

STYLISTIC CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SERBIAN AND EUROPEAN MUSIC IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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SUMMARY. The Serbian musical culture was put late into connection with the European one. The fact that the first piano was introduced in Serbia in 1824 indicates that cultivating Serbian music was not possible under the Turkish domination. The spread of Serbian music in Europe made it possible to publish compositions by foreign authors and Serbian composers, which drew attention to the themes of Serbian music. The compositions were printed and published in Leipzig, Vienna, Prague, Paris, Budapest, London. The tours abroad performed by Serbian choirs and soloists popularized Serbian songs all over Europe. In the first half of the 20th century, almost 80 European composers wrote works with Serbian influences. Most of the foreign composers, especially those who lived and created among Serbians, embraced the mentality and cultural and musical needs of a people whose melodic essence they tapped into, using Serbian musical themes in their compositions.

Keywords: Serbian, composition, modernity, relations, influences.

Introduction

Serbian music was, due to the geographical and cultural situation, at the border of the influences that have always crossed the Balkans: “the history of art music in the region began after the arrival and Christianization of Serbs and other Slav tribes in the 9th century. Under Byzantine influence, they developed church music in their own language, and from the 12th century onwards they had an independent state. During the Turkish occupation, which

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lasted until the 19th century, Serbian church music had to continue largely in secret. At the end of the 17th century, contact was re-established with central European culture. Gradually, during the 18th century, cultural influence from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy spread among the Serbian population (...). From then onwards urban populations became increasingly open to influence from western Europe”³.

Serbian music in XXth century

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The Serbian musical culture was put late into connection with the European one. The fact that the first piano was introduced in Serbia in 1824 indicates that cultivating Serbian music was not possible under the Turkish domination. Many foreign musicians, when visiting Serbia, felt the need to sing, to take over compositions based on Serbian themes. Serbian composers also studied in schools abroad. Without any doubt, their teachers influenced their training as well, but we cannot rule out the possibility that they might have influenced the musicians of that time.

Here are some of the composers from before WWI who studied abroad: Kornelije Stanković (1831-1865), in Budapest and Vienna; Aksentije Maksimović (1844-1873), in Prague; Jovan Paču (1847-1902) in Prague (under the supervision of B. Smetana); Mita Topalović (1849-1912), in Prague; Josif Marinković (1851-1931), in Prague and Vienna; Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856-1914), in Munich, Rome and Leipzig; Jovan Ivanišević (1861-1889), in Prague; Petar Z. Ilić (1868-1957), in Vienna, Prague and Munich; Božidar Joksimović (1868-1955), in Prague; Vladimir R. Đorđević (1869-1938), in Vienna and Prague; Cvetko Manojlović (1869-1939), in Leipzig; Stanislav Binički (1872-1942), in Munich; Petar Stojanović (1877-1957), in Vienna; Petar Krstić (1877-1957), in Vienna; Isidor Bajić (1878-1915), in Budapest; Petar Konjović (1883-1970), in Prague; Miloje Milojević (1884-1946), in Munich; Stevan

³ Devic, Dragoslav. *Grove's Dictionary for Music*, Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of, electronic edition.

Hristić (1885-1958), in Leipzig; Milenko Paunović (1889-1924), in Prague and Leipzig; Kosta Manojlović (1890-1949), in Moscow and Munich; Ljubomir Bošnjaković (1891-1987), in Vienna, Berlin and Naples; Miloje Crvčanin (1892-1978), in Prague.

Unlike the French-Russian direction (with its main representatives Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky, whose innovations resulted in the search for alternatives to the dominant German Romantic tradition), the composers in the Austrian and German area (Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg, Richard Strauss) ensured the continuation of the main direction in music development. Their innovations emerged in the process of looking for an escape from the tonality crisis at the end of the 19th century (which coincided with the Expressionist impulse – the second school).

The key terms associated with Modernism were progress, technique, rationality, control – which shows that Modernism is a fundamentally positive, utopic vision of the world. The obsessive search for new expressions and techniques in Modernism implicitly indicates the faith in progress, in innovation. The artist's dissatisfaction with the individual's position and, consequently, with their own position (in the developed capitalist society, in which the individual feels threatened because of the increasing domination of the standards of the capitalist world) is imprinted in Modernism. The artist of the 20th century also witnessed the various disasters which marked this epoch, above all the most dreadful wars in history. This is also the source of the aspirations towards the autonomy of the creation, which can be linked to the emergence of artists' critical attitudes, often conflicting and challenging towards society (that followed and understood the artistic events with increasing difficulty). However, one cannot ignore the fact that some avant-garde movements within Modernism, in addition to their tendency towards autonomy, displayed the opposite tendency – towards the closest relationship between life and art, which is one of the many contradictions of this period.

