

---

---

## STUDIES

---

---

Article received on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Article accepted on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010

UDC 781.071.1 (091)(497.11)

*Sonja Marinković\**

University of Arts in Belgrade

Faculty of Music – Department of Musicology

### WORK AND CREATION OF VUČKOVIĆ AND RAJIČIĆ FACING THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL ART\*\*

**Abstract:** On the occasion of the hundredth birthday anniversary of the youngest representatives of the *Prague group* of Serbian composers, Vojislav Vučković (1910–1942) and Stanojlo Rajičić (1910–2000), the search for the answer to the question of taking a stand towards that developmental phase of their creative path which concerns the so-called *turning point* from the pre-war expressionism towards socialistic realism becomes increasingly important. First, because the historical distance can now be considered sufficient for making relevant judgments; and second, because that phase in their work was important for general development of Serbian music of the time. And finally, because their attitude towards the questions of engaged and social art gives fundamentally important answers, which have relevant theoretical and artistic meanings.

**Key words:** *Prague group*, Vojislav Vučković, Stanojlo Rajičić, *turning point*, socialistic realism, engaged and social art.

---

\* Author contact information: marinkovica@ikomline.net

\*\* The research for this study was carried out as part of the project *The World Chronotopoi of Serbian Music* (No. 147045), supported by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

The turning point<sup>1</sup> in the work of the Prague group of Serbian composers, which is evident with all its members after 1945, and had been prepared in the years before the Second World War, occurred as an inevitable consequence of contemporary happenings in art, not only in Yugoslavia, but around the world as well. Its significance is by no means exhausted by the events from the period of socialist realism; the style retardation which occurred at the time was a logical consequence of the long-lasting process of certain artistic concept stemming from the pre-war period. The starting point of this text is that the essential meanings of these ideas can not be equated with simplified soc-realistic expressions, and that there are actually two different waves of this turning point, which will be shown in the examples from works of Vojislav Vučković and Stanojlo Rajičić.

The ideas of social art on international level offered various possibilities of creative artistic engagement, and this richness of form and manifestation of social tendencies influenced the development of Yugoslav art in the third and, especially, fourth decade of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The main characteristic of our social art movement was its breadth, universal orientation, openness toward different variations and manifestations of new conceptual trends. Further development of the movement led to differentiation of separate groups, which formed specific programme concepts, and later towards their mutual confrontation and exclusivity. This provoked the 'confrontation in the literary left wing' a strong clash of creative concepts and opinions which is unparalleled in size and importance in Yugoslav cultural history, and not limited to the field of literature.<sup>3</sup> The work of Vojislav Vučković was a part of those conceptual and artistic movements of the fourth decade. His theoretical thought and composing work, from finishing his studies (1934) until his death, are inseparable from similar events and ideas in other artistic field, since no dimension of composer's engagement can not be

---

1 The idea of the style turning point in Serbian musicology as a definition of a phase in the style development of the composers from the Prague Group was promoted by the publication of the PhD thesis of Marija Bergamo *Elementi ekspresionističke orijentacije u srpskoj muzici do 1945. godine*, [*Elements of Expressionistic Orientation in Serbian Music before 1945*], Beograd, SANU, 1980, but had been used in musicological works even before that (Cf. Vlastimir Peričić, *Stovaralački put Stanojla Rajačića*, [*Creative Path of Stanojlo Rajačić*], Belgrade, Art Academy, 1971).

2 Cf. Sonja Marinković, 'Vojislav Vučković and new realism', *International Magazine for Music New Sound*, 2, 1993, 23–33. The text approaches the development of Vučković, who turns from radical expressionistic positions to the doctrine of socialist realism. It particularly points to the generalizations, imprecision and inaccuracies in the previous views on this problem, as well as to the necessity of forming a more moderate and objective judgement of Vučković's ideas from the period of his accepting the doctrine of new realism.

3 The clash in the literary left wing was the subject of many scientific works, among which the book by Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici, 1928–1952*, [*The Clash in the Literary Left Wing, 1928–1952*] Zagreb, Liber, 1970, stands out for its comprehensiveness and quality of analytical approach.

understood completely outside the context of ideas of the movement to which he belonged.<sup>4</sup>

In Vučković's development in the *pre-war* period, there are two distinct phases. The first refers to the years of studying, and the period immediately after coming to Belgrade. Vučković's positions in this period were far from the ideas of our social literature movement, and can be compared with similar tendencies in European art – various variants of critic expressionism and surrealism – under which influence they occurred. In his theoretic thought from the time emerges one, for Serbian musicology, important experience, which could serve as the theoretical base of the Marxist approach towards artistic phenomena. The other phase in Vučković's development coincides with the period and development of ideas of new realism. But Vučković did not follow the new-realistic programme blindly; he accepted it gradually, forming a new vision of artistic engagement and a new, unfortunately unfinished, profile of a creative personality.

