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**Review of the Proceedings of the Symposium *Life And Work Of Vasilije Mokranjac*, Belgrade, SOKOJ-Music Information Center, 2005, 216 pages**

The Proceedings of the symposium *Life and Work of Vasilije Mokranjac*,<sup>1</sup> held by the SOKOJ-Music Information Center to mark the 20th anniversary of the composer's death, were not published until almost a year after the scholarly gathering. The publication was underwritten by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, so this time the reasons for the excessive delay were not financial. Difficulties which arose while working with the authors, as well as numerous technical issues, resulted in a gap between the symposium (14-16 December 2004) and the printing of the collection (November 2005). Of course, this has not affected the quality of the publication, nor has it reduced its significance as a contribution to literature on recent Serbian music history.

The collection comprises several large sections, encompassing the most important aspects of Mokranjac's work. Fourteen papers in total cover his music for symphonies, concertos and piano, as well as his less researched film music, from various angles of a mostly analytical nature (articles by Nadežda Mosusova, Melita Milin, Biljana Milanović, Sanela Radisavljević, Anica Sabo, Ivana Medić, Dušan Trbojević, Branka Radović, Svetana Maksimović, and Maja Vasiljević), while a smaller number of authors deal with the reception and performance of Mokranjac's compositions at home and abroad (texts by Roksanda Pejović and Marina Milić-Apostolović). The last group of papers reviews his years of teaching, observed from different aspects (articles by Sonja Marinković and Vladimir Tošić).<sup>2</sup> Wishing to preserve the memory of Vasilije Mokranjac in her own way, his daughter Aleksandra

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<sup>1</sup> Published by the SOKOJ-Music Information Center, edited by Dr. Nadežda Mosusova, and reviewed by Dr. Katarina Tomašević and Dr. Dragana Stojanović-Novičić.

<sup>2</sup> The third paper in this group, by Rastislav Kambasković, was presented at the symposium but not published in this publication at the author's request.

contributes a personal note by revealing some of the many sides of her father's personality.<sup>3</sup>

Following the collection's organizing principle, we find texts that are different but of mostly consistent quality. Most of them are papers focusing on the results of musicological research as a significant framework for further research into specific segments of Mokranjac's creative work. However, there are also several papers whose different focus has caused a certain imbalance, thereby altering the publication's character. Here we refer to the romantic and somewhat abstract literary text by the composer's daughter, which stands out in comparison with the others. Bearing in mind that the text is highly interesting and extremely personal, our opinion is that this article as such was more appropriate for the symposium itself, rather than for a collection of papers predominantly oriented towards scientific research. Also, we cannot help but notice how such a significant occasion for discourse about our great composer has inspired some authors to emphasize their own artistic achievement, using Mokranjac's music as a means rather than an end in itself.

When we consider the scholarly discourse on Mokranjac's creative work, we come across a vast range of various readings and interpretations of his work. Nadežda Mosusova illuminates the art of Vasilije Mokranjac, observing it as a particular synthesis of tradition and avant-garde, while authors Melita Milin, Biljana Milanović and Sanela Radisavljević view his symphonic work from three different angles. Melita Milin observes Mokranjac's symphonies within the context of European symphonic style, Biljana Milanović studies his mature works in the same genre and, comparing it with the open drama form, tries to update and redefine the existing musicological reception of Mokranjac's work. One more contribution to this most frequently researched aspect of Mokranjac's music is given by musicology student Sanela Radisavljević, who thoroughly analyzes the specifics of orchestration in his works as a relevant element in determining stylistic expression.

