing new means of representing contemporary Australia in sound (Smith, 2005)<sup>7</sup>. Among these were vocal groups experimenting with global sounds, such as Martenitsa Choir, Blindman’s Holiday, and Petrunka, and fusion bands such as Sirocco, who formed in 1980 with the aim of representing multicultural Australia in music, often featuring expert players from a range of musical traditions and communities. At the same time, radio programs and festivals dedicated to showcasing world music came on the scene, with the appearance of Music Deli on ABC Radio National in 1986, the opening of the World Music Café in Melbourne in 1989, and the first WOMAD festival held in Adelaide in 1992. These groups and initiatives, featuring enthusiasts with a fervour for unfamiliar sounds, found in the rhetoric of multiculturalism a means to position their music within the growing world music market, and to attract funding from bodies such as the Australia Council who were increasingly “eager to find ‘multicultural’ musicians” to promote narratives of “national cultural development” (Smith, 2009, p. 8) and successful multiculturalism.

While Australia became host to an array of migrant musical communities, a range of factors have increasingly brought these strands into conversation with one another as

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<sup>6</sup> The name is a wordplay on Hungarian jumping dance *ugró*s and Australian marsupial the kangaroo

<sup>7</sup> It is also important to note the history of Indigenous Australian music being framed within and exploited through ‘world music’. This has included the proliferation of groups (in Australia and abroad) adopting Indigenous instruments such as the didgeridu to add ‘exotic flavour’ to their work and the accompanying categorisation of Indigenous music as ‘other’ (Neuenfeldt, 2015).

part of a 'world music' category. These include artists looking to reflect multicultural Australia in their work, creative musicians inspired by new sounds and means of expression, increasing musical exchange and intercultural collaboration, audiences seeking a diverse array of musical experiences, and grassroots organising from key promoters committed to multicultural arts practices (Petran, 2010). Among these key figures are several Anglo-Australians who had spent time abroad with access to the 'real deal', studying foreign musical instruments and techniques, and seeking to extend their passion in Australia. Mara and Llew Kiek toured Europe and changed their name to Mara<sup>8</sup> in 1984, with Mara later studying Bulgarian vocal techniques in Plovdiv and setting up Martenitsa Choir in 1991. Linsey Pollak became fascinated by the sound of the *gaida* (Macedonian bagpipe) after hearing it on a recording, and in 1977 travelled to Macedonia for the first time to study the instrument under Lazo Nikolovski. On returning to Australia, Pollak wondered how his new musical passion could continue to develop:

One night while busking with the gaida outside Hoyts cinema complex in Sydney, about 15 young Macedonian men started dancing to the music and I soon discovered a rich and thriving Macedonian culture alive and well in Sydney ... In the summer of 1982 I started playing Macedonian music in Newtown Park (inner-city Sydney) with Christine Evans and a number of other musicians and this developed into one of the most joyful experiences that I have had in music and dance. For three months up to four hundred people came every Sunday afternoon to dance to a scratch Macedonian band that sometimes included up to 15 musicians playing gaidas, tamburas, tapans, flutes, clarinets, trumpets and euphoniums. It was a wonderful time and many older Macedonian men who had not played for years joined in the music-making on borrowed gaidas. The crowd that came consisted predominantly of Macedonians, but many people came from outside the Macedonian community. (Pollak, 1998)

Pollak, as many scholars have done, hints at the significance of these musical encounters for channelling the largely Macedonian audience's nostalgia for homeland (Holdsworth, 2010) and creating a focus for social identities and sense of place. But as Roger Holdsworth, producer of radio show *Global Village*, argues, it was only on rare occasions that musical performances would find an audience outside their originating community:

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<sup>8</sup> The name Mara is well-recognised in Bulgaria for its associations with ancient Slavic mythology

music tended to bond members of a community, but rarely saw different groups come together (2010, p. 29).

Bringing together worldwide musics into one act, program or festival has not been merely an inevitable by-product of multiculturalism, but an agenda actively pursued by performers, programmers, organisers, reviewers and politicians invested in the project of multicultural arts practice. In 1985 Pollak, along with other Sydney-based enthusiasts, established the Multicultural Musicians Guild at Addison Road Community Centre with the help of an Australia Council grant. Among those involved in its establishment was Linda Marr – singer, choir leader, dance teacher and long-time mover in Sydney's world music scene. When I spoke with Linda, she reflected on the motivations behind the Guild's establishment, and how the musical landscape of Sydney has changed since:

We had an organisation called the Multicultural Musicians Guild, and we used to have a lot to do with the community centre down there because there were really vibrant communities who had different huts. There used to be dance groups and music groups and all this sort of stuff ... As it went along we'd organise concerts with say, an Indian or Punjabi group from Parramatta, and a Turkish group or a Latin American group on the same bill, and the idea was that you'd have this wonderful meeting of cultures. But what ended up happening was that the Indians would come along just to see the Indian group, then they'd leave, and all the Latin Americans would come for the Latin American group [laughs]. So, there'd be no actual meeting.

At that time, because Australian immigration was quite young, it was mainly people who were already established here, Anglo-Australians, who were interested in this cultural sharing and mixing. Back in those days the cultural stuff was more of a lifeline for people, because they'd just arrived in Australia, they'd left their families behind, but they'd find other people who were from the same culture or the same area, or the same village even, sometimes. But it's really changed since then, because you've now got generations of migrants who move more outside of those communities or have mixed identities themselves.

Initiatives promoting 'public multicultural music' (Smith, 2009), such as the Multicultural Musicians Guild, have been critiqued as synthetic and even harmful –



endorsing safe and prescriptive versions of cultural authenticity and diversity in order to market migrant music-making to government bodies and predominantly English-speaking audiences (Dunbar, 1990; Parkhill, 1987). Dunbar's critique (1990) also points out the historical overrepresentation of Anglo-Australians in the receipt of multicultural arts grants, arguing that "much of this musical activity was essentially created by Australia Council funding" (Smith, 2009, p. 8) rather than genuine intercultural interaction. While government funding certainly influences musical development, Linda's reflections on the Guild tell a different story about the motivations of those involved in its establishment. As Linda explicates, the organisers and supporters of early multicultural music initiatives were not aiming to simply present bounded, 'exotic' sounds alongside one another, but to establish a community where diverse musicians could interact, and to provide a platform where expert performers and respected representatives of different communities might find common ground and wider audiences for their work.

Graeme Smith (2009), reflecting two decades on, acknowledges efforts made by multicultural initiatives to seek out musicians from migrant communities, and the later appearance of groups who reflect more diverse membership and include first and second-generation migrants among their line-ups. Rather than a scattering of largely insular migrant music communities, or an assemblage of outsiders borrowing from foreign forms, the world music scene today is a network of individuals who actively engage across public and private spheres, moving in and between community borders and positioning themselves within the broader intercultural framework of world music. The last two decades have seen a marked increase in dedicated world music venues, festivals and programs. In Sydney, these have included the establishment of Yaron Hallis's QIRKZ in 2008, later revived as Camelot Lounge and Django Bar, and Richard's Petkovic's Cultural Arts Collective, formed in 2007, who organise the Sydney Sacred Music Festival and the Sydney World Music Chamber Orchestra. These developments have ensured that world music in Australia is less music from elsewhere, and more music "from just around the corner" that "nods at the international genre of world music, but goes far beyond it" (Holdsworth, 2010, p. 43). These developments have seen increasing opportunities for diasporic and migrant musical practices to find audiences outside of their immediate communities, and has expanded the framework of 'world music' to encompass a huge range of musical activity. Through a case study of Sydney-based musician Joseph Tawadros, Keogh (2015) points out that some musicians adeptly position themselves within the established framework of 'world music' in order to attract funding and appeal to wider audiences.

While funding availability and fluctuating trends may influence the way musicians market themselves, artists are also drawn to ‘world music’ for a plethora of other reasons, including its hybrid aesthetic qualities, its opportunities for collaboration, the vibrant social world that accompanies it, and the project of successful multiculturalism for which it strives.

Commentators have characterised Australia’s world music scene today as a “tight-knit multicultural music community” in which musical hybridity is reflective of camaraderie and close social ties amongst its diverse members (Jordan, 2010, p. 237). Indeed, as Therese Virtue notes, although many groups in this space “appear to operate independently, scrutiny often reveals overlaps and relationships across cultural and ethnic boundaries” (2010, p. 62). I was reminded of this recently as I headed into Sydney venue Gasoline Pony and happened to catch Pape M’Baye & Chosani Afrique, an ensemble led by Senegalese musician and griot Pape M’Baye. During their final set, I was surprised to hear a familiar melody, though difficult to recognise at first alongside the rhythm of the *djembe* (West African drum). Then it clicked: they were performing “Čaje Šukarije” by Macedonian-Romani singer Esmā Redžepova. I’d recently had coffee with Serbian-born *truba* (trumpet) player Stolé Petrovski, who explained to me how he and his band mate, Pape, like to teach each other popular songs from their home countries (Pape plays drums in Petrovski’s group, Stolé & the Black Train Band). So here was Pape, singing a song from Macedonia, taught to him by a Serbian trumpet player, in a Marrickville bar, alongside his Senegalese band. When I relayed this to Linda, she nodded and smiled – “It’s just great”, she announced, “you can’t get much better than that”. This example illustrates the distance between the accounts of multiculturalism offered by artists themselves, and the lines of critique common to the literature on world music, which assume the overarching influence of the global market on musical forms and the homogeneity of world music audiences. As Ramnarine has suggested, musical hybridity should not be viewed as the inevitable outcome of population movements but “in the ordinariness of creative production, as musicians working as individual agents in their everyday environments, making choices that suit them and their audiences” (2007, p. 7). In speaking with musicians, it is clear that their musical trajectories map onto their everyday social interactions, and their stylistic exchanges can be heard through their performances. Rather than an abstract market force, clash of demographics or synthetic display of the ‘exotic’, the reality of world music in Sydney is a social and musical microcosm embedded in everyday interactions, collaborations and friendships.

