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**SRPSKA MUZIKA NA RASKRŠĆU ISTOKA I ZAPADA? O DIJALOGU
TRADICIONALNOG I MODERNOG U SRPSKOJ MUZICI
IZMEĐU DVA SVETSKA RATA
(Serbian Music at the Crossroads of the East and the West? On Dialogue Between the
Traditional and the Modern In Serbian Music between the Two World Wars)**

A result of many years of the author's research of European frameworks of national music, Katarina Tomašević's doctoral dissertation focuses on the phenomena that initiated, provoked and significantly marked the lines of development of musical output and the circumstances in Serbian music in the decades between the two World Wars.¹ The analyses in this study have been carried out for the purpose of isolating and differentiating precisely those phenomena which, being dominant and crucial in the processes of transcending the previous music tradition and practice, exerted vital influence on the transformation of the physiognomy of Serbian music towards its *modernization*. The essential method of the comparative analytical procedure – determining the types of relationships established between *innovation* and *tradition* – is also the basic criteria for deriving various typologies, those arising from monitoring micro-changes within the very structure of music works and their stylistic aspect as well as broader ones, which encompass developmental tendencies within the creative trajectory of an author or a whole group of creators. Serving as a point of departure for systematizing the results of historical, analytical and theoretical research, the relations *old-new*, *traditional-modern*, *national-cosmopolitan* were also presented as being key to understanding not only the typical features of the analyzed period of Serbian music and the local artistic surroundings, but also the general characteristics of the lines of development of European art as its referential context.

Seemingly structured as a mosaic, the text of the dissertation is realized by polyphonically leading several principal ideas through five chapters representing methodological variations of the central theme of the work.² In addition to a definition of the subject and goal of the research, the *Uvod (Introduction)* (Chapter I) includes a review of musicological literature dedicated to Serbian music between the two World Wars, discusses the state of the material itself and the extent to which it has been examined, highlights the problems detected within the very term *Serbian music between the two*

¹ The doctoral dissertation was written under the mentorship of full professor, Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, Ph.D. It was defended at the Faculty of Music on January 19, 2004, in the absence of the mentor, and before a committee consisting of full professor, Roksanda Pejović, Ph.D, (president), Academy member Predrag Palavestra, full professor, Miodrag Šuvaković, Ph.D, and associate professor, Sonja Marinković, Ph.D.

World Wars and points to a series of open questions regarding which our contemporary national musicology has still not reached consensus.

The premises for a discussion on the dynamic transformation of Serbian music between the two World Wars are presented in the first section of the *Diptych (Diptih)* dedicated to a *crossroads* as the central concept of the study (Chapter II). Functioning as a preface for reviewing the integral polemic context of an epoch at the crossroads of tradition, modernism and the avant-garde, the section entitled *Srpska muzika na raskršću Istoka i Zapada? (Serbian Music at the Crossroads of the East and the West?)* (IIA) brings an outlined description of the creative orientation of Miloje Milojević, Petar Konjović and Josip Slavenski as the key figures of the epoch, points out their choice for a course due either East or West and explains the antagonism between the poetics of the “Europeans” and the representatives of avant-garde trends. The topicality of the East-West dichotomy in the critical consciousness of the period’s protagonists is an occasion to trace its origin and point, in outline, by recapitulating the centuries-long development trends of Serbian music, to the significance of interaction between *Orientalization* and *Europeanization* as the two key acultural processes in forming the cultural and artistic identity of the Balkan peoples. The following section of the *Diptych* dedicated to *crossroads* is realized on the theoretical plane (IIB). Resulting in the formation of a general model of types of creative communication, the theoretical discussion on crossroads is based on analyzing the key concepts of comparative and semiotic theoretical systems (*communication, dialogue, dynamics of an artistic phenomenon, horizon of expectation, influence*). Apart from discussing the crossroads as a point of convergence wherein individual creative communication is initiated, this section also treats of traditions and styles at the crossroads, as well as the hermeneutic circle as a unique crossroads at the centre of which is the work.

The third chapter of the dissertation, entitled *Prodor novina i otpor tradicije kao odlike duha vremena srpske kulture između dva svetska rata (The Penetration of Innovations and the Resistance of Tradition as a Characteristic of the Zeitgeist of Serbian Culture Between the Two World Wars)*, analyzes the questions of artistic communication at the crossroads of the traditional and modern age, elucidates the aspects of the reception of innovations and identifies the specificities of modernization processes, determined by a parallel operation of cultural models (civic, petit-bourgeois and anti-civic). Prolonging the debate on the interfusion and synthesis of the East and the West in Serbian artistic music, the section dedicated to the reception of Stevan Hristić’s oratorio *Vaskrsenje (Resurrection)* (1912) (IIIA) calls attention to a picture of Belgrade music life on the eve of World War I, points to the initial stylistic positions of the epoch’s key figures and, introducing an exhaustive account of a polemic occasioned by the performance of the first oratorio in Serbian music, it points to the level of critical awareness of music in the context of the spirit of the time.

