

## **Music, Memory, Sustainability, and Assimilation in the Bosnian-American Community**

The war and genocide in the Balkans during the early 1990s resulted in waves of migration throughout the world. More than twenty years on, how does Bosnian music function in assimilating refugee communities in the United States, specifically in California and Missouri?

The genre of Sevdalinka, an urban song genre that dates back to the Ottoman period, has become especially emblematic of Bosnian and Bosnian-American identity in both communities. It is sung and danced to during celebrations of all kinds. However, especially in a more diffuse community like the San Francisco Bay Area, it is rarely heard outside those special events. St. Louis, MO has the largest Bosnian population outside the Balkans and hosts various Bosnian-language media, including radio, television, newspapers, and social media. Even within such a large community focused on sustainability and cultural maintenance, the second and third generations have rapidly assimilated and prefer English-language hip hop to Bosnian-language music such as turbofolk.

Grandparents everywhere rarely share the same musical aesthetics as their grandchildren, but what happens when they lack the language to sing one another's songs? Music can be a powerful way to sustain community and remember the past, but only if it continues to be sung and heard. The final portion of this talk will focus on research design and the challenges of fieldwork at home, with non-musicians, focused on memories long past.

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Tanya Merchant is an ethnomusicologist whose research interests include music's intersection with issues of nationalism, gender, identity, and the post-colonial situation. With a geographical focus on Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and the Balkans, she has conducted fieldwork in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, the United States, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She is an avid performer on the Central Asian dutar and has given concerts in the U.S. and Uzbekistan. Tanya Merchant received her Ph.D. in ethnomusicology with a concentration in women's studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her book, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan: From Courtyard to Conservatory*, was published in 2015 by the University of Illinois Press.