

Global Music as an Open Concept — A Weitzian Approach to the Meanings of the “Music of the World”

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INTRODUCTION – ON THE MEANING (LESSNESS) OF “WORLD MUSIC” OR “GLOBAL MUSIC”

In 1999, a world music label Luaka Bop owner and a musician predominantly known as the singer of Talking Heads, published a well-known article with the telling title *I Hate World Music*. Although it cannot be discerned from the somewhat sensationalized title, Byrne primarily expresses his frustration with the *term* that is globally used for a conglomerate of different music genres and styles. The first paragraphs of the article are almost exclusively directed at the limitations of this all-encompassing word: “The term is a catchall that commonly refers to non-Western music of any and all sorts, popular music, traditional music and even classical music. It’s a marketing as well as a pseudomusical term – and a name for a bin in the record store signifying stuff that doesn’t belong anywhere else in the store”¹.

Although he is not a theoretician (a fact that should not discourage a commentary on his opinions), Byrne’s initial complaints express criticism that was not

uncommon in the reflections on what was called “world music” in the last couple of decades². Byrne is frustrated because he believes that world music cannot be adequately defined, so it should not be considered a legitimate music category. The first sentence implies that global music encompasses a spectrum of music genres and styles too broad to be accepted as a meaningful category; it simply includes too many and too diverse kinds of music while relying on a simple but politically incorrect criterion – to be made in, or derived from, a non-Western country, region, or area. The political dimension of it is yet to be stressed in the following passages of Byrne’s article: the term applies to “anything that doesn’t fit into the Anglo-Western pop universe”, which makes it a “none too subtle way of reasserting the hegemony of Western pop culture”³. So the “world music” category is either destined to produce a total mess (whether on the shelf in a music store, on a more contemporary streaming platform, or in our heads) or to elicit a constant uncertainty about its inclusiveness. “When we talk about world music we find ourselves talking about 99 percent of

¹ D. Byrne, *MUSIC: Crossing Music’s Borders in Search of Identity; ‘I Hate World Music’*, “The New York Times” 1999, 3 October, <https://archive.nytimes.com/query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage-9901EED8163EF930A35753C1A96F958260.html> (access: 25.02.2024).

² See J. Guilbault, *World Music*, [in:] *Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop*, ed. S. Frith, W. Straw, J. Street, Oxford–New York 2001, pp. 176–180. See also P. V. Bohlman, *World Music – A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford–New York 2002, p. xi.

³ D. Byrne, *MUSIC: Crossing...*, op. cit.

the music on this planet”⁴. That is why, according to Byrne, it deserves to be deemed unmusical and relegated to the world of the (artless) market.

A similar tendency towards discouragement and repudiation of “world music” – although much more based on the analysis of the social and political conditions in which it emerged – can be observed in roughly the same period Byrne’s text was published. Some of the (more academic) articles from that time expressed similar frustration with the term in their titles as well, suggesting that it is maybe time for “A Sweet Lullaby for World Music” (Steven Feld) or stating that “World Music Does Not Exist” (Timothy Brennan)⁵. The “sweet lullaby” in the title of the article by the ethnomusicologist Steven Feld alludes to Deep Forest’s⁶ controversial “Sweet Lullaby” song, notorious for the unauthorized sampling of the song *Rorogwela*, a “Baegu lullaby from Northern Malaita”, but those words are also used as a metaphor for the state in which this music category is at the very end of 20th century⁷. After discussing the history of world music – from being a “cumbersome alternative to ethnomusicology”⁸ in the 1960s to the profound expansion of its hybrid forms throughout the 1990s – Feld showed that the colonialist and imperialist forces behind it did not change significantly throughout those decades. Although he maintains a neutral stance over “anxious and celebratory contradictions in world music”⁹, the negative connotation of this metaphor is evident in his concluding remarks. For Feld, “a sweet lullaby” provides an adequate illustration of the state in which “technological and artistic elites” are “cradled and lulled on a firm mattress of stark inequities and padded mergers, and nurtured at the corporate breast”¹⁰.

Cultural theorist Timothy Brennan expresses opinions similar to Feld’s about the “contradictions” of

world music. Although he is aware that the interest in world music can be interpreted as a “usually positive, interest in the cultural life of other parts of the world”¹¹, Brennan is convinced that “the subversive globalism envisioned here neither exists, nor should exist in the way it is being imagined”¹². Stressing that this kind of globalized perception of a certain global music genre is often far too removed from the original aims of that music, Brennan worries about “the critical frame through which music is discussed – a frame that obscures what the music is and is not doing”¹³. In short, he is opposed to the very idea of discussing various global music genres through world music *category*. While Feld and Brennan were more opposed to the world music category, other theoreticians stressed the contradictions and paradoxes of world music while not abandoning it whatsoever¹⁴. For example, ethnomusicologist Jocelyne Guilbault stresses that “world music should not be seen as simply oppositional or emancipatory. Neither, however, should world music be viewed as merely the result of cultural imperialism or economic domination”¹⁵.

More recently, following the same or similar line of arguments, voices against the term “world music” started to be heard again. Ammar Kalia, “The Guardian”’s music critic primarily focused on the global music scene, discussed the world music category with several musicians, label owners, and festival organizers, including Strut Records manager Quinton Scott, Vula Viel trio bandleader Bex Burch, On the Corner label founder Pete Buckenham, and Réunion Island musician Jérémy Labelle, among others¹⁶. Although the views of Kalia’s interviewees were not unanimous, the majority of contributors did agree that the term “world music” is, at least to a certain extent, problematic. While some of them claimed it is “dated” because it does not do justice to the newer, more complicated

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby for World Music*, “Public Culture” 2000, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 145–171; T. Brennan, *World Music Does Not Exist*, “Discourse”, 23.1, Winter 2001, pp. 44–62.

⁶ Deep Forest is a French electronic New Age duo that was founded by Michel Sanchez and Éric Mouquet.

⁷ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 146. For more on the ethnomusicological uses of “world music”, see C. Pegg, *World Music*, [in:] *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. A. Latham, Oxford 2002, pp. 1388–1389.

⁹ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., p. 165.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 168.

¹¹ T. Brennan, *World Music...*, op. cit., pp. 45–46.

¹² Ibidem, p. 46.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 51.

¹⁴ S. Frith, *The Discourse of World Music*, [in:] *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, London–New York 2007, pp. 149–166; P. V. Bohlman, *World Music...*, op. cit., pp. xii, xv–xvi; J. Guilbault, *World Music...*, op. cit., pp. 176, 178–179.

¹⁵ J. Guilbault, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 176.

¹⁶ A. Kalia, “So flawed and problematic”: why the term “world music” is dead, “The Guardian” 2019, 24 July, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jul/24/guardian-world-music-outdated-global> (access: 25.02.2024).

“cross-pollinated styles“ (Scott), others had a stronger negative stance towards the term¹⁷. They were calling the moniker “world music” “dangerous” for any music “that seeks to create bridges” (Labelle), arguing that it promotes “exoticising of black skin” (Burch), and even claiming that it is “the antithesis of art” and that it can be “out-and-out racist” (Buckenham). Within this discussion on the term “world music” Kalia also emphasized that “The Guardian” stopped using it, and switched to “global music” instead, emphasizing that their focus in the global music column will be on more specific genres this category encompasses¹⁸.

Kalia’s article on the term “world music” included Byrne’s famous account of the term from *I Hate World Music* article, which gives reasons to believe that “The Guardian”’s decision to change the name of their world music column was partly influenced by Byrne’s opinions as well. What is more, an echo of Byrne’s stance over it was even present in the words of one of the persons Kalia interviewed for the article – Yale Evelev, the president of the already mentioned Byrne’s Luaka Bop label, which is one of the longest living and most respected record companies among global music aficionados. Evelev told “The Guardian” that “[w]hen people said we were a ‘world music’ label, we wanted to crawl into a hole. Instead of signifying a certain emotional honesty, it is a marketing rubric”¹⁹. Trying to escape the “world music” moniker in the descriptions of the music released on Luaka Bop, both Byrne and Evelev often referred to it by simply calling it “pop” music. “We always considered it a pop music label”, Evelev told Kalia in the same conversation for “The Guardian”²⁰. In a discussion with Evelev published on the “History” page of the official Luaka Bop website, Byrne stressed that “we think of the music we work with as contemporary pop music, and we try to present it as such. While something like Zap Mama’s first record could be, and sometimes was, perceived as an ‘ethnic’ record, we did our damndest to alter that perception”²¹.