## Australia's 'Balkan Craze'

Eastern European, and more specifically Balkan, music has for the last several decades been the “central, binding force” among a subset of Australian performers – musicians, singers and dancers (Virtue, 2010, p. 49). Those who identify themselves with the Balkans are best described as a ‘musical scene’ in that they occupy a “cultural space within which a range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with each other” (Straw, 1991, p. 369) through social and extended networks. This Balkan scene overlaps with world music networks, cultural and religious institutions, various ethnic communities and audiences, and fosters musical exchange between performers based in different parts of Australia. Currently active groups include (but are not limited to) Hobart staple Xenos, who have been active since the late 80s, Brisbane-based The Balkanics, Melbourne-based *trubaci* orchestra Opa Bato, Transylvanian-focused Vardos Trio and lively five-piece Babaganoush. Vic Janko Orkestar bring Balkan brass to Wollongong, while Sydney is host to a range of interconnected groups identifying with the Balkans. Among them are Balkanski Bus, Stolé & the Black Train Band, and Nadya & Zoran’s 101 Candles Orchestra who explore “music from the European backgrounds of its members” (Virtue, 2010, p. 60). Klezmer influenced Monsieur Camembert, led by world music mainstay Yaron Hallis, interpret music from Russia to the Balkans, producing fusion material in English, Russian, Romani, Hebrew and Yiddish. Lolo Lovina have been performing Romani Balkan music for over a decade led by Australian-born Hungarian-Romani Sarah Bedak and Serbian-Romani drummer and guitarist Nenad Radic. Marsala, sharing members across bands mentioned above describe themselves as “music without borders” presenting melodies from “Africa, Cuba, Yugoslavia, Russia, Spain, France, Italy” (“Marsala,” n.d.), though they frequently perform at events for and are well-respected among Sydney’s Eastern European communities.

The term ‘Balkan’ describes a vast region which eludes precise geographical, national, ethnic or religious classification (Šarić, 2004), and has long carried negative associations within Europe. Indeed, the term Balkanization came about after WWI to describe the collapse of states into smaller sub-states, and the accompanying rise of inter-ethnic violence and destructive nationalism. Todorova (2009) coined the term ‘Balkanism’ to summarise the international discourses around the region, which have exacerbated stereotypes of peoples passionate, divided and violent. Nevertheless, the term ‘Balkan’ is often adopted by groups who perform a diversity of material from across Southeast

Europe, and is sometimes adopted by individuals to describe their own ethnic identities (particularly for those with mixed heritage). This identification with the Balkans is more political than coincidental. Yorgo Kaporis, who leads the band *Balkanski Bus*, views the term ‘Balkan’ as a catalyst of positive social change – a way of appreciating the overlapping culture and history of the region, and a means to promote a pan-ethnic identity which unifies Southeast European peoples in diasporic contexts. Yorgo is particularly proud of how his band’s musical performances draw audiences representing different ethnic groups, and stressed that they tailor their repertoire to provide musical experiences that appeal to diverse groups. He explained:

What we do with my band when we do gigs, we know there’s going to be Greeks, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbians...and you announce, and you say, ‘Now we’re doing a song from Serbia for our Serbian friends’ and then ‘Wool’, you know – there’s a table there of Serbians, it’s great.

Stolé & the Black Train Band are a particular favourite for weddings and have several members of Serbian background, but Stolé similarly expressed that he does not want his band to be isolated to the Serbian community:

We play all the weddings! Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Macedonian, whatever.

The musical repertoires of these groups vary greatly. As well as presenting various traditional and more recently composed folk music from across Southeast Europe, they often borrow freely from well-known songs and infuse these with trademark Balkan time signatures and musical idioms. Moreover, the music presented tends to adapt to reflect the diverse influences and backgrounds of groups’ shifting multi-ethnic memberships. When I enquired as to how performers selected the music they perform, I was invariably given a similar explanation:

Someone in the group will say ‘I like this tune’, and someone else will go, ‘Oh yeah I know how to play that’, and lo and behold it eventually becomes part of the repertoire of the group. We just play what we like to play.

Many of the popular numbers fall under the category of *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (‘newly-composed folk music’, or NCFM) from the former Yugoslavia and neighbouring states. Musically, this commercial folk-based genre retained “rural symbolism and ambience, appropriated the technical language of arranged folk music, and turned to the

commercial resources of the pop market” (Rasmussen, 2002, p. xix). These songs tend to ruminate on “longing and destiny”, their lyrics representing “the existentialist and romantic sentiments that thrived on the condition of emotional unfulfillment”, especially unrequited love (Rasmussen, 2002, p. xviii). Many groups also incorporate folk music from further afield in Russia, Poland, Hungary and Greece, as well as Romani (Gypsy) music that was popularised during the same era.<sup>9</sup> Given the diversity of materials covered, these musicians often demonstrate impressive versatility with different musical styles, or what Baily (2008) terms ‘intermusability’ – skills developed through their exposure to and practise in varied musical traditions. In doing so, these bands often combine multiple languages into one repertoire, or different musical styles into one performance, drawing commonality and cohesion across potentially divergent cultural traditions.

There has been substantial ethnomusicological research into the so-called ‘Balkan craze’ that has permeated world music and Western markets since the 1980s and has also seen the rise of new genres such as Balkan Beats and Turbo Folk, which fuse folk music with pop and electronica. Lausević, in her book *Balkan Fascination* (2007), documents a group of Americans who call themselves ‘the Balkanites’, running camps and workshops dedicated to learning and preserving Balkan music and dance, despite few to none of the members having ancestral ties to the region. This ‘Balkan craze’ has drawn criticism over issues of cultural appropriation and the commercial exploitation and exoticisation of traditional music practices (e.g., Lausevic, 2007; Marković, 2013), critiques which permeate the literature on world music markets more broadly. However, much of this research has focused on the phenomenon of Balkan music enthusiasts who have little or no ancestral connection to the Balkans or its musical traditions. While this research raises interesting questions around the cultural appeal of the Balkans and its exoticised iterations produced abroad, they have tended to focus on issues of cultural appropriation and assumed a homogeneity in enthusiasts’ cultural relationship and claim to the music.

In contrast, exploration of Sydney’s Balkan music scene presents a much more complex picture of belonging, cultural identity and claims to authenticity and ownership, in that it connects members from a range of Southeast European diasporic groups, neighbouring European Eastern countries, and those who are Balkan music enthusiasts or

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<sup>9</sup> The international popularisation and marketing of ‘Gypsy music’ took off during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Romani musicians such as Šaban Bajramović and Esma Redžepova (respectively known as the ‘king’ and ‘queen’ of Gypsy music) gaining mainstream acclaim despite ongoing discrimination against Romani peoples throughout Eastern Europe. Today, the label of ‘Gypsy music’ is used pervasively and problematically in world music markets, including in Australia. Several researchers have written insightful works dealing with this topic, including Piotrowska (2013), Silverman (2012), and Van de Port (1999).

experts without any ancestral connection to the region's musics. Because groups' repertoires encompass regional styles from across Southeast Europe and beyond, claims to expert or 'insider' status fluctuate from gig to gig, and from song to song. The tendency for groups to have multi-ethnic line-ups and diverse repertoires entails a rich collective musical knowledge which often sees 'outsider' musicians providing music for specific ethnic or religious community groups. Considering this entanglement of identities, belongings, knowledge and musical forms, I wondered how issues of appropriation, authenticity and cultural ownership are managed in this intercultural musical space, and the extent to which these might differ between homeland and diasporic contexts.

### **Balkan Hang-Ups: Cultural Ownership and Exclusivity**

Adela Peeva's documentary *Whose Is This Song?* (2003) underscores how the debated origins of a particular melody heard throughout Southeast Europe can crystallise and reveal intense feelings of nationalism, entrenching ideas of ethnic and cultural difference. In the film, Peeva travels a circuitous route from Turkey through the Balkans, hoping to unravel the history of a familiar melody which appears throughout the region in different forms; from love song, to religious hymn, revolutionary anthem or as a military march. In each iteration, "the song serves disparate cultural and political objectives and becomes invested with a different national imaginary" (Boletsi, 2010, p. 147). Peeva is constantly told that the song in question belongs exclusively to whichever country she visits, with her informants regaling elaborate histories that prove the origins of the song lie within their borders. In a few uncomfortable scenes from the film, Peeva's suggestion that the song's origins could lie elsewhere are enough to elicit intense anger, racist outbursts and requests for her to leave. During the dramatic closing sequence, the song appears again for a Bulgarian national festival at which the celebratory fireworks spark out of control, prompting chaos as wildfires engulf the nearby fields. Peeva laments in voiceover, "When I first started searching for the song, I hoped it would unite us. I never believed that the sparks of hatred could be lit so easily".

In her analysis of the film, Boletsi (2010) argues that it is the familiarity of the 'sounds of the other' that produces anxieties around one's own cultural identity. When Peeva presents people with alternate versions of the song, the perceived similarities between self and other can be disturbing, precisely because "the sound of the other is strangely familiar" and calls one's own selfhood into question (Boletsi, 2010, p. 146). It is

this perceived commonality, Boletsi asserts, which mobilises Peeva's listeners to solidify the borders between 'us' and 'them'.<sup>10</sup> When migratory objects such as Peeva's song cross national, cultural or ideological borders, they can give rise to violence and hostility where they are perceived to have trespassed or upset national narratives. In demonstrating the futility of attempts to 'prove' cultural ownership and purity, the film "foregrounds the paradox of people who seem to have so much in common, yet who would be willing to defend the authenticity and uniqueness of their culture and history to the death" (Boletsi, 2010, p. 147). Peeva's informants are unwilling to be categorised under a 'Balkan umbrella', as they are instead committed to claiming the exclusivity and uniqueness of their national heritage, constructed in contrast to neighbouring groups. After watching Peeva's sobering take on how deep these nationalistic attachments lie in the Balkans, I wondered to what extent they endure in the diasporic and multicultural context of Australia, and how they might play out in relation to the migratory objects of Balkan music in diaspora.

Yorgo is an Australian of shared Greek and Macedonian descent who, self-avowedly, is often painfully aware of underlying political tensions and intense nationalisms that are hangovers of Balkan political turmoil of the last century (and longer). He has witnessed first-hand the ethnic divisions embedded in the cultures inherited from his Greek father and Macedonian mother, tensions which during the 1990s, he tells me, threatened to break down his parents' relationship, until his aunt sat them down and told them 'not to let politics get in the way of love'. During our conversations, he takes a simultaneously bemused and frustrated attitude towards others' attachments to ethnic identity and nationalistic ideologies. Yorgo grew up in Sydney studying folk music and dance from across the Balkans and is now respected as a dance instructor and holder of folkloric knowledge within the Balkan community. He runs workshops and heads a folk-dance ensemble that frequently perform at cultural and multicultural festivals around Australia:

We've just come back from performing at a Bulgarian festival in Adelaide, and the whole repertoire we did for that festival was Bulgarian, including my dance ensemble performing Bulgarian dances, you know? So, it was interesting seeing a couple of the Bulgarian people going and speaking to the Macedonian girls or the Serbian girls [in the dance ensemble] and

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<sup>10</sup> Blok (1998) uses Freud's concept of the 'narcissism of minor differences' to explain how ethnic nationalism exaggerates small differences while ignoring overwhelming similarity to overcome the discomfort of similarity between self and other.

speaking to them in Bulgarian, and them turning around and saying, ‘Sorry, I’m Macedonian and I can’t understand everything you’re saying’. Then you see the looks of the Bulgarians saying to them, ‘Well why are you doing our dancing then?’

It’s hard to know how seriously to take it. You can almost see the politics ticking over in their head. There’s that nationalistic notion that people have got...it’s just that whole notion and concept in the Balkans. I just look at it and think, I can’t be bothered with you. If you’re not going to educate yourself and look beyond the propaganda that countries set on people, then you deserve to be narrow-minded.

Linda Marr sings alongside Yorgo in the group Balkanski Bus, who accompanied the dance ensemble on their recent trip to Adelaide and provided live music during their routines. Linda similarly commented on their experiences at the Bulgarian Festival:

We had to be careful that we didn’t sing anything that the Bulgarians might consider was not Bulgarian. But in fact, a lot of it wasn’t collected in Bulgaria! But as long as it didn’t mention any geographical landmarks that were outside Bulgaria then they would accept it as Bulgarian. It’s exactly the same music... Oh, there’s so much history there. Of invasion and melding together of peoples and resentments and stuff that are still bubbling under the surface, you know? But basically language-wise, there’s a commonality between the languages from Poland right down into Bosnia, whether it’s written in Cyrillic or English letters there are similar words and common culture. And then you move into Greece and that’s a different language but there’s still lots of similar melodies and similarities in dance steps.

Interactions such as these, Yorgo says, remind him that these tensions do endure in the diasporic context of Australia. In fact, it’s this awareness that has led him to use his position to promote a shared Balkan identity through his various musical projects. Several years ago he established his ‘Balkan’ folk-dance ensemble which brings together students of dance from a range of Eastern European heritages. He established the class with the specific intent of teaching his students a range of national dances from different regions across the Balkans and has attracted students away from more restrictive regionally-focused dance groups. His dance ensemble continues to be active across both culturally-specific events (such as the Bulgarian festival) and multicultural events (such as National Folk



Festival and Sydney Sacred Music Festival). People are drawn to his class, he tells me, because ‘they don’t care about politics’, and are excited to learn dances beyond their ancestral borders, which nevertheless share a wealth of similarities, crossovers and historical interrelationships.

### **Pan-Balkanism: Using Music to Promote Cohesion**

Inspired by his successes and looking for further ways to promote connections across national groups, Yorgo has for the last four years organised a festival dubbed the ‘Balkan Bonanza’. I attended its fourth iteration in June 2018 and was impressed by the large congregation of performing groups and audience members packed into the town hall, each representing regional groups of various Balkan heritage. The event was visited by the Mayor of Inner West Council Darcy Byrne, who proclaimed it a “wonderful celebration of multiculturalism” and praised the contributions of Eastern European migrants to Australian social life, words met by cheers and applause from the crowd. As the afternoon wore on to evening, proud parents having watched their children perform and feasted on *ćevapi*, the band took to the stage for a final round of music and social dancing. Over the microphone, Yorgo invited all of the day’s performers and their families to head towards the stage and join in the dancing: “because that’s what this festival is all about. I want to see all of you down here and dancing together!”. And they do. A large circle dance forms; variously costumed dancers link arms and dance slightly different steps to the same asymmetric rhythm. Yorgo had accomplished his vision, I thought, and I remembered something he had told me a few weeks earlier:

Folk means it belongs to the people. It doesn’t belong to an idea or a border, it belongs to the people. So, unless somebody documents that in 1343 I made up this song and I spread it through the Macedonian region and then because of the Ottoman Empire I now spread it to the Bulgarians and the Serbs and stuff...this notion of what folk music is, people need to get over. It belongs to the people.



Figure 1. Social dancing during the fourth Balkan Bonanza. Photo by author.



Figure 2. Poster advertising the fourth annual Balkan Bonanza. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/balkanbus/>

While there are moments in which she glimpses underlying tensions and old hostilities, Linda was careful to tell me that in her decades of involvement with the Sydney world music scene, her overwhelming experience has been that performers and audiences are not overly concerned with reinforcing borders of musical ownership and exclusivity:

It's really just so miniscule compared to the amount of sharing and commonality, I think. Because the reality is that the borders are pretty meaningless, really, people just don't live inside borders, and languages are shared on different sides of borders.

For Linda, the key to live music's ability to engender this sense of camaraderie and connection lies in the joy people experience by listening and moving to music together:

Dancing together, holding hands...you can't get away from how that brings people closer, and they're moving together and dancing next to each other, you don't even have to talk, but just by dancing next to each other, holding hands and smiling, you feel really close.

Moreover, the training and dedication required to become an expert performer in a particular musical tradition – taking an interest in 'someone else's music' – tends to be viewed as a sign of deep respect and flattery to another's culture. For example, when Marsala performed at the Sydney Serbian Festival in February 2018, singer Jose Zarb went about introducing the musicians on stage, joking that there was not a single Serb present – an announcement that was met by laughter and cheers among those gathered. Yorgo explained that despite not being Serbian, "[Jose]'s very known in the community, which is why he performs there every year. For Serbs it's a whole honour that somebody's singing and performing their music".

From my time immersed in conversations, events and rhetoric surrounding Balkan music performance in Sydney, it seems that narratives of cultural ownership and static identity, such as those Peeva encountered in the Balkans, are minimised in favour of diversity and exchange. While this might reflect a diasporic distancing from homeland nationalistic attachments, it is also an ethos cultivated by musicians themselves as they seek to use music, their primary artistic resource, as a means to work past divisions they sense within their communities. My observations and the reflections of my interlocutors suggest that at least momentarily, during the musical encounter, differences can be set aside and replaced with an openness towards diversity and cultural exchange. The extent to which

this fostered cohesion endures beyond the context of the musical encounter itself, and its broader impact on social identities and relations, are undoubtedly complex phenomena and remain open to future inquiry.

## **Chapter Two: Music, Memory & Diasporic Nostalgia**

Music is a powerful mnemonic trigger and can foster nostalgic moods, placing diasporic peoples in imaginative and emotional relationship to the homeland. In this chapter, I explore music as a means to transmit and keep alive cultural memory and its implications for group identity, interrogating how this process motivates individuals in conceptualising their engagements with folk music and dance. I examine the imaginative and memorial processes that accompany musical encounters, highlighting the ways in which performers generate a transportive nostalgic experience. Through ‘strategies of intensification’ (Hage, 2002), embodied audience responses can then reflect and heighten the extent to which they are emotionally implicated by the musical encounter, feeding back to a collective mood that becomes a resource for shared identity. What is the outcome of these shared, emotively contagious nostalgic experiences? I posit that diasporic experiences of nostalgia can be used to nurture a sense of familiarity and homeliness in the present.

