

## CURRENT QUESTIONS CONCERNING ROMANTICIST MUSIC

The set of questions, widely posed by the title, has been conceived so as to correspond to the context of this symposium's theme and has been subjected to the idea that inspired it. Pointing to the set of currently discussed questions concerning romanticist music has to do with the history of music syllabus which is taught at the Faculty of Music, and its aim is to point to several key elements of critical analysis of the traditional concept of the historical approach to musical romanticism.

The first set of questions has been brought up by the fact that the category of the *style of an epoch* has been accepted as the communication basis, i.e. as a desirable methodical starting point in the systematization of historical subject material. This has been done because of the belief that it is necessary to adopt a generally accepted terminology, but, at the same time, attempt to establish a critical attitude toward a large number of terms which are in use: in the framework of various national traditions, or, to be more precise – the linguistic traditions, namely Anglo-Saxon, German and Russian; then, in different arts, equally in respect to chronology and the definition of the specific stylistic traits;<sup>1</sup> in different theoretical disciplines where different types of systematization are accepted – for example, in music theory dealing with music forms, harmony and other subjects.<sup>2</sup> It is also interesting to note that these principles of systematization vary in our country, even when the disciplines are closely related, so that differences appear in the approach to the general and national histories of music.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This subject is very interesting because of the “delayed” expression of musical styles in relation to the literary and other arts, but, as at the end of the 18th and the 19th centuries this delay was almost annulled, musicology can offer serious arguments for a new critical analysis of both the chronology and the definition of the style's basic characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to point out that, in this sense, there exists a discrepancy in the approach to theoretical disciplines and general history. In the former, romanticism has been systematized in three phases – early, mature and late (the text-book by Dejan Despić, *Harmonic Analysis*, Belgrade, Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1998), whereas in the latter approach, the term, pre-romanticism, was introduced in addition to the basic division into early, mature and early romanticism.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to compare the manner of stylistically defining the creativity of Petar Konjović, where an equal use appears of the terms: romanticist, neo-romanticist, post-

Creating the awareness of the plurality of terms which are in use, it is important to survey all forms and derivatives of the basic term (romanticism, romance, romanticization, romantic, romanticist, early-, pre-, proto-, mature-, late-, neo-, new-, post-romanticism), as well as the implications of its basic meaning when used in compounds (for example, national romanticism). Bearing in mind a large number and the lack of differentiation between the meanings of certain term, one suggests the need for the solutions to be chosen with arguments and used consistently. However, this cannot be done without bringing up a new set of questions, which implies taking a stand toward other styles. The relation between classicism and romanticism still remains the most complex set of problems, but there is also an ongoing debate on the relation between romanticism on the one side, and impressionism/ expressionism/ realism/ baroque/ renaissance/ ars nova/ ars antiqua, on the other, as well as the theoretical generalization of the attitude toward any other tradition (folklore, for example). Yet, for this purpose, let the problem of the relation toward the classical model be singled out.

Literature on this issue testifies that no serious analysis exists without making the division between classicism and romanticism a relative one, and the presentation of Blume's attempt to create an inclusive term as an exclusive solution can hardly make any sense nowadays.<sup>4</sup> The division has been made relative and multiply questioned. First of all, because it is impossible to distinguish clearly the essential terms on the level of the musical language; and, even when the division has been accepted, it is necessarily noticed that "romanticist elements" exist parallel to the beginnings of the establishment of classicism; also, because it is impossible to differentiate epochs in the works of any of the significant representatives (speaking of romantic elements in Haydn and Mozart's music is nowadays equally present as the thesis on Beethoven's romanticism); then, due to the vitality of a "classical model" in the works of early, and the majority of late romantics, this occurring in a double sense, as a point of departure, and as "Antaeus's oasis" in which strength is regenerated and recuperated. The dichotomous relation between classicism and romanticism can therefore be interpreted in a new way by reducing them to the common denominator – symphonism (in the Asafyev-like sense of the word),<sup>5</sup> as the essential determination of a new manner of musical thinking which permeates all traditional music genres and forms in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, gradually transforming them. Because the idea of making the music flow symphonic is the generator of a dynamic development of musical language in all its aspects – melody, rhythm, harmony, form-creating principles, instrumentation. In this sense, one can