The avant-garde is indissolubly linked to Modernism, which is interpreted differently. Among its many interpretations, the most adequate is the one which sees the avant-garde movements within Modernism as its most radical forms of manifestation, its most advanced and challenging positions in a certain period. Impressionism, as a first distinct manifestation of the new aesthetics, anti-Romantic, did not share the features of the avant-garde movement. The first musical movement which shared the features of avant-garde was Expressionism, and A. Schoenberg was the prototype avant-garde creator. Besides Expressionism, the avant-garde movements can also be considered close to Dadaism (Erik Satie, Luigi Russolo), to neo-Classicism (Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud), to Serialism (Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez), to electronic and concrete music, or to Aleatoricism (Pierre Boulez).

Early Modernism (up to the end of WWI) is an expression of the changing spirit of the times after the R. Wagner's death, when people expected art to answer the religious and metaphysical crisis in general. Without these spiritual points of reference, the musical form lost its integrity and target orientation, features characteristic of the classical-romantic forms, like the sonata and the symphony, while the changes in the musical syntax became more and more acute. Fissures in the musical form were recorded, as evidenced by the fragmentary organization of the whole in Gustav Mahler's symphonies.

Impressionism, as previously mentioned, marked the initial stage of Modernism in France. The Russian music of the second half of the 19th century had a significant influence on the creative imagination of C. Debussy and his French contemporaries and was incorporated in the avant-garde genre dominated by I. Stravinsky.

Modernity coincides with Expressionism; thus, it includes the period from the fall of the tonal system around 1908 until the introduction of the strict dodecaphony in 1921. The emergence of Expressionism before WWI shows that artists can record the major cultural and social convulsions that are about to take place.

In the middle period of Modernism (which includes the inter-war period) the previous tendencies continued to develop, but the hopes of returning to order after the atrocities of WWI were increasingly visible. Neoclassicism is one expression of this effort, and it manifests not only through the cheerful parodies and the play on past stereotypes (Serghei Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, Igor Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, Paul Hindemith's chamber music), but also through highly stylized syntheses (*Oedipus Rex* and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*).

The emergence of dodecaphony represents, on the one hand, a decisive break with tradition, and on the other, the construction of solid bridges with the past, using counterpoint techniques and the Baroque and Classical forms (Serenade op. 24, Suite op. 29 by A. Schoenberg). Certainly, the very emergence of dodecaphony was a consequence of the need to "bring order" to music after the anarchic tendencies of the free atonality period, so that the compositions based on dodecaphony can be seen in the wider context of Neoclassicism. However, most composers wrote in vast areas within the above-mentioned avant-garde tendencies, combining elements of different styles and procedures, ensuring the conditions for very convincing and personal syntheses (Leoš Janáček, Richard Strauss, Jan Sibelius, Maurice Ravel, Dmitri Shostakovich).

The Serbian composers were late in accepting Modernist tendencies, but some of them succeeded in joining the international avant-garde tendencies

(first in the 1930s, and then in the 1960s), which made it possible for the Serbian Modernism to be not just a reflection of world events, but also a spontaneous reaction to the Modernist principles of several national composers.

Here are the four stages of Serbian Modernism and their main representatives:

- **stage I** (1908-1945): Petar Konjović, Stevan Hristić, Miloje Milojević, Josip Slavenski, Marko Tajčević.
- **stage II** (1929-1945) – the composers of the Prague Group: Mihovil Logar, Predrag Milošević (predecessors), Dragutin Colić, Ljubica Marić, Vojislav Vučković, Stanojlo Rajčić, Milan Ristić.
- **stage III** (1951-1970):
 - a) Neoclassicism: Milan Ristić, Dušan Radić, Dejan Despić, Vladan Radovanović, Enriko Josif.
 - b) Neo-Expressionism: Stanojlo Rajčić, Vasilije Mokranjac, Aleksandar Obradović.
 - c) Archaized music: Ljubica Marić, Dušan Radić, Rajko Maksimović.
- **stage IV** (1956-1980): Vladan Radovanović, Aleksandar Obradović, Petar Ozgijan, Petar Bergamo, Srđan Hoffman, the group Opus 4⁴.

The composers of the first and second stages are separated by generations, while in the following stages there is a mixture of generations. The temporal discontinuity between the second and the third stages is determined by the war period and the post-war “realignment”.