### **Cultural Memory in Diaspora**

In diaspora, a sense of collective identity and belonging to a particular community is “nestled within a collective understanding of a common past” (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 685). Collective memories, in the context of diaspora, emerge as “identity narratives which merge ‘actual’ and ‘mythical’ past events”, mapping a diasporic community within history and place (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 685). Safran has suggested that diasporas “retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements” (1991, p. 83), and Ricoeur (2004) has highlighted how these memorial narratives stand at the intersection between individual remembering, selective forgetting, collective imagination and myth-making. As Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) articulate, diasporic identity develops both through the production of a “memorial narrative of the origin of the group”, and the development of a shared exilic identity which is “simultaneously shaping and being shaped by contact” with ‘host’ cultures (p. 687). Diasporic memory is not necessarily structured around narratives of a singular point of origin, but “is the outcome of a collective migratory trajectory, with the diaspora’s sense of distinctiveness, and of forming a minority, having thus appeared throughout the course of their emigration” (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 687). Collective memories of homeland and exile are constituted both “by

individuals who have personally experienced displacement and dispossession, or have ‘inherited’ both this history and these memories from their forbears” (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 688). A shared sense of exilic identity can link different diasporic groups to one another in a multicultural context – while their points of origin may differ, migrants share narratives of exile, displacement and uprootedness, and a drive towards cultural preservation and celebration of cultural distinctiveness within their new homes. Music plays a role in conveying narratives around cultural origins, and can connect different diasporic communities together by structuring a shared sense of exilic identity.

I spoke with several folk-dancers who highlighted how a key motivation for their interest in music stems from its role in cultural preservation and the development of a distinctive cultural identity. These dancers were regular attendees at social music and dance events, and occasionally perform folk-dance at cultural and multicultural music festivals. Hanna’s parents migrated to Australia from Hungary following the 1956 revolution, settling in south-west Sydney. While she had some contact with the Hungarian community growing up, it was not until university that Hanna sought out Hungarian folk-dance as a means to become closer to other members of the Hungarian community, because “you have something in common; they understand your history and experience of growing up”. For her, music and dance became a means through which to form and nurture a sense of community in the context of exploring her own historical and cultural identity, with music constructing the social spaces which made these connections possible. Emma’s parents, on the other hand, were “economic migrants” who emigrated from Hungary during the 1970s. Emma told me how her father had expressed that he “didn’t really feel Hungarian until he left Hungary”, prompting him to enrol his daughter in Hungarian folk-dance classes from a young age. But it wasn’t until high school, Emma explained, that she began to intellectualise dance as an exploration of her Hungarian identity as she realised that her dancing hobby set her apart from her peers and became intrinsic to her sense of individual identity.

While cultural perseverance and personal explorations of identity were clearly an important drive for those involved in folk music and dance, both Hanna and Emma were now involved with larger dance groups comprised of other Eastern European migrants and their children. Emma expressed that it was the beauty and artistry of dance itself that facilitates cross-cultural interest and openness among dancers representing different cultural backgrounds, who often share social spaces and intercultural exchange at events such as the Woodford and National Folk Festivals. Moreover, folk-dancers in diaspora

share a parallel narrative of cultural displacement and identity exploration through music. As Emma put it: “you’re connected with others because they’re on a similar journey of self-discovery, identity exploration and expression of their cultural heritage”, so while the music and dance may differ, each can recognise themselves in the artistic interests of other folk-dancers and musicians from migrant backgrounds. This sense of camaraderie was also elucidated by another folk-dancer, Lena, who suggested that interest in folk music is prevalent in diaspora “because there is that stronger impetus and drive to connect with and preserve your traditions when you are displaced”, and in the diasporic setting, belonging to a particular ethnic community marks you as unique, and is therefore an identity marker to latch onto. Moreover, Lena stressed, many migrants have historically arrived in Australia with little English and experienced a sense of isolation, and therefore music has often played a central role in establishing and structuring cultural communities where people could speak their native tongue, feel comfortable, and “help each other out”.

The importance of music to cultural preservation among migrant communities has been well documented in ethnomusicology and diaspora studies. Les Blank’s film *Živeli: Medicine for the Heart* (1987), beautifully illustrates how Serbian folk music became a symbolic expression of ethnic identity for Serbian-Americans living in Chicago. Similarly, Lill and Dieckmann (2013) posit music’s importance in the construction and maintenance of social imaginaries, while Lidskog (2016) surmises that music serves as a ‘cultural resource’ to (re)construct and (re)negotiate shifting ethnic identities. In her research on Turkish music in Berlin, Aydin describes music as a ‘memory mechanism’ which is credited as a means of “keeping memories alive, a nostalgic agent, an emotional shelter and a narrator of identity” (2016, p. 216). Not only does music connect recently emigrated peoples emotionally to their point of origin, it transfers narratives of origin and identity across generations, implicating the idea of homeland, even for those who have lived out their lives beyond its borders.

Narratives of homeland and emotional return were tied up in the way that Yorgo described to me his ancestral home of Macedonia and its musics. “I always had a really strong sense of Macedonia, even before I went there”, he told me, explaining that he had visited his mother’s homeland for the first time during his 30s. While he was growing up, Yorgo’s maternal grandparents would frequently share stories about their lives in Macedonia, often prompted by or mediated through both songs and photographs. By the time he travelled to Macedonia for the first time in 2005, Yorgo stated that “he felt like he was born there”, and that he felt a visceral and emotional sense of ‘being at home’ through

the familiarity of the places, tastes, and sounds he experienced during his visit. This sense of belonging accompanied a deep nostalgia for Macedonia triggered by the aesthetic and sensorial qualities of the homeland. Yorgo's emphasis on the viscosity of his nostalgia for a homeland he had never lived in led me to reflect on the ways in which the embodied nature of music and dance cultivates a sense of familiarity with imaginative connections to distant people, places and times. The very embodiment of music – its bodily rehearsal that entails connections between action and meaning – makes it a powerful means for remembering and imagining the past, and thus for making present the nostalgic experiences that often accompany a sense of distance from one's (actual or ancestral) homeland.

### **Defining Nostalgia(s)**

The term nostalgia – *nostos* 'return home', and *algia* 'longing' – has a long and chequered history in academic discourse. Coined by a Swiss physician in the 17th century, its early use diagnosed the symptoms of homesickness experienced by mercenaries spending long periods of time abroad. While the term shed its clinical connotations during the 19th century, it continued to describe a romantic sense of longing for a lost home, particularly a home irretrievable due to the onwards march of time. For this reason, nostalgic longing has been associated with romantic naivety, and characterised by many as antithetical to progress and modernity in its "defeatist attitude to present and future...seeking to attain the unattainable, to satisfy the unsatisfiable" (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 920). As well as being portrayed as an overly sentimental mode, nostalgia has been critiqued as promoting selective, idealised, commodified or kitsch representations of the past which eschew complex historical and political understanding and shun progress (e.g., Greene, 1991; Jameson, 1991). In these characterisations, nostalgia refers to a "romanticising and consequently historically falsifying backward gaze in time" (Winkler, 2013, p. 23) which is understood as fundamentally regressive. What is common to these critiques is that nostalgia is characterised as backwards-looking, as fixated on the past because of dissatisfaction with the present and as a refusal to consider the future.

However, recent work on migrant and post-socialist nostalgia (Boym, 2001; Winkler, 2013) has expanded this straightforward reading to consider the subversive, constructive, and future-oriented potentials of nostalgic longing. Boym's (2001) delineation of reflective and restorative nostalgia is particularly useful for thinking about the way nostalgia might be experienced affectively through music. Nostalgias of both type build on



“the sense of loss of community and cohesion and offer a comforting collective script for individual longing” (Boym, 2001, p. 42), but with different outcomes in mind. Restorative nostalgia, as Boym defines it, belongs to the reconstructive projects of nation states; it “puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps”, seeking to recreate what has been lost (Boym, 2001, p. 41). Restorative nostalgia does not conceive of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition, and is often played out in nationalist agendas aimed at the “transhistorical reconstruction of lost home”, traditions and monuments of the past (Boym, 2001, p. xviii). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, “dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance ...[it] lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time” (Boym, 2001, p. 41). In contrast to nostalgia of the first kind, reflective nostalgia revels in the shared experience of loss and longing – it does not seek to reconstruct what has been lost but takes pleasure in its reminiscence. Reflective nostalgia, then, is an affective space which attends to individual and cultural memory, savouring “details and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself” (Boym, 2001, p. 49). What then, is the object of such nostalgia? According to Boym the object of romantic nostalgia is always “beyond the present space of experience, somewhere in the twilight of the past or on the island of utopia where time has happily stopped” (Boym, 2001, p. 13). Aware that ‘home’ is irrecoverable, reflective nostalgics are driven to share and narrate their experiences of loss in the present. Reflective nostalgia is not then a longing for the historical past per se, but a meditation on shattered fragments of memory, on the past that might have been, and the dreams held within.

## Music & Nostalgia

Reflective nostalgia, then, has the power to bring people closer together through shared affective experience, as music can provide a vehicle for fostering social cohesion through emotional attunement (Boer & Abubakar, 2014). Boym’s volume explores how the collected objects of migrants (‘memory museums’) mediate people’s relationship with the past and can trigger powerful emotion and mnemonic responses, allowing one to “imagine other times and places and plunge into domestic daydreaming and armchair nostalgia” (2001, p. 15). But in addition to objects, research has highlighted the analogous role of music as a powerful trigger of nostalgic affect (e.g., Barrett et al., 2010). Because music can carry “powerful affective or sensuous charge, [it] can act as a catalyst of moving surges of memory” (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 935), and shared nostalgic affect can “bond

diverse categories of actors and constitute a source of mnemonic convergence” (Angé & Berliner, 2014, p. 9). Connell and Gibson, for example, explore how Portuguese *fado* music expresses “a sorrow that was almost hope”, arguing that “migrant music epitomises dream and nostalgia combined” (2003, pp. 161-162) by playing with emotions of both loss and hope. In migrant music, “a sense of loss associated with the past [often] coexists with a sense of longing associated with the future” (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 936), thus traversing the ambiguous relationship between both past and present. These ways of thinking about nostalgia are pertinent to the analysis of musical experiences: not only is music a powerful catalyst for nostalgic emotion, communal nostalgic experiences constitute a source of emotional and mnemonic convergence that contributes to group identification and shared representations of the past. Hence, the relationship between music and nostalgia needs to be considered both in terms of emotion and in terms of collective reminiscence and myth-making about the past.

### **Performing Nostalgia**

During my research, several people spoke to me of music’s power to activate nostalgic longing, and it became clear that musical experiences place people not only in imaginative relation to the homeland, but also to one another. It was Stolé, a Serbian *truba* (trumpet) player and band leader, who first pointed this out to me in recounting a memorable performance. He and his band had recently played at a Sydney wedding between a young couple from Serbian and Macedonian heritage. During the wedding reception, the bride’s father led Stolé to the middle of the dancefloor and knelt down, pushing the end of the trumpet up against his ear. “Play”, he commanded, sliding cash between the trumpet’s tubes. As the trumpet’s notes began to ring out and reverberate through his body, the man broke down in tears. Stolé recounted that he struggled to continue playing through waves of bittersweet emotion in witnessing and sharing in the man’s mourning. “We [migrants] all carry this hurt around with us, that’s why the music makes us so emotional”, Stolé explains. “Everybody wants to go back”, he tells me, adding that as he gets older his desire to return to his hometown of Belgrade, which he left in the wake of political violence in 1991, grows stronger. But he adds that while many Balkan migrants feel loss, nostalgia or a desire to return, most are unable to – they have built new lives and communities in Australia, and in many cases, war and political upheaval means that the home they long for simply no longer exists. This desire to return to an

irrecoverable past is accompanied by intense experiences of loss, grief and nostalgia. “We are a very emotional people”, he says, and much of that emotion gets expressed and experienced through music. Music then, becomes a powerful tool for sharing and indulging collective experiences of nostalgia.

Nostalgic affect is heightened during alcohol- and music-infused celebrations such as weddings, where listeners express their appreciation for the music by balancing tips for musicians atop their instruments. The more emotionally affected by the music, Stolé explains, the more lavish and carried away people become in their offerings, often throwing not just money, but credit cards and jewellery to the performers. “Take it, take it all” they say, because the experience offered by music is invaluable. Linda has observed similar audience experiences while performing with various Sydney bands: “when someone recognises a song or language or style that they’ve grown up with, it can make them very nostalgic, and emotional...and maybe they’ll connect more to that than other pieces in the concert”. I have witnessed such audience reactions on many occasions. They usually begin with a glint of excited recognition as the opening bars to a much-loved song ring out. This is often followed by a demonstration of one’s appreciation for the music; by jumping up to dance, by squeezing to the front of the stage, by clasping the hands of those nearby, by singing the words loudly, by placing one’s hand on one’s heart, and so on. The way that the audience responds bodily to the music demonstrates their affective involvement and how nostalgically implicated they are upon hearing the music; this broadcasting of affect is equally an offering to participate and share in the meaning-making experience.

In thinking through these visceral and bodily audience responses to nostalgically charged musical experiences, Hage’s (2002) work on Lebanese-Australian migrants provides considerable insight. Hage asserts that a sense of affective and symbolic distance from the homeland underpins experiences of nostalgia within migrant communities. He provides a vignette of Maurice, a Lebanese migrant to Australia, interacting with the daily newspaper from Lebanon. While reading the paper, Maurice can often be heard yelling out in frustration or disagreement, gesturing as though to an imagined listener, and slapping the paper with the back of his hand. Hage terms these actions “strategies of intensification”, aimed at “narrowing the physical and symbolic gap” (2002, p. 200) between the homeland and displaced person. These strategies heighten the intensity with which the present moment is experienced as affective and involving, and are motivated by a desire to “be more implicated” by that with which one is engaging (2002, p. 200). In considering Hage’s news reader, a distinct parallel emerges between his ‘strategies of intensification’ and the

reactions of audience members during the musical performances I have described above. The generous offering of tips to musicians, heartily singing along, cheering, raising one's arms in the air, or rising from one's chair to dance and encouraging others to do so, all constitute forms not only of demonstrating, but heightening the extent to which one is emotionally implicated by the musical encounter.

For Hage, these strategies reveal an element of migrant guilt over the distance between themselves and the homeland – in heightening their emotional implication in homeland events and cultural production, migrants minimise the guilt of distance by participating in a “moral economy of social belonging” (2002, p. 203). However, Hage's analysis focuses on how migrants participate in these strategies by, and largely for, themselves, where in contrast live music performance is inherently social and participatory. More than assuaging a sense of guilt in dialogue with homeland production, the strategies I have described above are not merely about ‘performing’ for oneself, but also serve to symbolically and emotionally align oneself with the experiences of those nearby, signalling one's belonging to a shared diasporic identity on the basis of shared nostalgic longing. What these insights from observation reveal is that shared affect during the musical encounter seems to be of great importance to audiences, with people adopting strategies to align themselves emotionally with those around them. Such strategies indicate that not only do audiences respond positively to musical performances which evoke an embodied familiarity with home, they actively calibrate their responses to heighten the emotional transformation brought about by musically-evoked nostalgia. Given research discussed hitherto regarding shared emotional states, fostered cohesion and their implications for group identity, I suspect that these shared nostalgic moods serve to reinforce the sense in which people feel connected to those around them during the musical encounter.

### **Musical Constructions of Place**

I have argued for a shared musical experience that distributes between social agents feelings of nostalgia for places both remembered and imagined. I turn now to consider how music transforms our sense of place and might allow us to glimpse traces of the past in the present. As Stokes argues, music plays a vital role in the ‘relocation’ of self; “the musical event...evokes and organises collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity” (1994, p. 3). The consumption (and production) of imagery and narratives through media (including

music) leads migrants to continually revise and reshape previously accepted and remembered versions of the homeland. In this way musical performance evokes sites distant in time and space, and actively constructs place in the present. A sense of place emerges out of dynamic relationships between people, objects, and their environments; it is not purely material but attends to “the imaginary places, ideals, and real but intangible objects that underpin and produce material places and social spaces” (Davidson, Park, & Shields, 2013, p. 6). Sites of musical performance, then, emerge in dynamic relation between the physical locations in which they operate, the performers and audiences that inhabit them, and the intangible ideas, memories and narratives evoked through musical and social interaction.

In thinking through music’s power to construct and even transform familiar spaces, I was reminded of Goran Bregović’s 2016 performance in the concert hall of the Sydney Opera House. Bregović, who self-identifies as Yugoslav, along with his ‘Wedding and Funeral Band’ brought his much-loved songs, many of which were made famous through the films of Serbian director Emir Kusturica, to an audience of largely ex-Yugoslav migrants and their families now settled in Australia.<sup>11</sup> The performance transformed the cavernous space of the Sydney Opera House concert hall into a venue unlike I had ever experienced it before. Audiences sang along loudly to songs they knew by heart, and from early on during the performance the entire audience was on their feet or on their chairs dancing to the music. When the confines of the narrow rows proved too difficult to dance around, audience members gathered down the aisles and in front of the stage, as though in defiance of the space, forming dance lines that snaked their way along linked arms up the aisles and down the rows, until it felt as though the entire audience was joined as one large dance circle. Far removed from the often-austere setting of the concert hall, which plays host to ballets and opera, the space of the Sydney Opera House was transformed into something which felt remarkably intimate – more akin to a family or wedding celebration that seemed to stretch out in every direction.

Bregović’s performances have been described as constructing a “fictive *kafana* atmosphere” (Marković, 2013, p. 51). As Bregović remarked in an interview about the Sydney performance (Burke, 2016), this emotional and spatial transformation is “like a

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<sup>11</sup> While Bregović is not a member of the Australian community under study, his music has nonetheless been fundamental to global representations of the Balkans and the export of Balkan music internationally. His concerts bring music ‘from home’ to diasporic Balkan communities in Australia, and his work continues to be highly influential on Balkan musical performance in Sydney. Consequently, Bregović’s work echoes within the discourses around Balkan identity in diasporic and world music settings.

click, a point of no return, when even the stiffest audience in the most impressive classic halls gets caught by the rhythm ... the whole place comes alive, and the concert becomes a communal experience”. Bregović adds that in countries such as Australia where there is “a big concentration of immigrants from the Balkans, nostalgia is more palpable”, adding that as well as older Balkan emigres, he also receives mail from many “young Australians who come to the concert because their parents were marked by my music” (quoted in Burke, 2016). Imaginatively and physically, the performance site is transformed into a place evocative of the Balkans as remembered or imagined by its audience. Place, Stokes asserts, “is something which is constructed through music with an intensity not found elsewhere in [migrants’] social lives.” (1994, p. 114). As diasporic communities are separated by the gulf of distance (and time) from cultural production in the homeland, music can play a crucial role in “building fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders” (Davis, Fischer-Hornung, & Kardux, 2010, p. 3) and connect migrants imaginatively to the homeland.