² The doctoral dissertation covers 341 pages together with the supplements (*Tables and Bibliography*, with a

The following chapter, *Beogradski kontrasti – eksplozija novina i eho reakcije* (*Belgrade Contrasts – An Explosion of Innovations and Echo Reactions*) (IIIB), discusses the phenomenon of fashion, mass culture and music as its segment, the altered social status of women musicians, as well as the expansion of the field of artistic communication due to the appearance of new media – the radio, film and records. Variegated, dynamic and full of sharp contrasts, the mosaic of information on the character and the effects of modernization processes in Belgrade's culture between the two World Wars is then completed by a description of reform changes that occurred in the organization system and physiognomy of artistic life (*Muzički život Beograda na raskršću starog i novog doba /Belgrade Music Life at the Crossroads of the Old and the New Age/*, IIIC). Special attention is paid to the founding of cultural institutions, the education of our musicians abroad, the sojourns and guest performances of foreign musicians in the Serbian milieu, the repertoire policy, the system of reception and articles on music published in professional magazines. The presentation of data on the evolution of the national opera and ballet, orchestral, choral and chamber music, on the importance and development of the music educational system, as well as on the role of professional magazines in broadening the horizons of the reading audience, runs uninterruptedly parallel to *identifying the moments when innovations were introduced into the given artistic practice* and drawing comparisons with circumstances in the evolution of literature and the fine arts.

In the following two steps (*Diptih o tradicionalnom i modernom /Diptych on the Traditional and the Modern/*, chapter IV), attention is focused first on the polemic context of the epoch of Serbian art between the two World Wars and then on the theoretical aspects of the “eternal dialogue between ‘the old’ and ‘the new’” as a generative principle and a universal constant of European art development courses. A debate on the issue of Serbian national art's development strategy following World War I, conducted from the standpoints *pro et contra Europa*, is the subject of the first section (IVA) analyzing and systematizing poetical, aesthetical and ideological views of composers, writers, painters and representatives of art criticism. Special attention is paid to polemic dialogues and disputes wherein changes in the course of national art towards Europe, towards its East or West, are most clearly manifested. An older and wider dialogic context of European art is the subject of a theoretical analysis in *Rasprava o pojmovima (A Debate on Terms)* (IVB), initiated not only with the aim to systematically present relevant theoretical views on *tradition, the classical, the modern, the avant-garde, the national, a debate on ‘the old’ and ‘the new’* and on the problem of *progress* in art, but also to definitely prepare a platform on which a typology of Serbian music between the two World Wars will be presented as the next step.

Identifying changes in the structure and expression of the music discourse of artists, perceiving the specificities of the stylistic transformation of Serbian music, distinguishing the

dominant from incidental courses of its development and following the shifts of focus in the genre of the period are the methods employed for analyzing the problem of *the crossroads of the traditional and the modern* in Serbian music between the two World Wars in the final, fifth chapter of the dissertation. By broadening the perspective from the synchronic plane (*Raskršće u sinhroniji. Godina 1931 /Crossroads in Synchrony. Year 1931/*) to the diachronic (*Stilsko raskršće četvrte decenije /Stylistic Crossroads of the Fourth Decade/* and *Situacija raskršća u dijahroniji dominantnog stilskog toka. Period od 1919-1941 /The Position of the Crossroads in the Diachrony of the Dominant Stylistic Trend. The Period from 1919 to 1941/*) and by reviewing the relationship between the archaic and modern components of music expression in the works of J. Slavenski and M. Tajčević, the author presents an image of *a stable stylistic crossroads* as a *stylistic constant* that situates the Serbian music between the two World Wars along all the lines of its evolution within the framework of European modernism.

Because of the size of the analyzed material (the dissertation examines over 150 works of 29 composers), the main text brings only the results obtained through material processing. The key connectives in reviewing the relevance of the results are the tables that, albeit provided in the Appendix, bring a selection of characteristic compositions and are essentially a specific anthology of the representative works of the music epoch between the two World Wars. The physiognomy of the tables, originating in the methodological premises of the research, provides accurate direction for “reading” the analyzed period in the history of Serbian music using different criteria.

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac