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A Serbian Composer in France: National Identity and Cosmopolitanism in the Works of Alexandre Damnianovitch*

Abstract

Whereas cosmopolitanism in art used to be linked to the rejection of nationally specific elements, in more recent times it has been rethought, mainly because of the growing effects of globalisation and the concept of “rooted cosmopolitanism” being proposed. In this article, the music of a contemporary Serbian émigré composer, living in France, has been observed through those lenses.

Key words

Cosmopolitanism in music; Rooted cosmopolitanism; National identity in art music

Biography of the author

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Even before the outbreak of the crisis and wars in Yugoslavia during the last decade of the 20th century, there had been individual composers and musicians who emigrated to the West in search of better opportunities. Although Serbia, as part of the federal socialist Yugoslavia, was a relatively “friendly” country for artists and composers, it was, nevertheless, a peripheral European country, at a time when so many exciting and progressive movements were being introduced and tested in the main Western artistic centres. Therefore, it was always tempting for composers, especially young ones, to get to better know what those renowned cities had to offer their inquisitive and ambitious minds. However, the chances to obtain a scholarship in order to stay in those cities were very rare, so that only a handful of Serbian composers found a way to stay there for any amount of time, almost all of them returning to Belgrade after one or two years. Interestingly, only rarely did composers go to Germany or Italy, while more of them tried their luck in France, the Netherlands, the US and the UK.

In this paper the focus will be on the case of the composer Alexandre Damnianovitch (b.

1958), whose career has been developing differently from that of the great majority of his Serbian contemporaries, thanks to his early decision to move to France. I will attempt to answer the question regarding how, precisely, did his leaving Belgrade affect his career as a composer and how the relationship between the cultural centre and the periphery influenced the composer's curriculum vitae.

As a teenage pupil of the secondary music school "Slavenski" in Belgrade during the 1970s, Damnianovitch showed a marked interest in learning as much as possible and was attracted to different kinds of music. He was then introduced to avant-garde ideas by a rebellious group of students of composition studying at the Belgrade Faculty of Music. The group, which became known as "The New Generation", later called "Opus 4", was mostly interested in the music of John Cage and the American minimalists. During that period, Damnianovitch began to learn conducting in the private class of the renowned maestro Borislav Pašćan and, whilst in that class, he also initiated the foundation of the first Serbian philharmonic orchestra of young people. He was also drawn to old Serbian and Byzantine music, to which he was introduced by Dimitrije Stefanović, a fellow of the Institute of Musicology in Belgrade, who had studied neumatic notation with Egon Wellesz in Oxford. Even before applying to study at the Belgrade Faculty of Music, Damnianovitch had decided that he would study somewhere abroad. While waiting to get a visa, he began to study in the class of Vasilije Mokranjac, who was known to be tolerant as a teacher, inclined to stimulating young people to broaden their artistic horizons. He himself was an outstanding composer, whose works were marked by refined modal harmonies and a lyrical character of an individual type. However, young people at the time were looking for something quite novel and daring and he had a full understanding of their strivings. Damnianovitch admits today that he was not interested enough in the lessons in Mokranjac's class during the first and only year he spent there, being aware today that he could have learned a lot from such an exquisite composer and person.¹ Before leaving Belgrade, he composed several works that demonstrate his interest in dodecaphony and minimalism (Terry Riley, Philip Glass), and the works of Messiaen, Xenakis, Boulez and many others. While still in the country, he had a conversation with Enriko Josif, a distinguished composer and professor at the Music Academy, who warned him, in a fatherly way (as recalled by the young student), "to be on his guard against the foreign world and the strong Western civilisations that are powerful enough to swallow and convert people, to usurp their personality", and who advised him to follow his intuition first and foremost². Damnianovitch thinks today that the overall conditions for creative work in Serbia were not really unfavourable, and that the decisive moments for his leaving the country were his "atavistic drive to leave" and "to live