During all these years, Vučković showed an extraordinary sensibility to the emergence of new conceptual and creative orientation in the sphere of artistic creation, but also in the theory and philosophy of art. Nevertheless, he had the ability and knowledge to develop, within the limits of general conceptual movements and trends, a personal and original artistic world. Therefore Vučković's premature death was a multiple loss for Serbian musical culture, depriving it of a creative opus which, one can reasonably assume, would have had an important place in it; but moreover, depriving it of a vision of an artistic purpose and artistic creation which could have yielded valuable fruit, and whose echoes can not be recognized in subsequent creative streams. The post-war period brought an acclaim to Vučković's life and – with certain, clearly expressed reserves – work, but seemingly did not recognize in his work the really valuable embryos, nor did it bring true creative resonating with his thought and work. The post-war approach to Vučković could have had less acclaim and praise but, with all necessary criticism, more insight into the essential meaning of his artistic engagement. This particularly refers to the period of socialist realism, in which Vučković mainly served as an important evidence and example in the final score-settling with the avant-garde. In this matter, his work was used more as a source of arguments for different attitudes, than as an inspiration for the further development of the ideas of the socially engaged artistic work.

Vučković's thought on these matters offered several possible solutions. First, it was the path which he himself had trodden in most of his works, and which is on a line with topical streams in the development of the European music in the fourth decade: a form of neoclassicism, with elements of romantic expressivity. The other was creative remodelling of the folk tradition; and the third possibility – the development of the ideas and methods of the Slavic realism, above all, Mus-

---

4 Cf. Sonja Marinković, op. cit.

sorgsky. None of these ideas was taken into account in the development of the doctrine of socialist realism.

Soc-realistic aesthetic requirements in Serbian music emerge as a consequence of entwining and mutual supplementing of two basic currents from the pre-war period: the ideas of social art of proletarian-cult type, which induced composers to create mass songs and remake folk melodies, and the applied music and populist ideas, which appeared within schools of national romanticism and were prominent with many Serbian composers of the time. These ideas are usually combined with a rather limited knowledge of expressive and technical possibilities of modern composing technique, since they are absolutely satisfied with early romantic circle of expression devices.

The combination of these two currents represented, in the period 1946–1950, the one and only formally recognized artistic orientation, and the appearance of any other, different system of artistic thinking, was politically prevented. However, as a certain counterpoint to these officially defined courses of Serbian music development, there was the activity of a number of authors, the ‘travel-mates’ of the current streams, who, partially adapting to the requirements of soc-realism, continued their artistic activity. This was the case with the all the members of the *Prague group*.

The soc-realism came upon the members of the Prague group in a moment when they were all, more or less, in the process of searching for a synthesis of their youthful experiences, and the traditional elements, towards which they were directed by the situation in the contemporary music life, as well as the general developments in European music. ‘The first turning point’ in their music happened under the influence of the general atmosphere in cultural life in the pre-war years and immediately after the war. The best proof that the ideas of the social art played a part in this process is Rajačić’s music for the ballet *Pod zemljom* [*Under the Earth*] (1940). However, except with Vučković, the ideas of the social art movement did not significantly affect the work and development of the members of the *Prague group*, nor did it produce important creative results. Namely, all the other members encountered the requirements of the social art only after its dogmatic manifested form ceased to offer possibilities for true engagement. The development of the Prague group, which led from the phase of ‘aspirations to subside the expression’ in the period of socialist realism with its requirements for style retardation, can only seem logical at first sight; this view of these developments was best disproved by the composers themselves, in their further activities. ‘The second turning point’ was, in fact, a halt in their development, the interruption of the evolution line, which was continued only after 1950. This was the period of creation of the works which, but for a few exceptions, have no prominent place in the creative opuses of the *Prague group* composers.