The next sub-group of papers, also analytically oriented, is made up of studies within the field of piano and concerto music, that is, solos and music for piano and orchestra. Anica Sabo identifies a unity in the cycles in Mokranjac's piano works through the analysis of two compositions of similar formal structure (suites *Fragmenti* /Fragments/ and *Intima* /Intimacy/) belonging to different periods of his creative

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<sup>3</sup> The text in question was not presented at the symposium, but was subsequently included and published in the collection of papers by decision of the editorial board.

work, and with the objective of discovering the characteristics of music flow common to both pieces. Another attempt to define the layered styles of Vasilije Mokranjac, this time observed through the prism of his concerto music, is the outline of the paper by Ivana Medić. With an analytical approach she examines the compositions which belong to this genre (*Concertino for Piano, Strings and Two Harps, Concertante Music for Piano and Orchestra* and *Poem for Piano and Orchestra*) and determines the significance and role of concerto music in Mokranjac's creative oeuvre, as well as in the broader context of Serbian and European music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thematically related—but completely different conceptually—is the paper written by pianist Dušan Trbojević, who approaches the analysis of *Odjeci (Echoes)* and *Poema za klavir i orkestar (Poem for Piano and Orchestra)* as a performer, but above all as the composer's co-worker and friend of many years. Totally non-intrusive and subtle, with a simple and clear exposition, Trbojević draws interesting conclusions permeated with his experience as a performer, but also with the personal and sincere emotions he felt for Mokranjac over their forty years of friendship.

Branka Radović also indirectly analyzes *Odjeci*, certainly the most significant piano work by Vasilije Mokranjac. Her interesting comparative study reflects on the different ways in which this composition influenced the piano music of composers who came after Mokranjac, by analyzing compositions by Vlastimir Trajković, Dejan Despić and Vuk Kulenović. Moreover, she connects the specific features of *Odjeci* and their structure and form and associatively attaches them to certain poetic, metric and rhythmic structures of Serbian poetry, primarily by Jovan Dučić and Milan Rakić, which she finds akin to the composer's artistic sensibility. The segment dedicated to Vasilije Mokranjac's piano music is rounded off by Svetlana Maksimović, who analyzes the formal and stylistic elements of *Odjeci (Echoes)* from the composer's point of view.

The writings on Vasilije Mokranjac have been thoroughly processed by Roksanda Pejović in her distinctive manner. She considers individual surveys, critiques, and reviews of his works, as well as musicological publications, studies, and articles produced by his contemporaries as well as by numerous authors of the middle and younger generation. Thus, in this paper the reader can discover significant bibliographical information about the life and work of Vasilije Mokranjac and gain insight into how some of his compositions were received in-country and abroad. The issue of how Mokranjac's piano works are received abroad is taken up by Marina

Milić-Apostolović, with a completely different approach. In her substantial paper, the author describes the diffusion and popularity of Mokranjac's work among younger generations of performers while also taking the opportunity to familiarize readers with her own artistic personality, the activities of her *Laza Kostić* piano fund, as well as her work as director and selector of *The Karić Foundation Piano Competition*.

The only paper dedicated to the small oeuvre intended for film music is contributed by another student of musicology, Maja Vasiljević. Discussing the genre of Vasilije Mokranjac's 'applied music', she sheds light on some previously unexplored aspects of his creative work and finds new layers within the composer's otherwise homogenous style.

The teaching activity of Vasilije Mokranjac, which he carried out in tandem with his composing, serves as the last topic in the most important aspects of his life and creative work.. In her study, Sonja Marinković presents data preserved in the archives of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, where Mokranjac spent the greatest part of his working life at the Department for Composition and Orchestration, and also presents the testimonies and memories of his contemporaries and students. Vladimir Tošić, as one of his students at the Department, shares a highly personal and poignant recollection of his professor, pointing out some familiar and some less-familiar aspects of his personality and his relationship with his students.

The proceedings of the symposium dedicated to Vasilije Mokranjac as one of the most eminent domestic composers represents one in a series of successful projects of the SOKOJ-Music Information Center, with the goal of promoting and disseminating contemporary Serbian music. The different aspects of his life and work, which make up the contents of this publication, will have a multiple benefit for further research and analysis of a topic which, even 20 years after the composer's death, still occupies the attention of theoreticians and musicologists of all generations with undiminished intensity.

Translated by the author