1 Mail to the author of this article, sent on 3 February 2016.

2 Ibid.

somewhere else”.³ It goes without saying that one of the great advantages of Paris over Belgrade was the possibility to hear so much more new music, as well as art music of all ages, in first class performances. When Damnianovitch left Belgrade in 1978 (at the age of 20), the president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, was still alive, musical as well as cultural life in general were dynamic, although the economic situation was quite bad, so that ever new loans were requested from foreign banks and funds. There were many discussions in private on the fate of the country after Tito’s death, which was to happen very soon (1980), but even the most radical pessimists could not foresee what a catastrophic turn events would soon occur: after the troubled 1980s, which witnessed the rise of inter-ethnic tensions, there came the tragic 1990s, bringing violence and wars and, consequently, the breakup of Yugoslavia. Being away during all that time did not mean, of course, that Damnianovitch was spared the anxieties and worries of the period.

In the eyes of Alexandre Damnianovitch, arriving in Paris in 1978, the richness of the musical life was no doubt fascinating, but he must also have quickly realised that he was but one among the multitude of young ambitious composers coming from all over the world who aimed to achieve a remarkable career. Pierre Boulez was one of the key-figures in French musical life, not only respected, but also influential, with excellent political relationships that enabled him to decide on many important issues, being also widely criticised for his arbitrariness and partiality. Damnianovitch, however, showed no interest in electronic music and, after a year in the class of Max Deutsch at the Ecole Normale in Paris (1978–79), he began to study according to a regular program at the National Conservatory (Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique), where his professors were Michel Philippot and Serge Nigg. The conditions for studying at the Conservatory were the best possible and especially helpful were the opportunities to hear and record his own works.

After he had finished his studies in 1983, Damnianovitch stayed in France and started a typical career as a composer, conductor and artistic director.⁴ He was director of several conservatories in towns in Brittany and the vicinity of Paris and was constantly active as a composer and conductor, and as the founder and organiser of music festivals. As stated in the title of this paper, it is my purpose here to draw attention to the relationship between Damnianovitch’s wish

³ Ibid.

⁴ Most important dates in Damnianovitch’s career: 1983: conductor of the choir of the Opera in Rennes; 1989: laureate of the international competition “André Jolivet” with *Harpes éoliennes* [Eolian Harps] for seven instruments; 1988–1989: guest conductor of the orchestra of the Opera in Rennes; 1989–91: guest conductor of the orchestra in Rennes, then of the Orchestra of Brittany; 1993–1998: artistic director of ARSIS – Vocal Theatre; 1994–1998: director of the Music School in Saint-Grégoire and founder of two local festivals; 1998: special prize at the international competition ARTAMA (Czech Republic) with *Christmas Carol*; 1998–2005: director of the “Hector Berlioz” Conservatory in Pavillons-sous-Bois, founder and artistic director of local festivals; 2005–2008: director of the Ecole Nationale de Musique et de Danse in Beauvais, founder and artistic director of a chamber orchestra; 2008–2015: director of the “Claude Debussy” Conservatory in Saint-Malo, artistic director of the local orchestra and founder of a festival; since 2015– director of the Conservatory in Blanc-Mesnil, near Paris.

to affirm his national identity and his cosmopolitan attitude. Discussing those two categories – national identity and cosmopolitanism– may have seemed obsolete to many artists and critics during the period of the dominance of the Darmstadt and American avant-garde, from the 1950s until the 1970s and 1980s, but the changed socio-political circumstances in Europe in the past decades (the fall of communism followed by the inclusion of the former communist countries into the EU, and the massive immigration from Africa and the Near East), together with the intensive process of globalisation, have provoked a need in certain composers to preserve in their works links with the spiritual roots of their national cultures. Damjanovich belongs to that group of composers who spontaneously opted for expressing their national identity while at the same time being fully adapted to the cosmopolitan surroundings of the countries in which they chose to live.