However, having in mind that the label releases music from all around the globe, and most often focuses on the fusions of traditional and popular music styles, I believe that their retreat to an equally vague “pop” moniker was just a strategy for evading problematic connotations of the world music category that were elaborated in *I Hate World Music* article.

What has changed since the cited Byrne’s account of “world music” and the more recent criticisms of the term? Around the same time as “The Guardian” did, WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance Festival – the longest-living event dedicated to this kind of music) also decided to stop using the term “world music”²². The most significant shift happened in 2020 when the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences renamed the Grammy Awards for Best World Music Album and Best World Music Performance to Best *Global Music* Album and Best *Global Music* Performance²³. In all those cases (“The Guardian”, The Grammy Awards, WOMAD), the argumentation was on a similar line as the words of Talking Heads’ former frontman: the catch-all term bears connotations that are found to reinforce the “non-Western” (especially non-American and non-UK) perception of this music, the perception that is politically incorrect, neocolonialist, neoimperialist, and racist, since it “exoticizes” and “ghettoizes”, instead of celebrating, the artists in the field²⁴.

Although the name change was introduced by the mentioned “big players” in the music market, “global music” was not unequivocally accepted as the new term. While dropping the term “world music”, WOMAD kept “world” in both the subtitle of the festival’s name – “the world’s festival” – and in “a world of music” motto, as evident on their official website²⁵. The world’s most known global music magazine – “Songlines” – still uses the term “world music” in their introductory description (evident, for

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ D. Byrne, Y. Evelev, *IN CONVERSATION: David Byrne and Yale Evelev on the Origins of Luaka Bop*, <https://www.luakabop.com/history> (access: 25.02.2024).

²² A. Kalia, “So flawed...”, op. cit.

²³ B. Beaumont-Thomas, *Grammy awards rename world music category to avoid ‘connotations of colonialism’*, “The Guardian” 2020, 3 November, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/nov/03/grammy-awards-rename-world-music-category-best-global> (access: 25.02.2024).

²⁴ C. Gillett, *global music*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/global-music> (access: 25.02.2024).

²⁵ See *A World of Music*, <https://www.womad.co.uk/music> (access: 25.02.2024).

example, in one of their 2023 printed volumes)²⁶. Both the Transglobal World Music Chart and World Music Chart Europe still use the term in their names²⁷. As a WOMEX 2023 delegate, I observed that several organizations with their stands on the so-called “Trade Fair” still use “world music” in their names and printed materials. While their editors embraced “global music” in their texts on the website and official catalogue, WOMEX itself found a middle ground by changing its full name from World Music Expo to Worldwide Music Expo slowly (and perhaps silently, since I could not find any official announcement of it) between 2020 and 2021 (as can be observed using Internet Archive’s “Wayback Machine”). However, relying on my WOMEX 2023 experience, I believe that all mentioned organizations that kept using the term “world music” would nonetheless subscribe to the reasons why the change to “global music” was proposed in the first place – that there is the urge of the removal of the “non-Western” undertone from the descriptions of this kind of music. While I embraced “global music” in the title of this paper, I will still use “global music” and “world music” interchangeably in the rest of the paper.

Regardless of the new name prevalence, the more critical issue is whether this change actually contributed to casting out the “West vs. non-West” dichotomy from the descriptions of this music category. Although they accepted the name change, the editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica* are uncertain of the fundamental shift in perception. Adding to the article on world music, previously written by the late Charlie Gillett (one of the people who attended the original “naming event” for world music – the pub meetings of 1987), the editors claimed that “the replacement, however, seemingly offered little substantive change”²⁸. This is why I believe it is now the task of the theorists to

follow up on the name shift and provide scholars with a new, more politically aware framework for thinking about global music. Academic researchers of this music category have not yet commented on the name change, but the music press did (which is one of the reasons why I rely on it substantially in this paper).

Since my background is in the field of aesthetics and philosophy of music, I want to explore if this new kind of framework can be established by following its methodology, and its history. To the concept of global music, I will apply the theoretical mechanisms derived from one of the most well-known articles in the history of aesthetics – *The Role of Theory in Aesthetics* (1956) by Morris Weitz. In addition, I will add to the discussion a more recent take on a similar matter – Theodore Gracyk’s approach to the concept of popular music in his *Listening to Popular Music: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zepplin* (2007), which was partly influenced by Weitz’s account. Aestheticians interested in music have not, to my knowledge, made significant contributions to the discussions of world or global music so far²⁹. They did, however, eagerly reflect on various kinds of popular music, and Gracyk is one of the most active aestheticians in this field, so I believe his account can be fruitfully taken into consideration in further discussions on global music’s meaning(s)³⁰.

THE PROBLEM EXPANDED: LIMITATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS OF THE GLOBAL MUSIC CONCEPT

Before analyzing the global music concept from the aesthetics approach, let me expand on the claims that the world music category is too broad and based on the neocolonialist perception of the “non-Westernity” of this music. For this purpose, I will rely on Byrne’s article again, although I am fully aware that

²⁶ This can be observed in a sentence in the “Songlines”’s introductory description: “*Songlines* was launched in 1999 and is the definitive magazine for world music [...]”. “*Songlines*” 2023, 192, November, p. 3.

²⁷ See <https://www.wmce.de> (access: 25.02.2024) and <https://www.transglobalwmc.com> (access: 25.02.2024).

²⁸ C. Gillett, *global music...*, op. cit. See also Y. Bangura, *The new Grammy still fails to recognise African music genres*, “Premium Times” 2023, 18 June, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/605218-the-new-grammy-still-fails-to-recognise-african-music-genres-by-yusuf-bangura.html> (access: 25.02.2024).

²⁹ Philosophers, such as Philip Alperson, did discuss more specific global music genres in the past, but did not reflect on the global music category itself. See P. Alperson, C. B. Nguyen, T. N. Thanh, *The Sounding of the World: Aesthetic Reflections on Traditional Gong Music of Vietnam*, “*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*” 2007, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 11–20.

³⁰ See T. Gracyk, *Aesthetics of Popular Music*, [in:] *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/aesthetics-of-popular-music/> (access: 25.02.2024).

his account of world music is not the most thorough analysis of the category, and that there are various other valuable reflections on the matter, yet I cannot review them all in this kind of paper³¹. Still, I believe that the following analysis of his views can provide a more colourful perspective on the problems of understanding and defining global music. Even though Byrne’s opinions are expressed in a relaxed form of a newspaper article, they are nonetheless important and relevant today, since his views are still supported by contemporary music press, as shown previously. In order to illustrate the challenges of the global music category more directly in the following passages, I must rely on the “West vs. non-West” dichotomy more extensively, although it should be clear that I am not aligning with this kind of discourse.

It comes as no surprise to readers familiar with global music that Byrne includes both *traditional* and *popular* music of the non-West. These two categories are already too vast and vague in their own right. Regarding the “traditional” side of it, global music has already been explained, following the “world music” expansion in the 1980s, with references to the musical heritage of various parts of the world (especially those culturally and geographically removed from what is – also ambiguously – considered as “West”). The particular emphasis here is put on the musical heritage that (still) has not made its way to the Western (popular) music scene independently³². One would find Indonesian gamelan music included as a type of global music, but usually, there is no American bluegrass within it, although it stems from a musical legacy – those of the Appalachian region of the United States³³. It should be noted, however, that the perception of Western folk music not being included in the global music scene has not been entirely unequivocal

lately; for example, the 2023 edition of WOMEX included, although on the “offWOMEX” stage, a UK duo The Breath³⁴, whose music is influenced by the Irish folk and American country traditions.