The analysis of the melody, of its function in the musical phenomenon and of its influence on other musical and expression components starts from the enumeration of its basic features, perhaps most visible in the first movement of the composition. Emphasizing “the affinity with the new sound, objective and anti-Romantic, and the wise abstention from extremes”¹⁵ (our translation), Vlastimir Peričić sees in the first movement of the work the contours of the sonata and of the bi-thematic form, starting from the relative plasticity and the conditioned integrity of the two themes which combine in the same movement and can be seen as such:

⁴ Milin, Melita. *Etape modernizma u srpskoj muzici (Stages of modernism in Serbian music)*, Muzikologija, Beograd, 2006, p.103.

E.g. 1



Vlastimir Peričić, Sonata, m. 1 (1st part)

E.g. 2



Vlastimir Peričić, Sonata oboe piano, m. 13 (1st part)

The lower limit of the second stage was set in 1929, when the *Sonata quasi uno scherzo* was composed by Mihovil Logar, work which brings forth Expressionist elements, while the upper limit is the same as for the previous stage, because the end of the war marked a (temporal) break with the Modernist ideas which were adopted and applied by the composers in the “Prague Group” during the previous decade.

The years 1951 and 1970 mark the beginning and the end, respectively, of the third stage. It is the stage between M. Ristić’s *Symphony no. 2* and the years in which the various types of Modernism, typical of this stage, lose their avant-garde potential. There are also Postmodernist clues. Most of the protagonists of this stage continued to create in the established stylistic framework even after 1970, often approaching one of the Postmodern tendencies. As a first work of the fourth stage, it is worth mentioning *7 Korala* (1955–56) by Vladan Radovanović, a composition based on minimalism *avant la lettre*, while 1980 marks the end of the main work of the group *Opus 4*.

Cultivating the genuine respect for Mokranjac’s creation, sharing with Mussorgsky and Janaček a strong attraction to folklore as the deepest and essential creation of human musical tradition, Konjović took part in the formation of the main, dominant Modernist tendency under development: Konjović’s *Koštana*, musical drama from the south of the Balkans, was developed from the specificity of the language dialect and of the music in the Vranje region, as a synthesis of the Oriental and Slavic substratum, and enriched the European

contemporary creation at the time with its grandiose games of mixed measures and vocal prosody completely unknown to the musical tradition of the Occident.

As for the style, the dominant features of the modern layer of Konjović's musical discourse are represented by: the orchestration in the spirit of Impressionist solutions, the intensity of the linear melodic-rhythmic discourse leading to Expressionist detachment and the occasional departure from the functional tonality; these are reflected at the horizontal harmonic level and in the vertical harmonic saturation. *Koštana* is in itself a turning point reflecting a high-level synthesis of musical elements of different origins.

If the logic of the Petar Konjović's creative path is the logic of continuity (towards the modernization of traditional discourse), Mihovil Logar's development path is characterized by the constant melodic oscillation and the movement of the focal points in the coordinated area of a stylistic crossroads determined by the elements of late Romanticism, Expressionism and Neoclassicism.

The year 1931 is representative of the crossroads at which, because of the parallel action of several different stylistic programmes, there was a marked tension between the old musical style and the new one. "However, the year of Josif Marinković's death constitutes only the beginning of the increased tension in the stylistic cluster which became typical for the entire fourth decade. Although J. Marinković was no longer around, the tradition of the 19th century was still alive, as throughout the third decade, in the composition of older musicians (Petar Krstić) or of the younger more conservative ones (Ljubomir Bošnjaković)"⁵ (our translation).

The intersection between "old" and "new" in the Serbian music of the inter-war period was enriched by a new stylistic dimension through Milošević's Prague compositions. Formally balanced and efficient from the pianistic point of view, neoclassical and graceful, Milošević's *Sonatina* found rapidly and easily its place in the repertoire of local pianists, but also of foreign ones.

Conclusion

However, as long as the representatives of the youngest generation were living abroad, as long as their tonal research remained unknown in the national context, this continuity line determined by Expressionist elements constituted an independent stylistic current, parallel, without contact points, with the dominant current. Regardless of the years in which the student compositions of the members of the Prague Group were written, it is important to

⁵ Tomašević, Katarina. *Na raskršću istoka i zapada* (At the crossroads of east and west), Muzikološki institut srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Beograd, 2009, p. 210.

remember that the tensions between the new and the old poetics in Serbian music truly emerged only after the compositions of the youngest generation were presented in Belgrade.

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