### **Music as Transportive**

The examples illustrated above hint at the way music provides a means of virtual travel, of temporarily revisiting and accessing those places that exist in the collective memory and imagination of performers and audiences. Perhaps this is why themes of travel and the transportive power of music are so common in the rhetoric and advertising around the performances of Balkan music in Sydney. A survey of advertisements reveals countless similar invitations: to “come with us”, “pack your bags for an evening of virtual travel”, “let us take you on a whirlwind journey”, “come on a real musical adventure”, “a musical journey around the world”, “an amazing trip around the world”, taking you “straight to the streets of...”, a distant land, or perhaps one’s childhood or ancestral home. Similarly, accompanying music discourses highlight the imaginative journey of the audience. In his review of Sydney band Lolo Lovina’s album *Rromantics*, John Shand (2016a) suggests that their music “seems to come from an imaginary land nestled in the Balkans”. Similarly, Shand (2017) described a Nadya & Zoran’s 101 Candles Orchestra concert as transporting its audience to the “the Tavern at the End of Euroverse”, an imaginary “crucible of multiculturalism ... [where] Greeks, Anglos and Italians mingled and danced with Serbs and other Balkans”.



Figure 3. Album cover for Lolo Lovina's *Rromantics*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnshand.com.au/>



Figure 4. Promotional image of Nadya & Zoran's 101 Candles Orchestra. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/Nadyas101CandlesOrchestra/>

Experiences of musical transportation are also engineered during live performance. At a Lolo Lovina show I attended in January 2018, singer Sarah Bedak encouraged the crowd to flood the dancefloor for the final few songs of the night's performance. "Let's imagine we live in a city, one of those great romantic cities like Paris or Budapest, where musicians can play not just once a month, but every night of the week!" This invitation, to imagine ourselves somewhere else, was met by cheers and amplified enthusiasm from the audience. The invitation to be transported through music is not about place per se, but acts as encouragement for the audience to respond to the music in a certain way – with enthusiasm and energy that matches imagined European cities where live music is a fundamental part of life, and where experiences contain a heightened sense of emotion and romanticism. Similarly, during Nadya & Zoran's 101 Candles Orchestra's shows, singer Nadya Golski structures our musical journey over an imagined map of Eastern Europe. During a March 2018 performance, the band took a break in their largely Balkan routine to perform a song well-known to a group of Polish audience members. "We're going to head a little further north now", she guides us, as the opening bars of the Polish song are met by excitement from a table in front of the stage. Once over, Nadya again guides us into the following song: "Okay, now we're going back to the Balkans with the Gypsies", she says, before launching into Šaban Bajramović's "I Braval Pudela". Through music and the performative gestures that accompany it, the places of collective memory and imagination are conjured, with music the means of travel or escape. Migrant or no, we are collectively narrated a journey of nomadism, of cultural exploration, of displacement and of longing.

### **Shared Nostalgia & Diasporic Intimacy**

In this chapter I have highlighted how shared experiences of nostalgia for homeland bring diasporic communities together and can foster social cohesion through shared affective experience. Performers harness music's incredible power to affect and to transport its audiences, triggering nostalgic longing and conjuring places distant in time and place. Nostalgia contributes to a sense of 'diasporic intimacy' where migrants experience "shared longing without belonging ... haunted by the images of home and homeland" yet also indulging "some of the furtive pleasures of exile" (Boym, 2001, p. 253). Musically-evoked nostalgia, experienced together, creates an intimacy among audiences: by sharing physical and social spaces, by holding hands, by dancing together, but also emotionally, by distributing contagious emotional experience. Reflective nostalgics "can create a global diasporic identity based on the experience of immigration and internal multiculturalism"



(Boym, 2001, p. 342). So reflective nostalgia, experienced through music, has the power to foster diasporic intimacy among disparate migrant groups, precisely because it dwells on the shared experiences of exile, loss and longing, and binds these affective experiences as the bases for a trans-exilic identity.

In this sense, migrant music-making can be viewed as part of a larger process of making-home in the host country. Boym argues that immigrants' souvenirs, and the stories told about them, "reveal more about making a home abroad than about reconstructing the original loss" (2001, p. 328). The same can be said of music in diaspora, which provides a means of familiarising the unfamiliar and of engendering community cohesion. If home-making is about building the feeling of being 'at home', then intimations of the 'lost homeland', such as music, food, and objects, can be seen as "affective building blocks" used by migrants to "make themselves feel at home where they actually are" (Hage, 1997, p. 102). Rather than a "means to escape the realities of the host country", they constitute part of migrants' strategies of settlement (Hage, 1997, p. 104). Nostalgic longing is another such affective building block which guides home-making in the host country, as migrants "seek to foster the kind of homely feelings they know" (1997, p. 105). Thus, nostalgia is harnessed by migrants as part of the process of home-making and community building in the here and now.

## **Chapter Three: Balkan Diversity & Australian Multiculturalism**

The popularity of newly-composed folk music (NCFM) among performers and audiences from Australia's Balkan diaspora parallels the enduring popularity of the genre within Southeast Europe since the collapse of socialism during the 1980s and 90s. In this chapter I provide a brief overview of the history and qualities integral to Balkan NCFM and consider what qualities (aesthetic and thematic) of the genre might account for its enduring popularity in diasporic settings such as Sydney. In doing so I consider how the genre of NCFM conveys and circulates particular notions of Balkan identity and music, which reinforce a narrative of ethnic diversity and musical hybridity. Idealised narratives of a diverse but united Balkans serve as creative resources for musicians and audiences who are invested in intercultural musicking and multicultural spaces in which collaboration and sociality between different cultural groups is encouraged. In this sense, nostalgic narratives of the past are not merely affective (as discussed in Chapter Two), but have political dimensions as well, where a nostalgia for the Balkans 'as they were' is directed towards a vision for what successful multiculturalism might look like in the context of Australia.

### **Sounds & Themes of Newly-Composed Folk Music**

The emergence of NCFM as a genre has been typically described in the context of urbanisation following WWII, and the establishment of Yugoslavia and neighbouring socialist states (Rasmussen, 2002). By its critics, the popularisation of NCFM has been described as a "process of cultural impoverishment" brought about by the mass migration of people to urban centres during the second half of the 20th century, and is associated with loss of rural folk traditions and ways of life as well as their imitation (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 241). Socialist states across Eastern Europe played a pivotal role in the revitalisation and re-popularisation of 'folk' music, particularly during the 1960s and 70s, which they considered to be "an efficient means of mass education and consolidating sentiments of national cohesion" (Aubert, 2007, p. 50). Many musicians were educated at folkloric institutions during this era and were provided salaries as performers at national theatres. However, the downfall of communism across Eastern Europe "provoked the disappearance of this system and the unemployment of many musicians" (Aubert, 2007, p. 51), leading some to remember fondly the stability of employment that they had enjoyed under socialism.

An important (and often maligned) characteristic of NCFM is its ‘stylistic promiscuity’, involving techniques of recycling and appropriation. Its main features include “novelty, temporariness, bricolage and kitsch...a lack of historicity [or] stylistic coherence” that result from its “eclectic interviewing” of different musical styles and their recombination (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 242). Music scholars attribute these qualities to a number of factors, including the legacy of Ottoman rule, the role of Romani musicians in musical propagation, and the unity of former Yugoslav nations (Marković, 2013, p. 55). Whether through common musical inheritance or cooperative musical transmission across social groups, the fact remains “that many music practices in the Balkans are closely related, both at the level of stylistic similarities and at the level of common tunes” (Marković, 2013, p. 56). As Rasmussen describes, NCFM can be described as a Balkan pastiche, where artists freely borrowed from different regional styles and juxtaposed different folk music traditions alongside Western pop influences. Yugoslavia’s non-alignment policy shaped cultural production in relation to both east and west, with the National Radio Network adopting “representative diversity as the core principle of its programming policies” and promoting “internal ethnic and regional diversity” (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 254). Thus, Rasmussen argues, NCFM is a musical expression of the Yugoslav experiment as a nation; that is, it reflects former Yugoslavia’s ethnic diversity and positioning between east and west, “while affirming its own identity (and ‘energy’) as a Balkan subculture” (1995, p. 255). NCFM utilises styles and motifs associated with different Balkan regions, some of the most popular being Macedonian rhythms, Bosnian ‘oriental’ singing, Bulgarian choral techniques, Serbian brass (*trubaci*) music, as well as the “complex of Gypsy music” (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 247). Because NCFM crosses regional borders and has garnered popularity through Southeast Europe, it has served as a “major linkage in inter-ethnic music making” (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 247). The unifying stylistic underpinning of NCFM has been vaguely described as an ‘oriental’ sound, the characteristics of which include “richly-ornamented melodies with various trill patterns used both decoratively and structurally, and minor modes featuring augmented seconds” (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 248). This sound can be considered as a Balkan musical continuum across regional axes that primarily include South Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Turkey.