There is no definite, unproblematic definition of cosmopolitanism, a concept often confounded with “universalism”, but also often correctly regarded as “a form of universalism”. In the words of Pauline Kleingeld, “[Cosmopolitanism] is the view that all human beings share certain essential features that unite or should unite them in a global order that transcends national borders and warrants their designation as ‘citizens of the world’”⁵. It seems reasonable to adopt the view (expressed by Ulf Hannerz and supported by Björn Heile) that, in contrast to universalism that assumes sameness and equality, cosmopolitanism “includes an aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity”.⁶ In other words, whereas universalism as an ideology doesn’t accept and recognise cultural differences, cosmopolitanism implies respect and even the promotion of diversity. It could be remarked here that there exists a danger of tolerating differences to the limit of absolutising them, which could lead to multicultural randomness. In this situation, cosmopolitanism could have a corrective by way of the integration of the main universalist aspirations. It could be remarked here that there exists a danger of tolerating differences to the limit of absolutising them, which could lead to multicultural randomness. In this situation, cosmopolitanism could have a corrective by way of the integration of the main universalist aspirations.⁷ It should also be taken as a normal requirement that the tolerance of cosmopolitanism to differences should include tolerance to nationalistic tendencies too-- under condition that they be not extreme (threatening) in form.⁸ In contrast to multiculturalism, which

5 Pauline Kleingeld, “Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 3 (1999): 505.

6 Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 7, no. 2 (1990): 239; See also: Björn Heile (2015), “Eric Bergman, Cosmopolitanism and the Transformation of Musical Geography”. In *Transformations of Musical Modernism*. Series: Music since 1900, eds. Erling E. Guldbrandsen and Julian Johnson University (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 74-96.

7 See: Kevin Robins, *The challenge of transcultural diversities. Transversal study on the theme of cultural policy and cultural diversity. Final report*. Followed by eight research position papers (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2006), 161.

8 “The cosmopolitan rejects a strong nationalism”, from: Cosmopolitanism (entry) in, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2002, rev. 2013. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmopolitanism/>

promotes the diversity of cultures within a nation-state, cosmopolitanism applies this notion globally.⁹ Since nation states present a reality and are here to stay for quite some time, the notions of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism often merge. We have decided to use here only the former, cosmopolitanism, because it has a more general meaning and has arisen as a concept “in the first instance as a metaphor for a way of life and not in a literal guise.”¹⁰ There are, of course, different versions of cosmopolitanism, but in this article I am most interested in *cultural* cosmopolitanism.¹¹ As has been previously mentioned, cosmopolitanism is primarily associated with the widest international contexts, whereas multiculturalism refers to the co-existence of different cultures within one state, that of the home nation and those of diasporic communities, immigrants and refugees. Discourses on music within cultural cosmopolitanism are almost exclusively linked to traditional and popular music, which is understandable since diversity of those types of music is very much present in everyday life, as well as in the media. On the other hand, diversity is much less pronounced and is essentially a different kind in *art* music that belongs to the so-called high art of Western origin that has spread globally. With regard to compositional work, we may ask ourselves how much and what kinds of diversity can contemporary art music absorb. High diversity is typical of postmodern music, but Damnianovitch is a modernist who builds his work mainly on the heritage of Lutosławski, Ligeti and minimalism. He rejects avant-garde trends, but this doesn't make him a postmodernist, as he essentially creates a personal synthesis of 20th century modernism. In this article I expressly wish to examine how a contemporary composer of art music, coming from a modest cultural environment of a peripheral European country, creates strategies aimed at finding his place in a rich cosmopolitan environment. The early music training in this kind of music is the same everywhere in the world, but the paths to a successful career are much more solid and certain in countries with longer traditions that can also invest large sums of money into contemporary creativity.

France is the country Alexandre Damnianovitch chose as his second home, considering himself to be a “Serbian composer in France”, which may seem strange in light of his almost thirty years of continuous living in France, since a very early age. However, it is just such an open, non-problematic perception of dual national belonging, characteristic of his national positioning, that indicates that Paris, together with some other smaller cities he lived in, is rightly regarded to be a cosmopolitan city with the power to attract many composers and artists of quite diverse strivings and aesthetics and to give them all an equal chance to succeed.

Paris, the city in whose vicinity Alexandre Damnianovitch lived and worked for most of his

9 Anastasia Voronkova, “Are nationalism and cosmopolitanism compatible?”, p. 3. <http://www.e-ir.info/2010/11/25/are-nationalism-and-cosmopolitanism-compatible/>

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

years in France, could stand as a symbol for cosmopolitanism for most artists and historians, at least since the mid-19th century. According to Baron Haussmann, Paris was to be the true Rome of that time.¹² He was not alone in thinking that way in the Second-Empire France, as is shown in a text by Victor Hugo.¹³ Paris managed to maintain a high cosmopolitan status after World War 1, when it had even been called “the capital of the nineteenth century” by Walter Benjamin (1935/1939).¹⁴ The city was able to appreciate and support a great number of outstanding artists and writers coming from all over the world – let us just mention here Igor Stravinsky, Manuel De Falla and Bohuslav Martinů. Together with the French-born composers who were, of course, in the majority, they contributed in a significant way to the status of Paris as one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. One should not forget, however, that Paris has not always lived up to these proclaimed ideals. The threatening international political situation between the two world wars gave rise to nationalism and xenophobia, as in many other countries, which, according to Kenneth Silver, influenced artists to distance themselves from pre-war modernism and embrace neoclassicism as a form of conservatism.¹⁵ Such a view has been challenged recently by Ihor Junyk, who maintains that artists, mostly foreign artists living in Paris, interpreted neoclassicism in a subversive way, putting forward the values of cosmopolitanism, hybridity and transience.¹⁶ Which ever interpretation one chooses to adopt, it cannot be disputed that episodes of intolerance towards foreigners living and creating in Paris were short-lived and that, for the most part, the metropolis understood the value of modernism. One of the first works Damnianovitch composed in France, when still a student, was *Liturgie (Liturgy)* for eight voices and percussions. Judging by the inscription “Belgrade-Paris, 1980–81” in the score, it was conceived and started in Belgrade, showing the composer’s early inclination towards religious genres and the spiritual climate. It is not a work for a church service, but a meditation on the meaning of the liturgy. The texts of the four short movements of *Liturgy* are taken from the Divine Office of John Chrysostomos. The titles are: “Eleison”, “Gloria”, “Benedictus” and “Credo”, but the texts themselves are in ancient Greek, instead of church Serbian, as is sung in

12 “This immense city has the pretension to be the head of modern civilization; the principle seat of the sciences and the arts; the masterpiece of architects and engineers; the model of sound administration; the veritable Rome of the present century.” Quoted from: Stephane Kirkland, *Cosmopolitanism in the Culture and Planning of Second Empire Paris*, 2012. <http://stephanekirkland.com/cosmopolitanism/#sthash.3JCPWIZW.dpuf>

13 Hugo wrote the following in an introduction to the book accompanying the World Exhibition in Paris in 1867: “The logarithm of three civilizations reduced to a single equation, the penetration of Athens into Rome and of Jerusalem into Athens, this sublime teratology of progress pressing toward the Ideal gives this monster and produces this masterpiece: Paris.” [...] “Humanity needs the cerebral place, the generator of initiative, the organ of will and liberty, that acts when the human race is awake and, when the human race sleeps, that dreams. [...] We need a city of which everyone is a citizen. The human race needs a universal reference point.” Quoted from: S. Kirkland, *Cosmopolitanism*.

14 The essay with that title was published posthumously for the first time as: “Das Passagen-Werk” von Walter Benjamin, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: [Suhrkamp Verlag](http://www.suhrkamp.de), 1982)

15 Kenneth Silver, *The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989)

16 Ihor Junyk, *Foreign modernism: Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Style in Paris* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 7.

Serbian orthodox churches, which was probably due to the composer's wish to produce a stronger archaic effect, calling to mind the antiquity of Byzantine singing. Characteristic melodic ornamentations and moves of small chromatic intervals within a narrow ambitus, together with the use of percussion that, in some sections, can be heard as ison (drone) notes, are evocative of Byzantine church singing. Since the composer came from Belgrade, with at least a basic knowledge of the Byzantine chant tradition, his hearing in Paris of a recording of the music of an ancient Greek drama (conductor Grigorio Paniagua) and concerts of Byzantine music performed by Greek choirs, didn't fall on unprepared ground, but additionally stirred the composer's imagination. *The Liturgy* is an austere and intense work with heterophonic voice leading and sharp vertical harmonies evocative of the historic depths of the Christian ritual.

Example 1

Although living in France, Damnianovitch was in constant communication with his family and friends in Serbia, and could not avoid following the events in the whole of Yugoslavia that were announcing not only the end of communist rule in the country, but also the beginning of the horrific inter-ethnic wars that would mark the whole last decade of the 20th century. A major event in Serbia, in 1989, was the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle with the Ottoman invaders. Damnianovitch's reaction was to compose *Kosovo* for orchestra (1990), being primarily inspired by the poetic text about the event, attributed to Prince Stefan Lazarević (the early 15th century). The composer based this work of strong tragic and epic character on ancient Greek and Byzantine modes, wishing to give it a certain archaic dimension.

Damnianovitch has never abandoned that Orthodox-Christian line of his creative work, creating, in parallel, works that explore other sound spaces, often those linked to the cultural heritage of his "second country", such as *Harpes éoliennes* (Aeolian harps) for 7 instruments (1987)¹⁷ (in some points similar to the music of the French spectralists and those of Giacinto Scelsi) and *Quatre poèmes français* (Four French Poems by R. M. Rilke) for voice and piano (2004–2005). Among his religiously inspired works most worth mentioning are *Nativité* (Nativity, Roždestvo, 1997–2001), a cycle of songs for a female (or children's) choir, based on texts from Serbian non-liturgical spiritual poetry, with the exception of the first song ("Dyeva dnes"), which is based on a liturgical text written by Roman Melodos (VIth c.),¹⁸ and *L'eau et le vin* (Water and Wine) for orchestra (2013), inspired by the icon "Holy Trinity" by Andrey Rublev, and the fresco "Wedding

17 *Aeolian Harps* was inspired by Gaston Bachelard's philosophical books, specifically *L'Air et les Songes* [Air and Dreams]. The work received an award at the international "André Jolivet" competition in 1987.

18 Ivana Perković, „Aleksandar Damnjanović: *Roždestvo za ženski hor*“ [Alexandre Damnianovitch: *Nativity* for female choir], *Novi Zvuk* 22 (2003): 59.

at Cana” from the Serbian monastery Kalenić. *Nativity* is a very good example of Damnianovitch’s successful efforts to express his attitude towards the Serbian traditional musical heritage through his own music, to respond creatively not only to the typical national features of the Serbian folk music tradition, but also to the wider Orthodox Christian tradition. With that aim he used not only elements of different Orthodox chants – Serbian with some typical melodic formulae and the ways in which they are varied, Greek with the Ison notes, Russian with reminiscences of the linear polyphony of *strochnoe* singing – but he has also managed to produce the characteristic effects of Serbian folk singing, specifically that of singing “in seconds”.¹⁹

Example 2

Water and Wine for orchestra is the first movement of the cycle-to-be *Fresques* (Frescos), which will use the modes of the Octoechos; this particular work is based on the 1st mode. Damnianovitch also plans to adapt this work into the first movements of another two compositions: *Quatuor* (Byzantine Quartet) and an eight-movement symphony with the title *Octoechos* (Osmoglas). The different facets of a serene melody carrying typical features of the 1st mode of the Octoechos are displayed in *Water and Wine*, a work of a mystical atmosphere and flowing sound images.

Example 3

For those acquainted with the opus of the Serbian composer Ljubica Marić (1909–2003), Damnianovitch’s idea of such a cycle is reminiscent of Marić’s conception of *Musica Octoicha*, started in 1958 and left unfinished, and considered to be one of the most outstanding works in Serbian art music. The first piece, *Octoicha I* for orchestra (1959), was based on the chants of the 1st mode of the Serbian Octoechos, the second one, *Vizantijski koncert* (The Byzantine Concerto, 1959) on the chants from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th mode, whereas the 5th mode is the basis of two works: *Ostinato super thema octoicha* for a chamber ensemble (1961) and the chamber cantata *Prag sna* (The Threshold of Dreams, 1963). In his early Belgrade years, Damnianovitch had the opportunity to meet Marić and developed a great admiration and respect for her works. Both composers aspire to achieve individual expressions of their meditations on time and timelessness, on the spiritual values transmitted from one generation to another through the centuries.