Since its emergence, the term “world music” has also included what would be called “popular music” of the non-Western areas of the world – and it should be noted that scholars often referred to “popular music” in an unclear sense of the “popular”, yet still derived from the Western music perspective³⁵. However, the term has referred only to those kinds of music that are not just a simple local adaptation of a Western popular music style. So South African mbaqanga music is referred to as a popular-music-oriented kind of global music, but an Algerian “four-on-the-floor” hard rock – although produced within the boundaries of what is considered “non-West” – is not included in the equation. One particular feature of most of the global music of this kind is important and needs to be emphasized here – that it is often based on a mixture of already established popular music styles with the traditional music of a country or region. “There are guitar bands in Africa”, Byrne remarks, “that can be, if you let them, as inspiring and transporting as any kind of rock, pop, soul, funk, disco you grew up with. And what is exciting for me is that they have taken elements of global (Western?) music apart, examined the pieces to see what might be of use and then re-invented and reassembled the parts to their own ends”³⁶. This kind of music Byrne mentions here is included in the global music conglomerate since these musicians made some musical interventions – from their own cultural perspective – to a Western music style that initially influenced them. Those specific combinations of the musical techniques derived from the already established popular music genres with the musical heritage of a country or region are what theoreticians usually refer to as “hybrids”³⁷.

³¹ In addition to the sources already referenced, see, for example, P. Manuel, *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World*, Oxford–New York 2013; T. D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*, London–New York 1997; M. B. Bakan, *World Music: Traditions and Transformations*, 2nd edition, New York 2019; *Worlds of Music: an Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, ed. J. T. Tilton, Boston 2016.

³² S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., pp. 146–148.

³³ I realize that some ethnomusicologists do include Western traditional and folk genres within the world music category, but this is not the case in the majority of other articles on global music I used in this paper. See, for example, J. T. Tilton, *Blues*, [in:] *Worlds of Music: an Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples...*, op. cit., pp. 195–236.

³⁴ The Breath is a UK duo consisting of the guitarist Stuart McCallum and the singer/flautist Rioghnach Connolly.

³⁵ S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

³⁶ D. Byrne, *MUSIC: Crossing...*, op. cit.

³⁷ E. Chou, *Hybrid/fusion Music and the Cosmopolitan Imaginary*, [in:] *The Art of Global Power: Artwork and Popular Cultures as World-Making Practices*, ed. E. Merson, Abingdon-on-Thames 2020, pp. 94–96; S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 309–311; M. Stokes, *Music and the Global Order*, “The Annual Review of Anthropology” 2004, vol. 33, pp. 59–62.

Byrne did not limit his account of world music to the “traditional” and “popular” subcategories within a broad scope of this music. Instead, he also included “classical music” in the mix – using a term that is most often employed to refer solely to the European art music heritage but should certainly not be limited to it. Although he does not elaborate on this, I believe that by “classical music”, Byrne has in mind Indian classical music, such as Hindustani or Karnatak music traditions. If this is the case, his inclusion of classical music here is not without justification, at least not regarding how “world music” was perceived in the past. “Songlines” does include various kinds of Indian classical music in their 2019 text on it, published as a part of their *The Rough Guide to World Music* series, and so does *The Concise Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*³⁸. However, some theoreticians find this unacceptable. Brennan, for example, believes that “anyone who knows the complexities and millennia-long commentary on Indian classical music would be stunned to see it placed in the company of Irish folk music”³⁹. It is important to note that in this context he does not suggest that removing the centuries-old musical traditions from the realm of global music would solve the problem of the unstable meaning of this music category. Earlier on in his article, Brennan stresses that the “problem is rather a categorical one, which, I am suggesting is also, a phenomenological one. To take the Qawwalis of Pakistan and place them alongside the Benin rock of Angélique Kidjo is to get a false sense of both, regardless of what is said about them”⁴⁰. Whether one agrees with Byrne’s inclusion of classical music within the world music category or not, it is clear that he mentioned it to express how the term “world music” even encompasses centuries-long music traditions that are rightfully deemed “classical music” – and by doing this, Byrne wants to demonstrate the vagueness of the meaning of the term.

I should add to this preliminary examination of the challenges of the term “world music” the last “criterion” that Byrne mentioned in the previously cited words. According to him, “world music” includes everything that did not find its way to the carefully organized shelves in a local music store. (In our times, this would be equivalent to the “genres” or “styles” categories of the streaming platforms). By stressing this, Byrne emphasized the unstable connotation of the term. This way, scholars could just as well exclude reggae from the global music conglomerate, and maybe even various instances of Latin American or Cuban music, at least when it comes to those areas that have dedicated music markets (and thus separate shelves in the music store) for those kinds of music⁴¹. After all, there are several Latin Grammy awards and a separate Best Reggae Album award⁴². Of course, apart from this criterion, reggae would certainly qualify as a global music genre since it stems from local music sources, it is established in a non-Western environment, and it emerged as a popular music genre in Jamaica influenced by rock and roll, as well as rhythm and blues⁴³.

As I tried to show in the previous paragraphs on the example of Byrne’s opinions, attempts at defining global music already cause much trouble to a theoretician. I believe this is what Byrne had in mind when he, with a pinch of bitterness, called it the “non-Western music of any and all sorts”. Its unbearable vastness pervading traditional, popular, and classical music seems as if it can only be overcome by reference to the “non-Western” nature of it. While not explicitly stating this, Byrne’s account makes us face the following dilemma. Either we conform to the political incorrectness of the category, marking this kind of music as a cultural product of an “exotic Other”, or we dismiss the problematic cultural denominator, but

³⁸ *The Rough Guide to World Music: Indian Classical Music*, “Songlines” 2019, 21 January, <https://www.songlines.co.uk/the-rough-guide-to-world-music/the-rough-guide-to-world-music-indian-classical-music> (access: 25.02.2024). *The Concise Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Volume 2*, ed. E. Koskoff, London–New York 2008, pp. 932–997.

³⁹ T. Brennan, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

⁴¹ An example of such a separate music market would be the US market for Latin American music, one of the fastest growing in the era of contemporary streaming platforms. See J. Ochoa, *RIAA Report: Latin Music Is Growing Faster Than the Overall U.S. Music Market*, “Grammy” 2020, 3 May, <https://www.grammy.com/news/riaa-report-latin-music-growing-faster-overall-us-music-market> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁴² See 2023 GRAMMY Nominations: *See the Complete Winners & Nominees List*, “Grammy” 2022, 15 November, <https://www.grammy.com/news/2023-grammy-nominations-complete-winners-nominees-list> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁴³ See S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150, 156.

then we are left with a completely indefinable musical category that includes “99 percent of the music on this planet”⁴⁴. A name change can temporarily mask the dilemma, but a spoonful of sugary (or at least less bitter) wording can help the medicine go down just until the next politically sensitive occasion.

AESTHETICS AND THE OPEN CONCEPT STRATEGY

Can aesthetics help us with the previously illustrated dilemma? Since I already mentioned that there were notable contributions to the aesthetics of popular music, I should first examine if the theoreticians working in the field developed a strategy for coping with the meaning of their own key term – “popular music”.

Although it has been around for longer, the meaning of the popular music concept is no less vague than the notion of music named “world” or “global”⁴⁵. It “defies precise, straightforward definition”, stresses the media theorist Roy Shuker, discussing various key features of it in his *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* book – including claims that it is the music of the “ordinary people”, commercially-oriented, and mass-distributed⁴⁶. I am aware a lot has been written on the meaning of popular music, but I cannot analyze it thoroughly in this paper⁴⁷. Before commenting on Theodore Gracyk’s account of it, I just want to briefly illustrate how aestheticians approached it in the past. In the 1990s, most theoreticians contributing to the field of aesthetics explored the challenges of this kind of music while evading the unpleasant issue of defining it. Instead, they focused on a more specific genre within it: primarily rock and hip hop, but the former was used in a very broad sense that would include, for example, funk or metal music⁴⁸. However, most

of these aestheticians did not address the difficulties of defining “popular music” – they simply derived its meaning from everyday use, previous musicological contributions, or perhaps even from the early criticism of popular music, including the famous one by T. W. Adorno⁴⁹. Nevertheless, Gracyk did reflect, although briefly, on the meaning of the term and “the methodological problem of what music to discuss” in his *Listening to Popular Music*⁵⁰.