Negation and retribution of the soc-realistic programme in Serbian music happened more at the creative field than in theory and criticism. The work of the members of the *Prague group*, particularly of Rajičić, but also of Ristić and Marić,

played an important role in that process. With their creative intuition, their talent and knowledge, they opened new paths in the development of Serbian music. There is some analogy between their individual solutions and actual artistic courses of development in the sixth decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The ideas of Stanojlo Rajičić were closest to this line of development, which continued the realistic tradition of the Serbian art – that is the line which best established the continuity with the ideas of the social art. This was obviously no coincidence – Rajičić had shown sensitivity for similar developments in the pre-war period as well.<sup>5</sup> The list of works from 1944–1961, given in Appendix, shows that Rajičić was working very intensely in the period of soc-realism. His opus from this time could (generally) be divided into four main categories, which also indicate the chronology of the events:

1. compositions emerging from the spontaneous wish for a gradual subsiding of the expression;
2. works which, according to genre and means of expression, belong to the soc-realistic circle;
3. compositions which are the result of the compromise between the requirement for the simplification of the expression and personal creative programme, with significant artistic results, and
4. works written after the breakdown of the absolute rule of soc-realistic aesthetic which, according to their stylistic profile represent the synthesis of all previous experiences, including youthful and avant-garde experiences.

'The first turning point' in Rajičić's work came about just before the war, with the music for the ballet *Pod zemljom*, and the works written after that, until 1946, up to the *Četvrta simfonija* [*The Fourth Symphony*], also belong to the same ideal-aesthetic circle. The softening of the harsh language from his expressionistic period, which is evident in these works, could not completely fulfil the new aesthetic requirements of soc-realism, which was clearly evident from the discussion held on the occasion of the performance of his *The Fourth Symphony*.<sup>6</sup> Very soon after this, Rajičić decided which course his work would take: his next composition – *Drugi koncert za violinu u e-molu* [*The second violin concerto in e-minor*] – already showed all style characteristic of 'the second turning point': the composer decided to stand up to all limiting requirements of soc-realism. In this struggle, he had shown the greatest courage, compared to the other members of the *Prague group*, therefore

---

5 Milan Ristić's artistic nature was more inclined towards objectivistic approach of the organization of music material, which was best expressed in neoclassic style form, combined with some expressionist experiences. Ljubica Marić in her works presented some solutions, which are closest to Krleža's requirements for the creation of original artistic language, with strong local characteristic and (which, in her case, is not expressed in Krleža's understanding of this concept), characteristics of the time in which it emerges. It is understandable that such language today can not be imagined outside general global artistic developments.

6 Cf. Vlastimir Peričić, *Stvaralački put...*, op.cit., 62–63.

his opus from this period contains the most interesting, successful works (which are performed even today), especially in the sphere of the solo concert and, later, vocal symphonic cycle.

Rajičić's concerto compositions – *Drugi koncert za violinu* [*The Second Violin Concerto*] (1946), *Koncert za violončelo* [*Concerto for Cello*] (1949), and *Treći klavirski koncert* [*The Third Piano Concerto*] (1950), in particular, represent the works from the period of soc-realism, which balance successfully the inner emotional content and relatively simple expressive language. In them, the style retardation is brought almost to the critical point, where it would completely lose sense: the form is, like in the previous 'turning point', classical; the harmony, tonal and functional – with conspicuous classical relation of the tonality of the movements, and the main thematic complexes, which are rare in romanticism; in the melodic line there are a lot of folk intonations which, as well as in previous Rajičić's work, are not citations, but composer's melodies, which inventively enliven the latent characteristics of the folk song. Therefore, in these opuses, Rajičić went a step further in subsiding of his expression as a concession to current requirements, and also in fitting into the stylistic frames of the soc-realistic aesthetic. It makes the author's succeeding to bring out the aesthetic fullness of the experience all the more admirable: some pages of these Rajičić's works (it seems, the lyric ones in particular) can, even today, be considered as some of the best he created.

Besides the above mentioned works, in Rajičić's opus from this period, until 1950, there is also a whole range of compositions, which, according to genre (and some according to the means of expression as well), belong to usual soc-realistic forms: melodrama, film music, interpretations of folk songs and dances, music for the theatrical plays, mass songs, instructive compositions.

After 1950, that is, alongside with the process of revision of soc-realistic requirements in other forms of art, the change is also evident in Rajičić's work: its actual result on the expressive plain could be defined as a renewed sharpening of language, and return to some youthful experiences. This development is most obvious in the vocal symphonic cycles: from *Četiri pesme Branka Radičevića* [*Four Poems by Branko Radičević*], through the cycle *Na Liparu* [*At Lipar*] (1951), and *Lisje žuti* [*Leaves Are Turning Yellow*] (1952), to Rajičić's first opera *Simonida* (the first performed version from 1957, often revised later, the final version from 1968), which can be considered as the first work from the synthesis period. The creative peak of this ascending path is undoubtedly the cycle *Na Liparu* [*At Lipar*] which could serve as an example for the modification of Rajičić's style in this period.