Both Damnianovitch and Marić are also very much moved by traditional Serbian (though not exclusively Serbian) folk singing whose characteristic modal features, and those of the so-called “singing in seconds” they introduce into their works, transforming them into specific identity marks. Church and folk traditions are united in their works, becoming kinds of emblems of Serbian

19 I. Perković, *ibid.*, 61.

national identity. It is paradoxical that Damnianovitch “discovered” Serbian folk music rather late, after he had already got to know the folkloric heritage of the French province of Brittany. He found it a challenge to compose a work based on the texts of probably the most ancient Celtic poem from that part of France. The work -- *Séries* (Series) for voice, guitar, flute and two harps (1989) – has been extensively admired due to its refined use of specific features of Breton folklore. It happened that Damnianovitch was present at a performance of *Series* at a folklore festival in Corsica, which proved to be of great importance to him because he also got the chance there to hear a concert given by folk singers and a group from Serbia²⁰ and the music they sang proved to be a great revelation to him! According to the composer himself, it was then that he heard Serbian folk music for the first time, which may seem incredible. However, at that time, a boy brought up in Belgrade without relatives in the country side had very little chance to hear traditional Serbian music. Soon afterwards he composed *Trois chants serbes* (Three Serbian Songs, 1991) for choir and, later, *Folksongs* for soprano and string orchestra (1998-2002), consisting of four Serbian and three Italian songs. When trying to explain his views on his own works, Alexandre Damnianovitch speaks about composing along a Orthodox-spiritual line that includes secular elements too, as a way of “returning home”, affirming his national identity and being “true to himself”²¹. Oecumenism is also something he strives to achieve, not on the level of religion but through music, in the sense of harmonising the two cultures – the Orthodox Christian on one side and the Catholic/Protestant Christian on the other – characteristics that, according to him, best define the two countries most precious to him, Serbia and France. Damnianovitch’s exploration of western Christianity is reflected in *Les tentations de Saint Antoine* (Temptations of St. Anthony) for string orchestra, a work with finely controlled contrasts and, in Damnianovitch’s recognisable style, based on modality and minimalism. The composer is aware of the fact that because of his double national identity, he is also a stranger in both countries, though not to the point of being marginalised in them as composer. To put it in a different way: he chose to be independent, consciously avoiding being part of the main streams in both countries. It should be added that Damnianovitch has also composed a number of works without reference to traditional cultures. Such is the case of *The Bells* for mixed choir (2000–2001), based on Edgar Allan Poe’s poem, a work that has absorbed elements of the contemporary popular culture of the Parisian suburbs.²² In the 19th century, at a time of growing national self-consciousness and, especially later, in troubled times, cosmopolitanism in music was regarded as the opposite of adopting nationally specific means of expression, as “an *absence* of roots, folk spirit, developed subjectivity, or the capacity to transmit authentic feeling — to name

20 Nasta Stepanović, Svetlana Stević, the group “Pagan girls”

21 From Damnianovitch’s mail sent to the author of this article on 4 February 2016.

22 In that work Sylvie Nicephor has detected a transposition of rap music techniques. See her article: “Alexandre Damnianovitch: de l’Orient à l’Occident”, *Muzikologija* 5 (2005): 176.

only those qualities Wagner claimed to be fatally lacking in Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer.”²³ Even today, such tension can be noticed, although in a much smaller degree, in works belonging to the so-called “rooted cosmopolitanism” that is seen as partiality to native or other countries where one has lived a certain amount of time. “Rooted cosmopolitanism” contains both a universalistic basis and some forms of partiality towards one’s own national culture, maintaining a dialogue between them, a fruitful coexistence.²⁴ The works of Alexandre Damnianovitch belong to those that prove that cosmopolitanism and the attachment to one’s nation can co-exist in contemporary art music, as well as in other spheres of culture. In an attempt to answer the question posed at the beginning of this article regarding the effects of emigration on Damnianovitch’s work as a composer, it could be asserted that it was most beneficial for him to have had the opportunity during his Paris studies to obtain great professional skills and first-hand knowledge of modern compositional procedures, something that would have been much harder to get had he stayed in Belgrade. Maybe, paradoxically, he didn’t follow any current avant-garde trend of French music, although he was attracted by spectralism for some time. As a composer, he felt more inclined to the musical worlds of Lutoslawski, Scelsi and Ligeti, whose influence can be detected in his works. However, the crucial moment for Damnianovitch seems to have been the discovery of Serbian traditional music during a festival of traditional polyphonic music in Corsica at the end of the 1990s. He then composed *Folksongs* based on Serbian and Italian traditional songs and, soon after, followed it with *Nativity*, in which traditional Serbian church and folk music were used as its basis. Damnianovitch’s interest in Byzantine and, more generally, orthodox Christian music, which had been awoken much earlier, at a time when he was still living in Belgrade, was replaced for some time by other musical experiences, and then re-emerged from the depths of his musical being, probably as a result of his turn towards Serbian musical heritage in general and his wish to maintain his connection with his country of birth. It could be asserted, therefore, that Damnianovitch, who was neither an economic nor a political emigrant, moved to France essentially searching for a true definition of his identity as an individual and as a composer. It turned out that it was not an easy enterprise and that, although he began a promising career in France, something important was missing, which he finally found in the preserved treasury of Serbian traditional music.

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym²⁵ writes about “concrete” and “metaphorical homes”. Like so many other people today, Damnianovitch has two “concrete homes, one where he spent his childhood and early adolescence, and another in the country where he has spent all his mature life. His “metaphorical” home could be designated as his music, in which he

23 Dana Gooley, “Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Nationalism” – Introduction, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 66. no 2 (2013): 524.

24 See: Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 222–223.

25 Svetlana Boym, *Budućnost nostalgije* [The Future of Nostalgia] (Beograd: Geopoetika, 2005), 379. First time published in English in New York, 2001, by Basic Books

connects the cultures of his two concrete “homes” or countries. Instead of a closer assimilation into the French environment, he opts for preserving his national identity (through introducing non-Western elements, such as the musical traditions of the Orthodox Church and Serbian folk music, into his works) because he finds that, in that way, he keeps alive his links with his country of origin while at the same time maintaining strong links with the cosmopolitan tradition in France. Richness in diversity and “contrasts rather than uniformity”²⁶, as well as a necessary dimension of internationalism; these conditions should also be provided in the future in order to preserve a fertile ground for creative work. Damnianovitch found them in his French “home”, which follows from his remark that “Paris is a city that permits one to be what he is”²⁷. Fortunately, he was able to find a place of his own in the metropolis of cosmopolitanism, maybe partly by keeping in mind the warning regarding the threats of “the strong Western civilisation”²⁸ he had received from Enriko Josif before leaving Belgrade.

Summary

The issue of cosmopolitanism, or more concretely *cultural* cosmopolitanism, has become a challenging one in the humanities in recent times, being provoked by the need to evaluate the effects of growing global communication networks, mass displacements and migrations, which have altered people’s views on nations and nation-states. In this article, the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in contemporary music has been examined, using the example of Alexandre Damnianovitch, a Serbian composer who left Yugoslavia for France in 1978, at the age of 20, and has stayed in his country of choice ever since. After his studies at the National Conservatory in Paris, he has made careers in composition, conducting and as director of conservatories. Although being exposed to different avant-garde trends in contemporary music, especially French, from the very beginning of his life in the new country he felt the need to keep alive his connections with Serbian cultural heritage. In a number of his works he, thus, introduced some elements of traditional Serbian music, both folk and church, which he united symbolically by combining their characteristic features. In that way, a dialogue between cosmopolitanism, with its universalistic basis, and the composer’s attachment to his nation of origin has been established.

26 Hannerz, . “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture”, 239.

27 From a conversation with the author of this article, held in Belgrade on 24 February 2016.

28 See footnote 2.