Gracyk’s attitude towards the meaning of “popular music” is simple yet effective. He does not believe that we need to define it in order to be involved in meaningful discussions on the phenomenon. Instead, he claims that popular music is an “open concept” and illustrates the four most common ways theoreticians usually approach this type of music⁵¹. In a different context, popular music can be seen either as “music that is widely liked” (countable, for example, via record sales), music on “the ‘low’ side of the distinction between high and low cultures”, music “intended to be widely accepted” (and even profitable), or music that “people actually produce for themselves”, even apart from and despite any music market forces⁵². Popular music can be perceived as mass art, folk culture, or counterculture – neither of these approaches is entirely right nor wrong.

In the rest of his book, Gracyk would not add to the examination of the meaning of “popular music”. I am setting aside here the question of whether the mentioned meanings should be considered paradigm ones in the case of popular music, but it is important to see the benefits of this theoretical strategy. Relying on it, aestheticians can, for example, analyze patterns or audiences’ interaction with popular music by referring to different and diverse spectra of styles and subgenres, following those different understandings

⁴⁴ D. Byrne, *MUSIC: Crossing...*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ The editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *popular music*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/popular-music> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁴⁶ R. Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, “Routledge Key Guides”, London–New York 2005, pp. 203–205.

⁴⁷ For more on popular music, see D. Beard, K. Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*, “Routledge Key Guides”, London–New York 2005, p. 100; M. Danesi, *Concise Dictionary of Popular Culture*, Lanham 2017, pp. 249–250.

⁴⁸ B. Baugh, *Prolegomena to Any Aesthetics of Rock Music*, [in:] *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art. The Analytic Tradition: an An-*

thology, ed. P. Lamarque, S. H. Olsen, Malden–Oxford–Carlton 2004, pp. 498–504; R. Shusterman, *Form and Funk: The Aesthetic Challenge of Popular Art*, “The British Journal of Aesthetics” 1991, vol. 31, issue 3, pp. 203–213; idem, *The Fine Art of Rap*, “New Literary History” 1991, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 613–632; S. Davies, *Rock versus Classical Music*, [in:] *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art – The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology...*, op. cit., pp. 505–516.

⁴⁹ See T. W. Adorno, *On Popular Music*, [in:] *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. J. Storey, Athens 2006, pp. 197–209.

⁵⁰ T. Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zeppelin*, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 7.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 7–8.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

of the term “popular music”. Some popular music subgenres (and the musical works) would be included in the popular music category following one of these criteria, while they would not align with the others. Songs of a local punk band would not be considered popular music by the first one of those that Gracyk mentioned, compared to the music of Taylor Swift, but both of those music approaches would undoubtedly be placed on the “low” side of the “high culture-low culture” dichotomy (setting aside whether we accept the dichotomy or not). A punk group may not even have the intention “to be widely accepted” (in fact, they would probably hate it if it turns out to be like that – as John Lydon of The Sex Pistols did)⁵³. However, their music will still count as popular music on the fourth criterion since their songs are made to provide aesthetic enjoyment for the community of like-minded people (while they don’t care too much what other communities think of it, such as the British royal family, to follow the same The Sex Pistols example).

Gracyk does not elaborate on the open-ended nature of the term since he relies here on the well-known theoretical mechanism of what is often called the analytic branch of aesthetics, ascribed to the theoretician mentioned in the title of this paper. The open concept argument dates back to Morris Weitz’s famous article *The Role of Theory in Aesthetics*. Weitz argues that aesthetic theories should not be involved in formulating an all-encompassing definition of art but focus on exploring different aspects of it while maintaining that art, as an open concept, covers various kinds of phenomena mutually connected through “family resemblances and no common trait”⁵⁴. Some art forms are comparable on the basis of one common property (or a specific set of properties), while others

can be linked together according to another property or a group of properties. Neither of these properties is the one that can be ascribed to each and every thing we call “art”. Not having an essential property that we can rely on when trying to answer the question of whether something is art or not, we should then analyze if this product can be included within the realm of artworks by comparing it to the known, established types of art or – especially when it comes to the new cultural products – “demand decisions on the part of those interested, usually professional critics, as to whether the concept should be extended or not”⁵⁵. This does not mean that, according to Weitz, everything that theoreticians have already included within the realm of art is perceived the same way; instead, he argues that “certain (paradigm) cases can be given, about which there can be no question as to their being correctly described as ‘art’”⁵⁶.

While Weitz does believe that aestheticians should not waste their time on pursuing the essential property of each and every art, this does not mean that attempts at defining art in the history of aesthetics have been entirely futile. Instead, aestheticians should “deal generously with the traditional theories of art; because incorporated in every one of them is a debate over and argument for emphasizing or centering upon some particular feature of art which has been neglected or perverted” in some other theoretical approach⁵⁷. Analyzing these features further, theoreticians can explore their role and significance in various instances of participation in the art world: in the process of art making and in the aesthetic experience and evaluation of an art piece.

Weitz’s open concept argument inspired many aestheticians in the second half of the 20th century. “Weitzian anti-essentialism is common today”, Stephen Davies remarked in 1991, and “[m]any of the writers who offer a definition are very careful these days to emphasize that they aim to do no more than to characterize the concept’s core, the paradigm art

⁵³ S. Moore, *John Lydon says his experience of the Sex Pistols’ popularity was ‘mostly hell on Earth’*, “NME” 2021, 28 September, <https://www.nme.com/news/music/john-lydon-says-his-experience-of-the-sex-pistols-popularity-was-mostly-hell-on-earth-3056891> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁵⁴ M. Weitz, *The Role of Theory in Aesthetics*, [in:] *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, the Analytic Tradition: an Anthology...*, op. cit., p. 15. By referring to “family resemblances” in the cited words, Weitz has in mind the famous Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept derived from his seminal work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). For more on “family resemblances”, see A. Biletzki, A. Matar, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Fall 2023 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, U. Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/wittgenstein> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁵⁵ M. Weitz, *The Role of Theory...*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵⁶ Ibidem. It is not, however, unequivocally accepted that the paradigm cases are compatible with the open concept argument and similar theories of art. See T. Adajian, *The Definition of Art*, [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/art-definition> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁵⁷ M. Weitz, *The Role of Theory...*, op. cit., p. 18.

forms or artworks, and to characterize it in terms of necessary or sufficient conditions, but not in terms of conditions that are jointly both”⁵⁸. I believe that Gracyk’s usage of it shows that it didn’t lose its appeal in the 21st century. Historically speaking, perhaps the most famous use of the open concept argument in the philosophy of music community was the one in Lydia Goehr’s *Being True to the Work* (1989). Goehr argues that a musical work is an open concept in the sense that it “can undergo expansion and modification in meaning when its associated understanding is affected by extraneous influences”⁵⁹. The concept of a musical work has its “original”, paradigm uses and examples (that emerged in the 1800s musical practices), but it can also have various derivative uses and examples in the musical practices before and after this period, as well as outside the realm of what is usually called “classical music”.

