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Djerdj Mandić (Mandity Gyorgy)
THE VOJVODINA ORGANS

“With pleasure, the publishers face the challenge of publishing in one volume the available data and descriptions of all the Vojvodina organs, which are in use or not used. The book which was originally published in Hungarian (Agape, Novi Sad, 2002), we are now also publishing in the Serbian language, due to cultural and historical values...”, it is said in the prologue of the book *The Vojvodina Organs* by author Djerdj Mandić. The book was published in 2005, and successfully promoted in the following year by the Cultural Institute of Vojvodina, and furthermore, it represents a rare and comprehensive designer’s account of 173 instruments, their genesis, development, use and durability, as well as regrettably their undoing, but also the story of the hundreds of lives and destinies woven into these magical instruments. On nearly 250 pages of quality paper, in hardback, the author first offers us a short history of the organ, where of special interest are expert and detailed illustrations of the instrument's construction, in chronological order from its originating in ancient Greek until today's day. This storytelling is illustrated with precise drawings and photographs and written in a flowing narrative, which makes the reading educational as well as comprehensible for wider audiences. Djerdj Mandić could not follow the beginnings and development of the organ throughout the centuries by neglecting the historical, culturological and social circumstances, and thus he offers a short overview of the influences of Protestant and other religious movements on the uses and liturgical treatment of this instrument. The book also includes many facts on the deliberate destruction of organs, which five centuries ago, like today, indicated the incomprehensible intellectual and spiritual helplessness of humans, with enormous consequences.

“To play the organ is to perceive the force which ensues from the awareness of immortality”, this quotation by the renowned French organ player and composer Charles-Marie Vidor opens the chapter entitled *The beginnings of organ-playing in Vojvodina*. There are no facts relating to the organ in the area of Vojvodina during the middle ages – as the Christian population fled the invasion of the Turks or was decimated by them, while all the churches were destroyed. Only with the ousting of the Turks and the resettling of the deserted areas was a religious life organized, and thus today we have facts about but a few 18th century instruments (from Plavna and Sremski Karlovci), while the others come from the 19th and 20th centuries, and in comparison with the preserved medieval instruments throughout the world, these organs from Vojvodina are classified as the “younger generation”. Also of interest are the statistical facts which, as the author himself claims, testify to a culture which is slowly disappearing: the number of organs has

decreased by at least one third, especially after World War II, but also at the beginning of the 1990s, and of the preserved instruments, 56% possess a mechanical system, and the rest are pneumatic and one electro-pneumatic; of 173 instruments, as many as 165 are with pedals, with one-manual organs prevailing, 35% are two-manual, and only two instruments have three keyboards. Two fifths of the preserved instruments were created in the famous workshops of Angster (Pečuj) and Wegenstein (Timisoara); the other organs come from 39 different workshops, while the origins of 12% are undetermined. The organ players of Vojvodina – Fisher, Hubman, Kajlbah, Lindauer and Fajfer are presented by interesting biographical texts, as well as the foreign builders Hefefer, Jenko, Riger, Majdak, Orsag and son, Kovacz and many others. With every builder, also given is a cartographic diagram of his work and all the builders' instruments on the territory of Vojvodina, with complete instructions, a description of the reconstruction, the utility and the current condition of the instruments, illustrated by clear good quality black and white or color photographs. All the data is systematized at the end of the books in clear tables, and of special interest is the description of all 24 registers or register types, used on these instruments.

The fifteen-year-long research and collating of Djerdj Mandić is a tributary gesture which preserves the Vojvodina organs from people's negligence and obsolescence, but also serves to incite the cultural, artistic and with any luck, the political community, and is thus admirable, whereas the professionalism and studiousness of the author in all the book's segments is deserving of respect.

Translated by Elizabeta Holt