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romanticist, new-romanticist, late romanticist, etc. (*Život i delo Petra Konjovića / Life and Work of Petar Konjović*, Belgrade, SANU, 1989). Similar dilemmas exist in respect of Mokranjac, where interesting attempts have been made to introduce the term, realistic style, but also the attempts to define his musical language in the romanticist framework.

<sup>4</sup> Josip Andreis, *Povijest glazbe (History of Music)*, Zagreb, Liber/Mladost, 1976, 151.

<sup>5</sup> The evolution of the meaning of the term – symphonism – with the Asafyev, which is traced throughout his entire opus, here implies the meaning which has been given to it in the studies *Musical Form as a Process* and *Tchaikovsky's Symphonic Music*.

observe individual phases of the process of gradual development (of which some can be named as classicism, i.e. romanticism), but with the clear awareness that in different spaces they are expressed in a non-synchronic and non-linear way.

The third set of questions is linked to the idea of musically national. In modern musicology these issues are often ignored, avoided or have become a cliché through specific models of thinking and methods of research (and the treatment of these issues from the aspect of ideology has not become outdated yet, but they could be understood with difficulty in the context of postmodern science). The basic goals of dealing with this phenomenon would be: 1. the recognition of its historical limitations and the dynamics of their appearance; 2. the attempt for the sociological layer of the issue not to be exaggerated on account of comprehending this phenomenon's essence in the very musical being and 3. the creation of a new type of historical systematization by working out the analytical criteria. An extreme increase in population in the 19<sup>th</sup> century generated a large number of changes in expressing the ethnic principle. This principle also led to applying the criterion of the national as a form of historical events systematization, but, parallel to it, one should necessarily activate the mechanisms of making this principle relative by observing the relation between the national and international, national and universal, and national and individual. It is also possible to achieve this, in the framework of a common reduction of the issue of national to the issue of the relation toward folklore, by perceiving the relation between the artistic (professional) and folklore tradition not as a narrower, but as a wider platform which provides a survey from the remote historical and stylistic perspective.

The fourth set of questions must necessarily deal with the most dramatic mistake of 19<sup>th</sup> century music science: the division between the "program" and "absolute" music. Impossible to defend from the theoretical point of view, but not less real historically, it has been the cause of a large number of specific analytical undertakings. For example, defining the type of relations toward the program in the romanticists' music, or a comparative analysis of Liszt's "program" and "absolute" works, and the discovering of none the less interesting genesis of his musical thinking, beginning with his paraphrases which are based on the principles of varying the virtuoso piano models, the creative re-modeling experience of Beethoven, Berlioz, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schuman, to giving a form to the idea of monothematics, the multiple permeation of the sonata form dramaturgy with the sonata cycle, and the permeation of the variation principle with the symphonic development. The question of the relation between the "program" and "absolute," besides its historical dimension, excellently elaborated by Dahlhaus,<sup>6</sup> opens a new cycle of problems in analyzing the relation between music and language, comprehending music as a language, etc.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Chicago, 1989 (Kassel, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Interesting aspects of that debate have been opened by L. Kremer. (Lawrence Kremer, *Classical Music and Post-modern Knowledge*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1995)

By defining these four sets of questions, four possible points have been defined from which one can begin a critical analysis of romanticist music. Four doors have been indicated behind which lead the paths of non-standard, subjective, an alternative interpretation of the nature of romanticist musical language. And this is the road which can provide an up-to-date character to the communication with romanticism, change the ruling process of displacing ourselves from our own time to the romanticist framework in which we are obliged to act by its rules, and make a post-modern life for romanticism possible.