It should be noted that Weitz’s stance on the definition of art has been criticized thoroughly. I will not refer to its limitations here (Stephen Davies has already done it in his *Definitions of Art*) nor advocate it as a go-to approach in the philosophy of art⁶⁰. In other words, I don’t want to rely on the Weitzian open concept *argument* but rather put his *strategy* to work, in a way closer to what Gracyk did with the concept of popular music. Since I am not interested in the question of the art status of global music, I have no use of Weitz’s open concept argument as a potential “solution” to this philosophical problem (or rather, of his skepticism over the claim that a definitive solution is possible)⁶¹. Instead, I want to adapt his theoretical mechanisms to the problems emerging in pursuit of the meaning and scope of global music. Having in mind that I primarily rely on his methodology, and not on his theoretical results, I call it “strategy” in order to distance myself from his account of art. However, as opposed to what Gracyk did, I am including Weitz’s original words on the open concept argument here to make my application of it to global music a little bit more extensive. I realize that the application of Weitz’s original account would, ideally, involve a broader

reflection on its drawbacks, but since I cannot do it to the full length in this paper, I will only address some of the issues in the following discussion. With some additional clarifications of the open concept strategy, I want to examine if, by relying on it, some of the previously illustrated concerns over the term “world music” could be mitigated, especially those that – as the music press has shown us – still apply today, in the era of “global music”.

GLOBAL MUSIC – AN OPEN CONCEPT

As illustrated before, the way I understand the first mentioned Byrne’s complaints over the meaning and the usage of “world music” is that it is too all-encompassing and that the only thing that connects the musical “apples and oranges” within this moniker is the neocolonialist perception of their “non-Westernity”⁶². However, if we interpret “global music” as an open concept, both problems could be played down, at least to a certain extent.

First, if we take into account its openendedness, the global music concept could just as well uncontroversially include everything Byrne mentioned at the beginning of his article – various kinds of non-Western traditional, popular, or classical music, yet even encompass music he did not touch upon, and safely add to the mix some of the music with references on the traditional and popular music of the West (just like WOMEX 2023 did with *The Breath*). It can also be safely expanded to refer to music that emerged before the wake of “world music” in the 1980s. Not including the problematic “non-Western” attribute of it (on which I will comment later), there is, for example, no essential musical feature that will enable us to connect, within a conglomerate of global music, an Indian classical music subgenre with Balkan-brass-flavoured electronic dance music – but these music styles can be safely counted as global music following the Wittgensteinian (and Weitzian) “family resemblances” between various included phenomena. Let’s explain this by following an example similar to one Byrne mentioned in this context since he included

⁵⁸ S. Davies, *Definitions of Art*, New York 1991, pp. 8–9.

⁵⁹ L. Goehr, *Being True to the Work*, “The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism” 1989, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 62.

⁶⁰ S. Davies, *Definitions of Art...*, op. cit., pp. 9–22.

⁶¹ See T. Adajian, *The Definition of Art...*, op. cit.

⁶² D. Byrne, *MUSIC: Crossing...*, op. cit.

“Hindi film music” in his account⁶³. Contemporary Bollywood EDM⁶⁴ music can bear some similarities with both Indian classical music and Balkan-brass-flavoured EDM: with the former on the basis of relying on traditional Indian music sources⁶⁵, and with the latter when it comes to combining traditional music elements with the electronic dance music beat. We can even imagine a global music event that would include all three mentioned genres – WOMEX is an excellent example since they have both the daily showcases, suitable for Indian classical music performances, and DJ gigs in the evening for such EDM hybrid genres (although the latest edition did not feature music of the exact mentioned styles).

Secondly, understanding “global music” as an open concept means having a more realistic stance on its cultural dynamics. Turning our attention to its openness means not expecting mathematical clarity from a concept whose meaning is constantly being updated thanks to vital musical activities throughout the globe. The concept should be considered open because the phenomenon is in constant development in which multiple parties are involved, so no singular point of view can encompass everything emerging. In other words, while Byrne “hates” the term “world music” (partly) because of its unstable denotation, its meaning could become fixed only if the cultural forces behind it stop replenishing it. Moreover, as evident in Gracyk’s application of the open concept strategy, the open-ended nature of the term encourages multiperspectivity. Just as Weitz did not advocate for a full dismissal of various reflections on art in traditional aesthetics, different stances over music deemed “world” or “global” should also be encouraged. This is especially important if different reflections explore and emphasize the significance of various properties of the category, rather than search for an essential one, and reject it if they cannot locate such a thing. In the wake of the name change from “world” to “global music”, the theoreticians should pay

closer attention to the new practices that occurred in the meantime and mark numerous relations they establish with the previously known branches of the phenomenon.

I believe such exploration of all the different layers and various connotations of the global music category would be of great use not only for scholars but also for the broader global music community – especially for potential audiences and developing musicians. Putting the emphasis on the wide variety of musical styles united within the global music category and showing its multifacetedness to potential audiences would encourage their interest in the music cultures previously unknown to them. This can be beneficial for music artists as well, who can recognize the open-ended global music category as a platform for fresh sonic experimentations that the global music community, not overwhelmed by the question of strictly defining its musical interests, would embrace wholeheartedly. On the other hand, demonstrating the indefinability of “global music” is hardly encouraging or inspiring.

This is not to say that, following Weitz’s concerns over defining art, every exploration of the meanings of “global music” leads to rendering its culture static. Weitz worries that “closing” the concept of art “forecloses on the very conditions of creativity in the arts”⁶⁶. Weitz’s critics have already shown that defining art does not mean precluding its growth⁶⁷. However, pinpointing failures in capturing the meaning of a musical phenomenon can sometimes be even farther from promoting its expansion, especially when it comes from a famous music personality and a label owner, and then followed by a current label director and supported by the main global music critic in a prominent UK newspaper. Instead of expecting it to become more precisely defined, “world music” or “global music” could be just as well used for celebrating new and emerging music that can be included within the genre along with the already established (and institutionalized) types of it. At the same time, problematic political connotations of the term can be ruled out in the background of, or even – as I will try to show in the following passages – on the basis of, its openness and inclusiveness. In addition to the

⁶³ Ibidem.

⁶⁴ “EDM” is an abbreviation of “electronic dance music”.

⁶⁵ Although the authors don’t refer here to the EDM-oriented Bollywood music, they do claim that “Bollywood music has been very inspired by the classical tradition with many film songs having been composed in ‘ragas’”. See *An introduction to: Indian classical music*, <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/introduction-indian-classical-music> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁶⁶ M. Weitz, *The Role of Theory...*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶⁷ S. Davies, *Definitions of Art...*, op. cit., pp. 15–18.

works of scholars, this can be done through more specific initiatives towards the different perceptions of this type of music in the press articles or at a global music festival’s educational events, and without the overall dismissal of the concept. As I observed during WOMEX 2023, the conversations on such topics can be encouraged through the so-called “conferences” and networking sessions, aimed at musicians, festival organizers, but also music educators and scholars⁶⁸. Its 2023 edition included panels that are on the same line as discussions on its supposed “non-Westernity” and the danger of “exoticizing” foreign musical culture. For example, I believe greater inclusivity in the global music market was promoted in the session dedicated to the place of indigenous languages in the current global music market⁶⁹.

In other words, we can just as well keep the concept open and promote its openness as the category’s “superpower” for future growth while ruling out its “non-Westernity” connotation to further enhance this expansion. For example, contrary to Byrne’s criticism of the term, a couple of music journalists and DJs have underlined the significance of more recent musical experiments (such as the reggaeton-inspired EDM music called “moombahton”) by using the term “world music 2.0”⁷⁰. For the ethnomusicologist Wayne Marshall, world music 2.0 is “a reclamation and redefinition of global street music for the internet age”⁷¹. What is important for him is not only that the new technology allowed musicians to experiment more with the music they make, but also to distribute it more easily through the internet and encourage further development of their approach by their collaborators

and like-minded authors worldwide. “Moombahton” was established on the basis of such experiments made by DJ Dave Nada, who slowed down a house music track named “Moombah!”⁷² during a Latin American music DJ set, and created a track that fit well into a musical context dominated by reggaeton music. His peers around the world quickly accepted the challenge, as the track was accessible to them via the internet, by developing it further or making similar experiments that were based on other traditional or local music – Brazilian, Jamaican, Mexican, and so on. As it is evident in this example, musically speaking, “moombahton” was originally based on a motivation similar to some of the world music I discussed in this paper – intending to expand and develop the creative potentials of an established local or regional music genre (in this case, reggaeton). I believe Marshall added the “2.0” attribute to it in order to emphasize how easily those new musicians adapted the traditional music sources by digital manipulation (via sampling, changing tempo, combining it with an EDM style using musical software, and so on), but also that global dynamics of distribution and collaboration have been updated in the internet era. By referring to this example, I do not want to imply that we should still follow Marshall and stick with the term “world music”. Whether we call such experiments “world music”, “world music 2.0”, or “global music”, I believe that the open-ended nature of those musical categories can be an approach suitable for including and celebrating new and emerging musical phenomena.