Thematically, NCFM suggests its own origins in village musical practices, and is associated with notions of the ‘genuine’, the ‘pristine’ and the ‘authentic’. Fundamentally NCFM has a romantic aesthetic which often dwells on “the unattainable state of emotional fulfillment” through narratives of unrequited love, existential solitude, separation from

home and family, and nostalgic sentiment (Rasmussen, 1995, p. 250). The key setting for its performance and audition is the *kafana*, spaces central to Balkan social life which serve food, alcohol and often host live music. As Rasmussen writes, “the sheer enjoyment of the *kafana* ambience is inextricably linked with music, particularly live performances...the *kafana* institution, with its high concentration in both rural and urban settings, continues to provide grassroots validation of NCFM; as musicians like to put it, ‘*kafana* defines the hit’” (1995, p. 250). According to Ceribašić and colleagues, the sonic practices of NCFM performers have a counter-hegemonic feature in the sense that through exchange, collaboration, borrowing and plagiarising, they “run against the forces of cultural homogeneity impressed across the region by the policies of *national* music” (2008, p. 41). As Buchanan has stressed of the Balkans, “nationalism remains a powerful and potentially destructive force”, but in looking at different ethnomusicological case studies, it is clear that it is through the agency of musicians themselves that Balkan music embraces “many remarkable inherent commonalities and...equally abundant, intriguing and captivating differences” (2007, p. 49). Shared and overlapping musical styles and repertoires, familiar dance tunes, and market-driven newly-composed folk remain an integral part of the Balkan musical landscape within the region and in diasporic settings.

## **Narratives & Images of the Balkans**

Mijatović highlights how the discourses of NCFM present a reinterpretation of the Balkan past “in which multiculturalism and shared musical repertoires are seen as a feature of the Byzantine legacy in the region” (2003, p. 207). Rather than possessing, as Todorova put it, the “handicap of heterogeneity” (2009, p. 133), the historical Balkans are reframed in NCFM as a “multicultural utopia, wherein the multitude of intertwined cultures and musics renders all issues of authenticity irrelevant” (Marković, 2013, p. 58). Marković posits that this idealised vision of the Balkans and its musics has been fed back to Balkan musicians themselves, “who began to incorporate aspects of this style’s mediated images into their own musical identities, in order to market the same stereotypes back to their local audiences” – a marketing strategy she strongly critiques Goran Bregović for adopting (2013, p. 60). ‘Balkan parties’, in their various iterations around the world, provide their participants “with a highly invented event, with an emphasis on (musical and ideological) interchangeability, in vein with Balkan blurriness and celebrated diversity” (Marković, 2013, p. 63). Marković adds that within world music discourse, “the otherwise shameful multiethnic and mongrel nature of the region turns into a positive symbolic resource” for

the celebration of multiculturalism (2013, p. 64). The Balkans of NCFM, therefore, are promoted as a post-nationalist success story of multiethnic collaboration and unity.

This idealised notion of the Balkans – as a place of cultural diversity and musical exchange – seems to correspond with the visions of intercultural collaboration and sociality promoted among the Balkan music and world music communities in Sydney. I turn now to consider the discourses surrounding Balkan musical performance, and analyse how bands' marketing materials and self-representations reflect common tropes in their imagining of the Balkans. The promotional images used by Balkanski Bus (Figure 5), "a Balkan group playing the social dance and wedding music of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Greece, Turkey and Romany Gypsies on a range of traditional and electric instruments" ("Balkanski Bus," 2018), and Mara! with Martenitsa Choir (Figure 6), who are "modelled on the magnificent Bulgarian female state choirs" ("Martenitsa Choir," n.d.), share several common attributes. In both images, the musicians are pictured perched on top of or inside vehicles, alluding to their migratory character and the ambiguous (or imaginary) nature of the performers' location. In Figure 6, the group are pictured in the clouds, hinting at the transcendent and transportive potential of the musical experience. In both images, the bands are seen 'arriving' in vehicles, suggesting that they have travelled or originated from afar and returned with music for our enjoyment. Figure 6 also suggests an air of chaotic frivolity, with the choir members mid-dance, instruments strewn about ready to be played, and food and drink laid out on a table suggesting a festive gathering. Interestingly, both images also contain animals, with Figure 5 featuring farm animals such as chickens and goats, evoking a rural or pastoral setting, which is reinforced by the inclusion of traditional dress and instruments such as the *gaida* and *tapan*.

Lolo Lovina (Figure 7) advertise their work as "an intoxicating brew infused with Unza, Swing and Balkan Gypsy beats...reflect[ing] the cosmopolitan identity of an artist, who grew up with three native tongues and cultures" ("Lolo Lovina," n.d.). This photograph, used for promotional purposes, pictures the band performing from their signature 'Lolo' caravan which they use as a stage during outdoor concerts. Similarly, the band makes use of a vehicle to evoke ideas of nomadism and migration (human and musical), along with imagery of the pastoral. The poster for the event 'The Love of a Mystic' (Figure 8), a music and folk-dance event during Sydney Sacred Musical Festival, features traditional dress, suggesting at the authenticity and antiquity of the music and dance being displayed. We are promised a "mystical journey" through our encounter with the sacred traditional and its potential as a spiritual and transcendent experience. These

tropes suggest that the music is being brought to us from afar, rolling up from somewhere else more authentic and connected to tradition, ready to enthrall and perhaps provide experiences that transcend the everyday. Alongside these evocations of the exotic, however, is a celebration of difference and diversity, where old and new, ‘exotic’ and familiar, are presented alongside one another, and a sense of inclusivity is suggested through the invitation to join in the frivolity.



Figure 5. Promotional image of Balkanski Bus. Retrieved from [www.facebook.com/balkanbus/](http://www.facebook.com/balkanbus/)



Figure 6. Promotional image of Mara! with Martenitsa Choir. Retrieved from <http://camelotlounge.com/>





Figure 7. Lolo Lovina performing in Sydney from their caravan stage. Retrieved from <https://lololovina.com/lolo-the-gypsy-caravan-stage/>



Figure 8. Advertisement for Sydney Sacred Music Festival's 'The Love of a Mystic'. Retrieved from <http://www.sydneysacredmusicfestival.org/>

The way in which these bands choose to market themselves and their identity as Balkan performers resonates distinctly with the narratives of 'Balkan-ness' the genre of NCFM has been criticised for promoting. Problematically, Marković's frustration at NCFM's claim to, and supposed lack of, authenticity reinforces the notion that *real* authenticity is to be found elsewhere in Balkan musical tradition. Her critique of NCFM's "highly invented event" (2013, p. 63) further fails to take seriously the fantasies bound up in popular music performance. In Marković's view, these problematic constructions of 'Balkan-ness' have been internalised by musicians themselves, who simply reproduce these tired stereotypes for their audiences. However, my research suggests that many performers of Balkan music in Sydney are much more reflexive and self-aware than this narrative gives them credit for. Performers frequently play with the illusion of authenticity in their creative work, provoking the imagination and fantasies of their audience for distinct narrative effect. The idealised Balkans of NCFM, with its "blurriness and celebrated diversity" (Marković, 2013, p. 63), resonates with these bands' investment in intercultural arts practices.

Running parallel to these images of an imagined Balkans are narratives about the power of musical performance to connect and foster understanding between diverse peoples. The rhetoric surrounding these performances infuses music with a potential to unite its audience and create a community where differences are embraced and celebrated. A common sentiment is that multicultural line-ups and repertoires can enhance audiences' appreciation of other cultures. For example, Stolé & the Black Train Band market themselves with the following blurb when advertising upcoming live performances:

Led by Stolé Petrovski, the Black Train Band is made up of exceptional musicians from countries all over the world and together, this group is certain to enhance your admiration, love and respect for music from different cultures ... Woven throughout the exceptionally rich music are the traditions, hardships, forbidden love affairs, suffering and struggles ever present in nomadic existence. ("Stole and the Black Train Band," 2011)

The band Marsala, often touted as Sydney's leading world music band, similarly present their artistic work as "music without borders" ("Marsala," n.d.), promoting a positive approach to diversity and ethnic difference. In a 2009 promotional video on YouTube, a voiceover intones during footage of the band making their way via ferry to a performance in Sydney's iconic Darling Harbour:



Music is an international language. It is a place where we all understand each other. A place where emotions are shared without explanation. (Sébire, 2009)

Indeed, Marsala's concerts are famous for their passion, energy and diverse audiences. In a 2016 review of a Marsala concert, music journalist and reviewer John Shand proclaimed:

This is the real multicultural Australia: neither threat, failure, myth nor aspiration, but a thumping reality. Migration can be a glue rather than a source of division, because it is something most of us share, even if coming from spectacularly diverse places. Express this diversity in music, as Marsala does so joyously, and watch the various ethnic pools cohere. Young and old, from all corners of the world, the audience members responded as one: dancing, laughing, clapping and singing. This is what our politicians don't get: the arts are not a luxury, but the secret that converts an economy into a community. (Shand, 2016b)

Similarly, in a 2005 interview Yaron Hallis, who leads the band Monsieur Camembert and who founded some of the key world music venues in Sydney including QIRKZ, Camelot Lounge and Django Bar, described the relationship between musical hybridity and multiculturalism in the following words:

It's not static ... Gypsy music is constantly drawing on external influences to pepper, spice up the music. They're open to absorbing other musical and cultural influences. There's a connection between music and the collision of cultures in Australia. It's the ultimate manifestation of multiculturalism. It's an exciting trend. Music is so much more vast and varied than it has been in a long time. ("Gyp-rock," 2005)

The relationship between stylistic eclecticism and multiculturalism is further reinforced through the musical repertoires of groups marketing themselves under the label of 'Balkan' music. As well as the hybridity inherent to Balkan NCFM, which makes up a substantial portion of their repertoires, groups often borrow influences from other (often neighbouring) musical traditions, reinvent Western pop songs in the style of Balkan music, or compose new music which speaks to their lives and positioning within Australia. For example, Lolo Lovina's rearrangements of popular tunes "Paint It Black" and "Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps" reimagine pop songs as frenzied Balkan dance tunes, while their original

track “Lolo Loco Kolo”, arranged by guitarist Dave Carr, blends progressive metal with classic *kolo* dance motifs. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, groups also frequently perform popular folk tunes to appeal to a particular portion of their audience or reflect the musical lineages of different band members. In pulling different musical styles and histories into one repertoire, the performers assert to their audience that they belong together, either through shared musical ancestries or shared emotions and narratives. In this way artists working in the world music scene perform the same kind of sonic bricolage inherent to NCFM, borrowing from and juxtaposing different styles in a playful way that reflects the diversity of their influences and band membership, and reinforces a celebration of diversity. In the context of diasporic musicking, this also brings into dialogue different migrant groups’ narratives of displacement and thus equates their experiences of nostalgia.