Five songs composed to the verses by Đura Jakšić: *Pijem* [*I'm Drinking*], *Spomen* [*Remembrance*], *Moja Milka* [*My Milka*], *Veče* [*Evening*], *Ponoć* [*Midnight*]; comprised into a cycle named *Na Liparu* [*At Lipar*], were composed in two versions: for bass and piano, or for the orchestra. The connection with the previous period, in which the expression was ultimately simplified, is obvious, but at the same time, the aspiration towards the sphere of freer treatment of musical-expressive means, leading to the new phase in Rajičić's work, the synthesis, is also clear-

ly manifested. The old elements are obvious, above all, in the formal organization and development of material, and on the plain of unity (even when it reaches the dimensions of the poem, as in the last song), and in the shaping of individual melodic phrases. The functional harmonic thinking, which was, in the previous period, bared and extremely simplified, is now more complex and freer – here, in the sphere of harmony, there are most indications of the innovations – but still, in some parts especially, it clearly shows that the author has passed through experiences of soc-realism. In the shaping of the vocal part the author aspired to the maximum interpenetration, melting of the poetics and the meaning of the word on one side, and the logic of the melodic line, on the other. Rajičić belongs to the group of composers who have an exceptional ability of turning the word into music in such a way that it keeps its accent and the logic of the spoken phrase with the rhythmic pulse of natural speech (with all caesurae and pauses), so that it is not reduced to the mere chanting of the text, but forms a clear logic of the music flow (Exs. 1a and 1b).

### Example 1a

*Pijem*

*Allegro con moto*  
*pp* *sempre cresc.*

А ја пи-јем, још те пи-јем, а ја пи-јем, још те пи-јем, а ја пи-јем,  
још те пи-јем, а ја пи-јем, још те пи-јем у том ми се ср-це па - ра.

### Example 1b

*Поноћ*

*Andante*  
*pp*

По - ноћ је у цр - ном пла - шту не - ма бо - ги - ња  
сло-бо-дне ду - ше то је све - ти-ња то глу-во до - ба тај цр - ни час

By this method of work – the construction of melody which flows from the inflections of the spoken word – Rajičić approaches the realistic traditions on which he would further, in the forthcoming period, build his expressive world. In the treat-

ment of the harmonic component of the expression, in these songs Rajičić also comes close to his future personal style. The following examples prove that the songs emerged from the new artistic atmosphere: the endings of the first and the second song of the cycle, and a part from the fourth. In the harmonic freedom used by composer, some Rajičić's favourite methods from the earlier period can also be discerned: the bitonal leading of the chordal blocks (ex. 2a), whole-tone passage and the final chord (ex. 2b), and the sharpness, which is achieved by combining chords at the second's distance.

Example 2a

Example 2b

The experiences of the late-romanticism harmonies are also used; typical example is the part from *Evening* [Veče]. The harmonization of the gradual ascent of the melodic line by the semitones set over the ostinato vibrations of the major seventh in bass, combined with the dynamic extension from *ppp* to *f* (exs. 3a and 3b).

Example 3a

*Allegro scherzoso*

Вече

сбе - лом бу - лом, са зум - бу - лом ша - рен

*pp* etc.

Detailed description: This musical score is for a vocal piece titled 'Вече' (Evening). It is marked 'Allegro scherzoso'. The score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in bass clef, 2/4 time, with lyrics: 'сбе - лом бу - лом, са зум - бу - лом ша - рен'. A dashed line with '8va' above it indicates an octave shift. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in treble clef, 2/4 time, starting with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef, 2/4 time. The piece concludes with 'etc.'.

Example 3b

Вече

а - ли мо - је ср - це а - ли мо - је гру - ди ле - де - ном су зло - бом раз - би - ја - ли љу - ди

Detailed description: This musical score is for a vocal piece titled 'Вече' (Evening). It is in 2/4 time. The score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics: 'а - ли мо - је ср - це а - ли мо - је гру - ди ле - де - ном су зло - бом раз - би - ја - ли љу - ди'. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in treble clef, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords.