However, underlining global music inclusiveness with the open concept strategy is not a magical solution to the problem of its meaning since it can, to an even greater extent, blur the problem of its scope. Referring to Weitz’s critics once again, I do believe that it is not enough just to connect, via “family resemblances”, various music genres within the global music category since, as Davies stressed, “anything might resemble any other thing in some respect”⁷³. Does it mean that, by relying on the open concept strategy, we should, as Byrne suggested, include all

⁶⁸ See, for example, *Education Networking Session: Meeting Place for Anyone With an Interest in Music Education*, https://www.womex.com/virtual/piranha_arts_1/event/education_3 (access: 25.02.2024).

⁶⁹ See *Exploring Indigenous Languages: Creating Meaningful Spaces for Indigenous Languages on World Stages*, https://www.womex.com/virtual/piranha_arts_1/event/exploring_indigenous (access: 25.02.2024).

⁷⁰ W. Marshall, *Sounds of the Wide, Wired World*, “The National” 2010, 29 October, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/music/sounds-of-the-wide-wired-world-1.516526> (access: 25.02.2024). See also D. Hancox, *DJ/rupture: the shapeshifting savvy selector behind world music 2.0*, “The Guardian” 2016, 1 September, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/sep/01/dj-rupture-world-music-jace-clayton-uproot-digital-culture> (access: 25.02.2024). Cf. M. Gallope, *World Music Without Profit*, “Twentieth-Century Music” 2020, 17, no. 2, pp. 163–164.

⁷¹ W. Marshall, *Sounds of...*, op. cit.

⁷² See *Silvio Ecomo & Chuckie – Moombah!*, <https://www.discogs.com/release/1897005-Silvio-Ecomo-Chuckie-Moombah> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁷³ S. Davies, *Definition of Art...*, op. cit., p. 11.

or most of the music on this planet in the realm of global music? This is where we should remember Weitz's claim on the importance of the "decision on our part" that must be made regarding the scope of an open concept.

Without a fixed definition of a concept of art, Weitz believes that theoreticians and "professional critics" are often involved in reviewing the emerging candidates for the art status. This is how I read Weitz's claims on such a review process. In the case of "standard" examples, not very different from the examples already and uncontroversially included within the realm of art (or global music, in our case), we follow the similarities between the new phenomena and previous, well-known cases, with no mind-boggling involved. An oil on canvas portrait of a person painted in 2024 is undisputedly counted as art relying on its similarities with artworks such as Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa", and a recently published composition by the newly founded Balkan brass orchestra is unquestionably counted as global music, following the fact that their music is reminiscent of the style of Boban Marković Orchestra⁷⁴. But there are situations in which resemblances themselves are not instructive enough, and what is needed is a deeper review from the "professionals", as I will call them, following Weitz. In those moments, making "a decision as to whether the work under examination is similar in certain respects to other works" means not including everything that bears at least some similarities with the known examples within the concept's scope, but selecting those in which similarities are considered to be profound, following not one "essential", but various criteria⁷⁵. Similarities between phenomena will arise, and the professionals are responsible for deciding if they are worthy of our attention and of extending our concepts' usage. As Weitz said, there is "a situation or case [that] can be imagined or secured which would call for some sort of a decision on our part to extend the use of the concept to cover this, or to close the concept and invent a new one to deal with the new case and its new property"⁷⁶. By referring to

"us" in the cited words, he has in mind a broad community of researchers of art, including philosophers. Referring to "professionals", I have in mind similarly broad global music community, including, in no particular order, and not limited to, music journalists (i.e. critics), philosophers of music (i.e. aestheticians of music), (ethno)musicologists, global music artists, sociologists of music, global music festival organizers, music historians, music publishers, etc.

The professionals reflect on the scope and the meaning of the concept of global music and are on the path of making such Weitzian "decisions" when they, for example, decide to include a Western folk-inspired band on WOMEX, to nominate an album for Best Global Music Album Grammy Award, or to interview Jung Jae-il⁷⁷ and Chief Adjua (the artist formerly known as Christian Scott)⁷⁸ in the November 2023 volume of "Songlines". But this does not mean every folk-inspired group, soundtrack composer, or (predominantly) jazz musician should automatically be added to the global music realm. Some greater consensus about a possible inclusion must be reached between those kinds of professionals. Let's reflect on the mentioned "Songlines" decision to interview Jung Jae-il. I do believe there are some reasons to include his and Han Seung Seok's⁷⁹ album *And There, the Sea at Last* (mentioned in the interview) within the scope of global music – this can be done by pinpointing the traditional pansori music inspired singing in it, combined with various classical music techniques⁸⁰. Nevertheless, I doubt that any music critic (as a Weitzian "professional") would claim that Jae-il's most famous, baroque music-inspired soundtrack for the movie *Parasite* should be included within it,

⁷⁷ Jung Jae-il (1982) is a South Korean music composer best known for the soundtrack of the movie *Parasite* (2019), directed by Bong Joon-ho. The alternative spelling of his name is Jung Jaeil, but I follow "Songlines" here. See *My World: Jung Jae-il*, "Songlines" 2023, 192, November, pp. 90–91.

⁷⁸ Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah (1983), formerly known as Christian Scott, is an American jazz trumpeter, multi-instrumentalist, and composer.

⁷⁹ Han Seung Seok (alternative spelling: Han Seung-seok) (1968) is a South Korean Pansori singer.

⁸⁰ For a short review of the album, see J. Bae, 2017 *in Review: Day 12 – Album of the Year*, "HelloKpop" 2018, 13 January, <https://www.hellokpop.com/review/2017-day-14-album-of-the-year/> (access: 25.02.2024). For pansori, or p'ansori, see V. Gorlinski, *p'ansori*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/pansori> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁷⁴ Boban Marković (1964) is a Serbian trumpet player and a band-leader of the Boban Marković Orchestra, one of the most recognized Balkan brass ensembles in the world.

⁷⁵ M. Weitz, *The Role of Theory...*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

even though there are obvious connections between those albums (starting from the fact they were made by the same artist).

However, Weitz’s claim on the importance of this kind of “decision” should not be overplayed. The fact that a phenomenon was affirmed by the “decision” from the “professional critics” cannot be proclaimed to be the necessary and sufficient condition for something to be called “art”, since it would call into question the openendedness of the term. This would turn Weitz’s open concept argument into a kind of institutional theory of art. But I believe that his claim on the importance of the professionals’ “decision” still is, in fact, compatible with his open concept strategy, if a word by the professionals is not our first address in the review of the (art, or the global music) status of a phenomenon. Weitz is not recommending the decision-making process as an alternative for connecting phenomena via “family resemblances” – in this case, he would call into question the openendedness of “art”. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of those kinds of decisions on some special occasions. Openendedness of a concept implies that we should be relying on “family resemblances” between phenomena up to a point we are uncertain of how inclusive the concept should be, and this is when the professionals kick in.

In other words, professionals’ opinion is thus not a go-to method for determining the concept’s scope, but an auxiliary device that we come down to when we fail to make insights on the basis of the “family resemblances”. While some professional critics were indeed involved in the process of nominating an album for the Grammy’s Global Music category, it does not take a critic to understand why Berklee Indian Ensemble’s latest album is nominated. Its belonging to the global music category is not controversial in any sense, following some clear resemblances between it and the known and established examples (including the music of previous award winners, such as Ravi Shankar). Within a broad global music community, scholars and professionals are involved in meaningful discussions on the Global Music Grammy nominees following those resemblances. However, it is different with cases such as *The Breath*, since UK and US folk-inspired music was not usually considered part of “world music” in the past. Following resemblances here is not instructive enough, but the dilemmas

are solved if there are notable decisions by the professionals made in the direction of including UK and US folk within global music. As previously illustrated, WOMEX’s team has already made such a move with *The Breath*, and so did the “Songlines”’s journalists⁸¹, while ethnomusicologists such as Jeff Todd Titon did include several North American traditional music genres within “world music”⁸². Having in mind that some of those initiatives – especially those by WOMEX and “Songlines” – were made recently, while in the past UK and US folk-inspired music was not typically counted as world music, I believe this can also be interpreted as a sign that the global music community is facing a more politically aware era that (slowly) removes the “non-Western” attribute from this music category.

