

## Milena Petrovic: zoömusicologist



Milena Petrovic with her Saint Bernard, Gavriilo.

**Milena writes:** My dog Gavriilo is nine and the half years old. He is a very special dog who enjoys his life with all his being. And what is more important for me now is that Gavriilo starts to communicate - it is some kind of bourdon singing, but more a type of rhythmical bourdon, depending on his mood and time of day. I found Bourdon singing in wolves' howling (Petrovic 1.mp3). I cannot overlook the connection that surely exists between original humans and animal communication systems. Listen now to the very old Serbian type of female singing, where we can hear exactly the same principles as in the wolves howling: antiphonal (where one starts singing and the rest of singers follow), bourdon (one and the same drone tone as the accompaniment that others make), and heterophony (parallel seconds resulting from simultaneous performances of melodic variants of the same tune) (Petrovic 2.mp3).

Close relationship between animals and humans exist since antiquity. Simple imitation of animal sounds is one of the most obvious ways for human musicians, and this kind of imitative song could be found in different cultures. In Serbian ritual songs and dances some of animal sound pattern are incorporated most frequently by direct imitation for ritual purposes.

The graphic displays seven rows, each representing a different bird and its corresponding rhythmic pattern in Serbian folk music. From top to bottom: 1. Nightingale (Allegro moderato, 2/4), 2. Dove (Allegro moderato, 4/4), 3. Cardinal (Allegro, 3/4 and 6/8), 4. Peacock (Allegro, 10/8 with a 2+3+3+2 pattern), 5. Owl (Allegro vivo, 2/4), 6. Rooster (Allegro moderato, 3/4), and 7. Turtledove (Moderato, 3/4). Each row includes a small illustration of the bird, a speaker icon, and a musical staff with notes and rests.

Birds' rhythmic patterns found in Serbian folk music, as notated by Milena Petrovic: 1. nightingale, 2. dove, 3. cardinal, 4. peacock, 5. owl, 6. rooster, and 7. turtledove. (See "Zoömusicologists" page for audio link.)

**Research interests:** Since 2007, I've been doing research in the field of zoömusicology. The main reason was my fascination with the animal world. My first project was about introducing animal sound patterns in early music education. I was thinking that familiar sounds, like animals' are for children, could be a great base for teaching basic music theory to music beginners. As animals make different sound patterns of rhythm, articulation, dynamic, form or melody, I found they completely satisfy the criteria of music patterns.

Completely occupied with music patterns that animal make, I've started to think in the direction of the origins of humans music, believing that many of humans' earliest songs are made by imitation of animal sounds. Did humans learn music from animals? These kinds of questions I asked myself, knowing that a number of cultures specify that their music comes from animals. One of these nature-oriented cultures is surely Serbian. Digging deeper into the Serbian folk music tradition, I found many similarities between animal sounds and their imitative projection in Serbian folk songs and dances, for which I cannot say that they are simple coincidental relationship. Thus become my second research project, named "Music elements of animal sound patterns in Serbian folk music tradition." What I am most interested in is the question of music origins that should be

directly linked to the question of music universals. In upcoming research, I will be studying the origins of basic music patterns that are universal in their nature and, therefore, could be found in animal sounds.

I am assistant professor for solfeggio at the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade. I am also a music teacher in Belgrade's international school Chartwell. I am finalizing my first book and preparing it for publication: *Musical Transposition of Linguistic Accent in the Serbian Romantic Lied*, which was a part of my 2010 PhD project.



Milena Petrovic with her favorite Shetland pony, Trifun.

**Milena writes:** Ponies belong to my husband. He is a horse riding coach and owns a private horse-riding club named Pegaz in Belgrade's Hippodrome. Living almost ten years next to Hippodrome, I started to investigate rhythms that horses make. Then I realized that a gallop rhythm is actually the combination of horse walk and trot rhythm. But what fascinates me more is that gallop rhythm I found as the archaic and then universal pattern, so familiar to people and their music all around the world. However, Serbian people, by living close with animals, especially horses, surely imitated their rhythmic patterns and incorporated in their first songs and dances. You can hear the horse gallop rhythm and compare it to Serbian old round silent dance, where people use just the steps of their legs, without saying/singing any words. [Petrovic 3.mp3](#) and [Petrovic 4.mp3](#).

## **Selected Publications**

- Petrovic M: „N. Djurkovic, K. Stankovic and M. Topalovic Irmoses”, *The new sound*, International music journal, No. 7, Belgrade, 1996, 95-104.
- Milankovic V, Petrovic M: “Hummingbird” Monograph, On the occasion of the forty years since the childrens' choir named Hummingbird was founded. Editors Veljanovski R and Stefanovic I, Radio Belgrade and Belgrade Music Festival, 2003.
- Petrovic M: “Harmonium in consulate”, On the occasion of the hundred and fifty years since composer Stevan Stojanovic Mokranjac has been born, *Foundation*, Foundation of Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic Journal, XVIII, No. 76, Belgrade, p. 6, editor Budimir Potocan, 2006.
- Petrovic M: „Metrical structure in the hierarchy of movement”, *Movement in music and performing arts*, *Proceedings of the Ninth Pedagogical Forum*, Belgrade, Faculty of Music, 2007, 97-109.
- Petrovic M, Milankovic V: “Understanding and representing music structures in the music courses for beginners”, *Proceedings of the Fourth Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM08)*, Thessaloniki, Greece, (abstract and full text, C. Tsougras, R. Parncutt et al, eds.), 2-6. јули, 2008.
- Petrovic M, Acic G: “New Concept of Music Curriculum for preschoolers in elementary music school”, *Collection of Papers of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium “Music in Society”*, Sarajevo, October, 28-30, 2008, 297.
- Petrovic M: „Application of the animal sound patterns in the music education for beginners”, Full-paper in: *Music and Education, The Changing Face of Music Education (CFME09) 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference*, Tallinn, Estonia. (CD ed: Tiina Selke) Tallinn Univeristy, Institute of Fine Arts, Dept of Music, 22-25. април 2009, 201-205.
- Petrovic M: „Music elements of animal sound patterns in Serbian folk songs and dances”. In: *Proceedings of the Tenth Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM 10)*. Sheffield University: Music Department, 2010.
- Petrovic M: „Cadenza as music projection of rhyme in Serbian Romantic Lied”. In: *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Music Perception and Cognition (ICMPC 11)*. Seattle, Washington: Washington University Music Department, 2010.
- Petrovic M: „Musical transposition of linguistic accent in Serbian Romantic Lied”, Belgrade: Sluzbeni glasnik, in press.

## **Links to online papers and articles**

[http://cim08.web.auth.gr/cim08\\_abstracts/133\\_CIM08\\_abstracts.pdf](http://cim08.web.auth.gr/cim08_abstracts/133_CIM08_abstracts.pdf)

[http://depts.washington.edu/icmpc11/ICMPC11\\_ABSTRACTS.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/icmpc11/ICMPC11_ABSTRACTS.pdf)

[http://www.tlu.ee/CFME09/proceedings/CFME09\\_Abstracts.pdf](http://www.tlu.ee/CFME09/proceedings/CFME09_Abstracts.pdf)

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/content/1/c6/10/01/77/CIM%20proceedings.pdf>