The period of synthesis in Rajičić work is also marked by the return to the freedom in harmonic language, given in combination with very clear classic formal patterns. If there wasn't for the newfound maturity, psychological and emotional profundity of his compositions from the synthesis period, which were, surely, also built in the works of the 'second turning point', this phase of his development could be considered as the direct continuation of the tendencies shown in the works from the music circle for the ballet *Pod zemljom*. In the general development of the Serbian music, Rajičić's compositions from this period seem as a logical developing path of the best realistic traditions of, for example, Konjović. However, this doesn't mean that Rajičić treated Konjović's work as a model; they are, above all, linked by the common sources in realistic Slavic tradition, which

got different, artistically valuable, creative 'restorations', in the works of both our composers. Within general artistic developments, Rajičić can be considered a member of those artistic circles who, after 1950, tried to build their artistic world by rethinking the meaning of applying the realistic method in their work, using mostly classical means of expression.

Rajičić's work from the period of 'the second turning point' had the importance of paving the path for contribution of new generations of composers, who would further develop these neoclassical experiences, and enrich them with new knowledge and experience. Therefore, Rajičić's contribution, as well as the contribution of the other members of the *Prague group*, had the meaning of establishing continuity in the development of Serbian music: his works do not 'deny' the orientation of his immediate precedents – Konjović, Milojević, Hristić and Slavenski – nor do the opuses of their successors deny the experiences of the *Prague group*.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

Соња Маринковић

## СТВАРАЛАШТВО И ДЕЛАТНОСТ ВУЧКОВИЋА И РАЈИЧИЋА ПРЕД ИЗАЗОВИМА СОЦИЈАЛНЕ УМЕТНОСТИ

### САЖЕТАК

У години када се обележава стогодишњица рођења најмлађих представника *прашке групе* српских композитора, Војислава Вучковића (1910–1942) и Станојла Рајичића (1910–2000), вишеструко значајним чини се трагање за одговором на питање одребења према оној развојној етапи њиховог стваралачког пута која се односи на такозвани *заокрет* од предратног експресионизма ка социјалистичком реализму. Прво, зато што се историјска дистанца од тог времена може сматрати довољном за доношење релевантних судова. Друго, што је та фаза у њиховом стваралаштву била значајна за укупне развојне токове српске музике овог раздобља. И, на крају, што управо њихов однос према питањима ангажоване и социјалне уметности даје суштински важне одговоре који имају релевантан теоријски и уметнички смисао.

**Кључне речи:** *Прашка група*, Војислав Вучковић, Станојло Рајичић, *заокрет*, социјалистички реализам, ангажована и социјална уметност.

Appendix

Year	Works by Stanojlo Rajičić
1945.	<i>Slika</i> , ballet <i>Zlatne stepenice</i> , for violin and piano, Vol. 1 <i>Mala svita</i> , op. 39 no. 5, for piano <i>Ptičica</i> , op. 39a, for piano <i>Marš</i> , op. 39b, for piano <i>Grudobolja</i> , song, op. 3g
1946.	The Fourth Symphony The Second Violin Concerto, E-minor <i>Zlatne stepenice</i> , for violin and piano, Vol. 2 (1946-1947) Folk songs arrangements (1946-1947) Folk songs arrangements (1946-1947)
1947.	<i>Kolo</i> , for symphony orchestra <i>Mala svita</i> , for piano Music for film journals (1947-1949)
1948.	<i>Sonatina</i> for piano <i>Vragolije</i> , song <i>Pesme mog cvrčka</i> , collection of children's songs for voice and piano Music for film <i>Život je naš</i>
1949.	<i>Dvanaest meseci</i> , music for children's play... <i>Rumenka</i> , dance for symphony orchestra The Violoncello Concerto, F-minor <i>Ala je lep ovaj svet</i> , children's choir Music for the documentary film <i>Pirinač</i>
1950.	<i>Snežana</i> , music for children's play The Concert Overture, for symphony orchestra The Third Piano Concerto in A-minor <i>Etude</i> , for violin and piano Four poems by Branko Radičević, for high voice and piano/orchestra
1951.	<i>Na Liparu</i> , song cycle for low voice and symphony orchestra/piano
1952.	<i>Lisje žuti</i> , cycle of songs for low voice and orchestra/piano) <i>Mladost</i> , collection of children's choirs a cappella
1953.	The Third Violin Concerto, B-minor <i>Introdukcija i rondo</i> , for violin and orchestra
1954.	Stage music for <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1957.	<i>Simonida</i> , opera (1957-1968)
1959.	Symphony in G (The Fifth Symphony)