This doesn’t mean that all occurrences with the “hard cases”⁸³ of the candidates for global music are easily solvable, so it is expected that discussions on the scope of the concept within the broader global music community will eventually arise, and the decision-making situations will occur, more or less directly. It is certainly better to be involved in those discussions, to evaluate the reasonings behind it and express opinions, than to “hate” the term, to refer to Byrne’s words here, and to advocate for its dismissal. Of course, I am fully aware that the famous Byrne’s article can be also read as a discussion of this kind, and not as a simple rejection of the genre, but its previously illustrated discouraging potential should not be underplayed, too.

So far, the open concept strategy has been instructive when it comes to the problem of global music’s wide scope, yet it didn’t provide a definitive solution to it, since the strategy relies on the belief that there is no all-encompassing definition of the term that

⁸¹ There is an interview with the band in the December volume of “Songlines”. See *Introducing the December 2023 issue of Songlines, celebrating 100 years of Emahoy*, “Songlines” 2023, 9 November, <https://www.songlines.co.uk/news/introducing-the-december-2023-issue-of-songlines-celebrating-100-years-of-emahoy> (access: 25.02.2024).

⁸² J. T. Titon, *North America/Black America*, [in:] *Worlds of Music: an Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples...*, op. cit., pp. 175–236.

⁸³ In the philosophy of art, “hard cases” signifies those cultural products, such as M. Duchamp’s “Fountain”, that are not easily explainable as the examples of art by a theoretical approach. See T. Adajian, *The Definition of Art...*, op. cit.

will make the problem of its scope resolved. But can it bring us any advantages in coping with the problem of the politically incorrect connotations of it, i. e. with its supposed “non-Westernity”?

I should return to Byrne once again and to his opinions on the tendency to interpret world music through the lenses of the “West and the rest” dichotomy. Put into a Weitzian perspective, the “non-Westernity” of this music was often referred to as a kind of “essential property” of it. Any music will be flagged as “global” or (third) “world” if some traces of “the exotic Other” – belonging to the outside of the “Anglo-Western pop universe” – can be located within it⁸⁴. The “open concept” strategy can help to cast out this perception of the political incorrectness of the terms “world music” and “global music” by emphasizing that we should resist the urge to pursue the basic feature(s) that would unify every music called “world” or “global”. Instead, insisting on its openendedness means promoting the plurality that the term implies, so the “non-Westernity” will no longer be perceived as an attribute that is inappropriate yet inescapable. By relying on it, scholars can remove the potential objection that the “non-Western” attribute allegedly possessed significant explanatory power in the past for expressing what “world music” was all about⁸⁵. Insisting on the open-ended nature of the term, scholars can demonstrate that they are not in pursuit of the essential denominator of global music, despite any claims that the “non-Western” denominator was used as such in the past. In other words, arguing for the open-ended meaning of the term means encouraging scholars to dismiss the “non-Westernity” attribute when referring to global music and search for other (perhaps more musically relevant) non-essential, but significant features of the phenomena included within the scope of global music.

This is especially important in the era of the name change of this kind of music. If the term “global music” should be promoted as an expression of awareness of the dangers of the neocolonialist and neoimperialist perspective (as it was in the previously cited music press), then persisting on the “non-Western” perception

of this music undermines those intentions. Let me give an example of how the more inclusive sense of the term “global music” is negated by conforming to “non-Westernity” as an essential property of this music. Although the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences did subscribe to the name change, it seems that their editors still believe that there is nothing wrong in including a variant of the “non-Western” attribute in the description of the global music category on the Global Music Awards webpage. They describe “global music” as music that “blends many different genres from around the world, found outside the United States”⁸⁶. It may seem convenient to some people if “global music” is briefly described this way, since this explanation relies on a clear geographical demarcation “outside the United States”, but I believe it is far from innocent since it reinforces the “West and the rest” point of view. On the other hand, if professionals such as those involved with the Grammy Awards resist describing the global music category on the basis of an essential property (“found outside the United States”), and accept that there is no need to limit the openendedness of the concept by “defining” it in such strict terms, the “non-Western” (or “non-US”) attribute would no longer be perceived as convenient, and can be dropped more easily in the future.

It can be objected that this kind of rejection of the “non-Westernity” presents nothing new in global music research. A substantial amount of work has been written on the problems of perceiving global music as something “exotic” (to the Western audience)⁸⁷. Scholars took different approaches to rule out “exoticity” from the discourse of global music. While some, such as Feld, warned about the dangers of it by disclosing the “globalization’s uneven naturalization” through examples such as Deep Forest’s treatment of Afunakwa’s “Rorogwela”,⁸⁸ others tried to dismiss “exoticity” by turning to the hybrid nature of certain global music styles. Brennan stressed this tendency in his words that the “hybridity” in world music is often celebrated as a vision of the

⁸⁴ See J. Guilbault, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 178. See also E. Chou, *Hybrid/fusion Music...*, op. cit., p. 99–100.

⁸⁵ Ibidem. See also S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

⁸⁶ See C. Gillett, *global music...*, op. cit.

⁸⁷ See M. Stokes, *Music and the Global...*, op. cit., pp. 51–62; S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., pp. 146–154. E. Chou, *Hybrid/fusion Music...*, op. cit., pp. 99–101.

⁸⁸ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., p. 165.

world “free from imperial domination”⁸⁹. I cannot expand on such scholarly attempts of fighting “exoticity” with “hybridity” in this paper – the sociologist Simon Frith has already done so in his *Discourse of World Music*⁹⁰ – but I do want to comment on them from the perspective of the illustrated open concept strategy. I do not deny that the perception of global music’s apparent “non-Westernity” can be played down by promoting its hybrid products – by celebrating, for example, this music’s tendency towards mixtures of traditional music attributes with the elements of various kinds of popular music. However, the open concept strategy is different from this kind of approach since it does not recommend ruling out “exoticity” with a search for some other, more politically-aware *essential* property⁹¹. Instead, it insists on changing the mindset about the meaning of a genre. Nothing, including the mentioned hybridity, should be promoted as a newfound essential characteristic of each and every global music. Many music works can be included within the conglomerate of global music by relying on the described hybrid nature of it, but there will be a lot of music that was not created as a mixture of distinct styles yet can still be counted as global music following some other criteria. If scholars do not insist that every presently available music is essentially a hybrid (of, at least, past and present musical practices)⁹², indigenous music from a region can be an example of non-hybrid global music. This can be explained by using, once again, the already mentioned Feld’s examples in *A Sweet Lullaby for World Music*. By following the criterion that the global music category includes traditional music from a country or a region, scholars can add to it a non-hybrid music piece such as “Rorogwela”, since it is “a Baegu lullaby from Northern Malaita”⁹³. Additionally, following the idea that global music also refers to mixtures of different traditional and popular musical styles, it can include Deep Forest’s “Sweet Lullaby” as well. This song includes a sample from

“Rorogwela” (controversially, since Deep Forest, according to Feld, did not acquire usage rights for it)⁹⁴, but also contemporary instruments such as synthesizers and drum machines, incorporated in a musical context of 1990s New Age music. Both musical phenomena can be included within the global music category (but this should certainly be done without celebrating Deep Forest’s unauthorized and uncredited use of the sample from the recording of Afunakwa’s song). In fact, it is not unusual to see those distinct types of global music put together in a lineup of a global music event. Let me refer to the WOMEX 2023 example once again. On the same evening, an attendee of WOMEX 2023’s showcases could experience, for example, the indigenous Native American music of the Canadian collective Nimkii and the Niniis⁹⁵, and the synth-filled electronic dance music by the South Korean duo Haepaary⁹⁶, influenced by the royal ancestral ceremony music of the Joseon dynasty.

