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## IN MEMORIAM

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### **OLIVERA VASIĆ** (August 18, 1946 – October 28, 2015)

Olivera Vasić – Coka, an ethnochoreologist and a retired full professor, passed away on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015, in Belgrade. She was a full time professor at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, where she taught Ethnochoreology and Ethnology.

Olivera Vasić was born in Gornja Badanja (a village in the west of Serbia). After finishing primary school she went to Belgrade, where she continued her education. Although she graduated from the Faculty of Economics, her love for traditional dances and customs proved stronger so she also studied Ethnochoreology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. There she earned her doctorate with the guidance of her doctoral advisor, Professor Petar Vlahović. The topic of her dissertation was *The Dance Tradition of Podrinje in the Light of Modern Ethnochoreological Studies* (1987). During her studies, she was an active dancer in the Cultural Artistic Society “Gradimir” in Belgrade, where she later worked as an artistic manager.

After her studies, Olivera Vasić got a job at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, but she parallelly did field research. While doing field research, she

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met Dimitrije O. Golemović, with whom she started cooperation which lasted until the end of her life. It was Dimitrije O. Golemović who invited her in 1990 to the Faculty of Music in Belgrade to begin a career as a professor. The same year, she founded the Centre for the Study of the Folk Dances of Serbia, which in 2013 became an autonomous professional organization known as the Centre for Research and Preservation of the Traditional Dances of Serbia (CIOTIS). The idea behind the foundation of this Centre was to educate artistic managers of cultural-artistic organizations through seminars for learning the traditional dances of Serbia. For this purpose, Olivera Vasić and Dimitrije O. Golemović published, as editors, the work *Folk Dances of Serbia*, in which there are kinetograms of the traditional dances of Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenes and Romanians, as well as descriptions of certain customs, transcriptions of melodies and songs of the studied regions of Serbia.

Besides working as a full professor at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, Olivera Vasić also worked at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, the Academy of Arts in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and in 2006, she introduced the Track for Teachers of Traditional Dances at the Professional Higher School for Teachers in Kikinda, where she also worked as a professor.

Her professional interests were Laban's kinetography, typology of dance patterns and step patterns, so called ethnochoreological units of Serbia, dance events and ritual dances. That resulted in Professor Vasić's systematization and grouping of traditional dances in so-called ethnochoreologic wholes in Serbia: north, central, west, northeast and southeast Serbia, with which she made a great contribution to science, and in that way established the ethnochoreologic dialects of Serbia, that is, a certain typology of basic patterns of steps in traditional dances in Serbia. Additionally, she particularly participated in the comparative research of dances and the research of ritual dances, about which she wrote in many papers. Moreover, the introduction of Laban's kinetography within the subject of Ethnochoreology in universities is entirely to her credit. Thanks to Professor Vasić, who knew how to recognize the importance of this discipline for the correct understanding of traditional dances, today, we have a big collection of recorded dances (over a thousand) in a world known movement notation system.

She published numerous scientific works and studies in Serbia and abroad, as well as 11 books with kinetograms and melodies. She was an active member of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and the International Council of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation (ICKL).

In October 2014, she retired and ended her career as a professor. How strong and cheerful her spirit was can be seen from the answer she gave me

when I once asked her what she was going to do now that she had retired. Coka only laughed and said: “What do you mean, what am I going to do!? I am planning to write eight more books, so I’m immediately getting down to writing.” And she did just that. She started to write, but... The realization of Coka’s plans must be continued by her successors. Olivera Vasić – Coka was a humane person, a friend, and a teacher. She was always there for her students and for all those who have traditional dances in their heart. With her selfless, honest and disciplined work, inquisitive spirit and incredible energy, Olivera Vasić left an indelible trace in the field of ethnochoreology, but also in our hearts.

Translated by Sonja Gobec