### **Balkan Nostalgia & Australian Multiculturalism**

Place and the past are “collectively created” during musical performance (Şenay, 2009, p. 74). For migrants who have escaped war and political upheaval to start new lives in Australia, the ‘place’ re-experienced through musical performance is both the homeland of personal memory, and its nostalgic reimagining imbued with the ideals and hopes one holds for home in the present. In Şenay’s research on a Turkish migrant musical performance in Sydney aimed at celebrating the city of Istanbul, she elucidates how imagery, narratives and music bound up in the performance displayed a “nostalgia for an idealised city” (2009, p. 74). The version of Istanbul conveyed through the performance, Şenay suggests, reflects the migrants’ longing for an idealised Kemalist Turkey heavily influenced and co-constructed by state narratives. Hence the musical performance of nostalgia is not merely an emotional experience, but a political act “directed to the creation of a desired homeland” (Şenay, 2009, p. 74). Winkler (2013) hints at the political and subversive potentials of nostalgia in her exploration of a ceramic mug exemplifying the “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for the east) phenomenon that persists in Germany. The mug’s decorations pronounce the positive aspects of life under socialism, concluding that “not everything was good, but many things were better”. Winkler argues that nostalgic items such as the kitsch mug allow for “counter-hegemonic practices that give voice to aspects of the East German past that dominant discourses fail or refuse to address” (2013, p. 20). In expressing nostalgia for the GDR, the mug flips the dominant historical narrative (that socialism was bad) and hints at elements of the past that might be worth celebrating or reclaiming. Similarly, the reclamation of the term ‘Balkan’ and the recreation of the

narrative around its character and identity as a region challenges the negative stereotyping that has accompanied the term for decades (see Todorova, 2009), providing an alternate narrative that underscores cultural commonality. NCFM and its embrace of 'Balkan' identity repaints the historical Balkans in a positive light by highlighting the diversity and interconnectedness of its musics and peoples. The myth-making power of 'Balkan music' and the shared identity narratives it promotes serve as creative resources for collective identification among Sydney's Balkan diasporas, narratives which are creatively drawn upon by performers passionate about intercultural engagement and the role music might play in its realisation.

### **The 'Future' of Nostalgia**

Nostalgia evokes certain other places and certain other times, but in so doing it recreates and transforms the present by drawing on narratives of the past to inform the future. As scholars such as Boym (2001) and Bradbury (2012) have suggested, nostalgia needs to be reconfigured not simply as a desire to return to the past; it also speaks to hopes for things to come. Rather than being anachronistic, this take on nostalgia "opens up a positive dimension in nostalgia, one associated with desire for engagement with difference, with aspiration and critique, and with the identification of ways of living lacking in modernity" (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 921). Hence, nostalgia is both melancholic and utopic, revealing relationships that exist between past and present, and carrying with it a "politics of the future" (Boyer, 2012, p. 25). With this in mind, we need to reframe diasporic music-making practices as not merely about 'indulging' a shared nostalgia for the past, but as a means of utilising and disseminating narratives of the past that serve as a model for the kind of community one would like to co-construct. In mediating between past and future, nostalgia provides a certain narrative freedom: "not a freedom from memory but a freedom to remember, to choose the narratives of the past and remake them", that they might impact on "improving social and political conditions in the present as ideals, not as fairy tales come true" (Boym, 2001, pp. 354-355). Music actively constitutes participants' embodied experiences of social connection and belonging to political and ideological ends. The society envisioned by NCFM, its own brand of nostalgic idealism and the unified Balkans it imagines, becomes a blueprint for the embrace of diversity, mutual respect and intercultural creativity which the world music project strives to bring into being.

## Limitations, Future Directions & Concluding Remarks

Before concluding it is necessary to highlight some of the limitations of my research, and to acknowledge questions I have been unable to address within the parameters of the current project. In this thesis, I have omitted discussion of the term ‘Gypsy’ within Australian music scenes, the parallel adoption and proliferation of ‘Gypsy music’ within international world music marketing, and the effects of such a discourse on representations and experiences of Romani musicians at home and on the global stage. While these issues are pertinent to the musical networks under study, I have not explored these topics in detail for several reasons: the identities and positioning of those I interviewed, my focus on ‘Balkan’ identity politics and homeland narratives, and the lack of space within the scope of this thesis to address Balkan and Gypsy music categories side by side. However, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of several authors to understanding the proliferation and exoticisation of Romani music and musicians in the international market, ongoing issues of discrimination and inequality, and the way Romani musicians negotiate ethnic identity in musical spheres (e.g., Piotrowska, 2013; Silverman, 2012; Van de Port, 1999). Further research is needed to address the frequent adoption of ‘Gypsy’ and Romani as categories of world music, their marketing and associated connotations, and their relationship to and impact upon Romani peoples living in Australia. It would also be fruitful in future analyses to compare use of the terms ‘Balkan’ and ‘Gypsy’ in music marketing (as they are often used relatedly), and to compare their meanings and interpretations among insider and outsider musical performers and audiences.

Another limitation in this project stems from my mixed methodology, as I chose to collect data from a wide range of sources and focus my analyses on overlapping performer networks and broader discourses surrounding Balkan and world music performance. While this method provided insights into music’s narrative relationship to diasporic identity and homeland, it limited the depth of my insights into specific ethnic communities, individuals, intersections of class and gender, and the relationship between people’s engagement with musical performance and other aspects of their lives. As Stokes has argued, the musical production of diasporic communities must be seen “in relationship to everyday lives outside of such privileged spaces and privileged art producers” (2004, p. 62). While I have hinted at the ways live musical performance might foster social cohesion during the musical encounter itself, a program for future research would be to investigate what happens when

the performance comes to an end; how do musical experiences of nostalgia and cohesion carry on (or not) into other aspects of people's lives? While my interest in diasporic musical practices has been focused upon the social spaces in which they are embedded, it would also be fruitful in future research to examine how the social processes I have discussed are played out musically; that is, how do the musical forms themselves carry, transform and reflect shifting social identities?

Musical performances and their accompanying discourses provide a glimpse into the complexities and multi-faceted nature of diasporic musicking, and the way musical settings can forge intercultural networks, collaborations and friendships. In this thesis I have highlighted how analyses of musical identity and hybridity in diaspora should be grounded in the social networks in which musical performance and production take place. In adopting this approach, I have underscored the particularities of the Australian case, and how the diversity of its musical practices and communities create a unique social context for investigating forms of music-making, dialogue and exchange. I would like to conclude by noting two ways in which my account of diasporic musicking within the Balkan music scene in Sydney depart from common assumptions in the ethnomusicological literature. The first is that diasporic musicking is not located in 'bounded' communities based on ethnic or national allegiances, but in overlapping networks forged through friendships and everyday interactions between performers sharing musical interests, resources, and venues. In this way performers and their musical practices become linked not just through mutual ethnic identities, but through evolving artistic interests and shared values. Secondly, a common assumption across the literature is that diasporic music-making primarily satisfies nostalgia for a lost homeland. In this thesis I have considered nostalgia as both an affective and a political phenomenon which can be examined in musical performance at the level of experience and of narrative discourses. But rather than viewing nostalgic experiences as fixated on the past, I have highlighted how emotional and political aspects of nostalgia work to cultivate a unifying and comparative diasporic identity, and a sense of homeliness in the present. This approach reveals surprising associations between nostalgic narratives of Balkan diversity and musical hybridity, and the hopeful, forward-looking narratives of Australian diversity and intercultural exchange, often expressed as 'multiculturalism'. Both of these points speak to music's ability to foster cohesion and to transform the social spaces and identities that it implicates.

Critics of the world music phenomenon have overly concerned themselves with global promotional discourses, the dealings of large record labels, recorded music markets,

and their assumed aim in appealing to the “fantasies, ignorance, and spiritual thirst of Western audiences” (Buchanan, 2006, p. 361). These critiques not only assume a homogenous audience for the multitude of musical activities and happenings which are encompassed by the world music phenomenon, they also fail to do justice to the individual musicians, performers and promoters who are drawn to, and draw upon, marketing labels such as world music for a range of complex reasons. In my case study of the intersection between Balkan and world musical networks in Sydney, it is clear that both performers and audiences reflect heterogenous relationships to the narratives of cultural identity, musical lineages, migration and displacement which are circulated within these musical communities. This heterogeneity complicates any straightforward account of world music scenes, as the literature fails to accommodate the complexity of everyday interactions between different ethnic communities and performers. These omissions can license critics to deny the agency of musicians in crafting and positioning their own identities in their own place, or their right to motivate terminology developed in the global market to appeal to broader audiences, or to use music and musical spaces to cultivate and promote a shared ethos towards diversity and difference. Instead we must recognise the diversity of creative and intellectual activities articulated by the world music phenomenon (Stokes, 2003), which forge connections across diverse social groups and give shape to the local landscape of musical activity.

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