At this stage of this discussion, I believe that the reasons why theoreticians of global music should pursue the question of its meaning without relying on the “non-Western” attribute are obvious. The “West and the rest” dichotomy can hardly be exercised without conforming to problematic neocolonialist, neoimperialist, or racist connotations. In addition, there are reasons to include works that were not made in a “non-Western” environment or based on “non-Western” musical practices within “global music” (as shown in a previous The Breath example). So, using the “non-Western” denominator is problematic even totally apart from any potential challenges of the meaning of “global music” yet it also fails as a candidate for an essential property of this kind of music. But someone could still argue that we cannot dismiss it entirely, since the openness of the term implies multiperspectivity on its meaning, and “non-Westernity” can still be used, from a certain approach, to describe some, if not all of global

⁹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 154–159.

⁹⁵ Nimkii and the Niniis is a Canadian indigenous Native American music collective from Central Ontario, led by Nimkii Osawamick. See *Nimkii and The Niniis (Canada)*, https://www.womex.com/virtual/dedicated_native_dna/nimkii_and_the (access: 25.02.2024).

⁹⁶ Haepaary is a South Korean alt-electronic duo from Seoul, consisting of Hyewon (instrumentalist) and Minhee (vocalist). See *Haepaary (South Korea)*, https://www.womex.com/virtual/ebb_music/haepaary_south_korea (access: 25.02.2024).

⁸⁹ T. Brennan, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁹⁰ S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 151–160.

⁹¹ For more on this tendency of favoring hybridity, see also B. Deschênes, *World Music*, “International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music” 2021, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 4–5.

⁹² See M. Stokes, *Music and the Global...*, op. cit., p. 60.

⁹³ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., p. 154.

music. Indeed, I don't believe that we can easily clear out (or perhaps cancel) all the references to the "West and non-West" dichotomy when it comes to global music. Historical accounts of world music did rely on its usage, and they should not be simply discarded, since they are a testimony to the initial perception of this kind of music. The ethnomusicologist Michael Tenzer expressed a similar opinion when he commented on Milan Kundera's repudiation of popular music of his time: "[t]oday things are different, but we still appreciate such choices in their historical (and especially in his case, political) context. But now the classical/popular or Western/non-Western divide is frozen in the past"⁹⁷.

However, while it is not difficult to tolerate those accounts as a form of historical reference, what is even more problematic is that it seems we cannot easily devoid musicians of their right to mark their own music in those politically problematic terms since they can perceive this as a good selling strategy in the Western market (a customary that can be interpreted as a kind of a "Stockholm syndrome" of the global music market)⁹⁸. But if it cannot be excluded from the exploration of the layers of meaning of global music (at least in principle, since this is a practice found on the global music scene that cannot simply be denied or "cancelled"), it does not mean that scholars should encourage this kind of discourse. If I may return to Gracyk's aesthetics of popular music, I agree with him that our attitudes toward certain kinds of music indeed reflect our engagement with a broader community as well⁹⁹. In this regard, if we believe, with Weitz, that we can make a "decision on our part" to extend the scope of the term, we should not forget that we are just as well in charge of limiting it if there are good reasons for it. The decision of not pursuing resemblances between musical works on the basis of their "non-Westernity" (when we are deciding on whether they should be included within global music category) should be made not only

because it is not instructive (anymore, if it ever was) but also because the exploration of the meaning of global music should not rely on problematic political prejudices and promote discriminatory perception.

Lastly, I want to address how this open concept approach to global music can influence our reflection on the previous attempts at explaining, or even defining, the meaning of music called "world" or "global". Although Weitz himself did discourage theoreticians from attempts at defining art (despite that defining something does not really mean precluding its expansion or advancement in the future), he didn't claim that theoreticians should not be involved in any analyses of those attempts. He did promote such analyses, especially when it comes to consulting traditional aesthetics on the matter. In the case of global music, we can indeed – following Gracyk's approach to popular music once again – mark and reflect on some more dominant meanings in which the terms "world music" or "global music" were used in the past (so it seems Gracyk was more a Weitzian in this regard than he would himself believe!).

While I don't want to involve it in the systematic reflection on the uses of the terms "world music" and "global music", it should be stated that some of the dominant meanings certainly include references to 1) traditional, folk, or indigenous music of the country or region, but also 2) a mixture of various traditional music styles, or 3) music based on traditional sources, or influenced by them, which is produced, arranged or performed with the intention of presenting it to the broader, international music market¹⁰⁰. It can also include 4) various types of popular music made with certain (minor or major) references to a distinct musical heritage of a country or region¹⁰¹ or 5) "the blending of modern and traditional musics"¹⁰², but also 6) "traditional music repackaged and marketed as popular music"¹⁰³. We can also mention that global music is sometimes perceived as 7) traditional music adapted, rearranged, and performed on contemporary

⁹⁷ M. Tenzer, *Introduction: Analysis, Categorization, and Theory of Musics of the World*, [in:] *Analytical Studies in World Music*, ed. M. Tenzer, Oxford–New York 2006, p. 4.

⁹⁸ This tendency I also perceived during and after WOMEX 2023, but I don't want to denounce artists utilizing such rhetorics by mentioning their names here.

⁹⁹ T. Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music...*, op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁰⁰ S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., pp. 146–148; M. B. Bakan, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. xxx; S. Frith, *The Discourse...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 153–156; S. Feld, *A Sweet Lullaby...*, op. cit., pp. 152–153.

¹⁰² J. Guilbault, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁰³ P. V. Bohlman, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. xiv. See also C. Gillett, *global music...*, op. cit.

music instruments (including samplers), and vice versa (i. e. contemporary music styles reimagined for traditional music environment)¹⁰⁴. Not referring to a “West vs. non West” divide, we can also add to the mix the music 8) “from disadvantaged population groups in general sense”, regardless of their location or origin¹⁰⁵. This list does not need to stop here – it can uncontroversially include other reflections on the wide variety of musical phenomena scholars stumble upon while engaging with the global music community or exploring the global music market. Following the open concept strategy, theoreticians understand that this is an arbitrary list of some (but not all) of the prominent usages of the terms “world music” and “global music”, and that it can never be exhaustive. It is also evident that the mentioned usages often overlap, but this, too, should not be seen as a problem since the strategy relies on the (Weitzian) premise that researching global music does not mean solving a puzzle made of those predominant meanings.

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¹⁰⁴ E. Chou, *Hybrid/fusion Music...*, op. cit., p. 95; B. Deschênes, *World Music...*, op. cit., pp. 4–5.

¹⁰⁵ J. Guilbault, *World Music...*, op. cit., p. 176.

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in ruling out the perception that its supposed “non-Westernity” is an “essential property” of the genre.

Keywords

global music, world music, open concept, philosophy of music, David Byrne, Morris Weitz, Theodore Gracyk

SUMMARY

Dušan Milenković

Global Music as an Open Concept – A Weitzian Approach to the Meanings of the “Music of the World”

In this paper, I argue that there are advantages to understanding “global music” (also known as “world music”) as an open concept, following Morris Weitz’s seminal account on the open-ended nature of art, as well as Theodore Gracyk’s characterization of popular music as an open concept. In the first part of the paper, I delineate prevalent critiques directed towards global music (or world music – I will use both terms interchangeably throughout the paper), which I present by commenting on David Byrne’s well-known article *I Hate World Music*. Central to my discussion are the two most dominant contentions: purported vagueness in defining the meaning and scope of global music, and its alleged propagation of politically incorrect values by broadly categorizing it as “non-Western music”. By employing a Weitzian approach to open concept strategy, I show that a strict definition of the meaning and scope of global music is not an imperative for a nuanced understanding of it. Furthermore, I contend that the open-ended nature of the concept of global music can help