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Aleksandar Pavlović
Anthology of the Serbian Music of the 20th Century for Strings –
The premiere performances of the Belgrade String Orchestra ‘Dušan Skovran’*
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Anthology of 20th Century Serbian Music for Strings, edited by Aleksandar Pavlović, veteran conductor, Artistic Manager of the Belgrade String Orchestra ‘Dušan Skovran’, violinist and retired professor of the Faculty of Music at the University of Arts in Belgrade, is doubtlessly and unambiguously one of the highest artistic, creative and interpretive achievements not only in our country, but in other regions too. The *Anthology* is a major celebration of Serbian culture, containing a selection of music by Serbian composers which ‘Dušan Skovran’, under Aleksandar Pavlović, performed and recorded between 1977 and 2003, live or in studio (recordings: Radio Belgrade, Radio Clyde 261, Tone studio of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade; mastering: Zoran Marinković and Zoran Jerković). It includes eleven audio CDs carrying fifty-two pieces for strings written by thirty Serbian composers.

Pavlović, as the orchestra’s conductor, solo-violinist and visionary mastermind, encouraged and carefully thought through the creative-interpretive project of premiere performances of Serbian compositions, spanning many decades. Thus many composers, including Pavlović, who gave premieres to their works over the years both domestically and abroad, received commissions from the conductor and/or by the orchestra, the resulting works being dedicated to ‘Dušan Skovran’. The creative stimulation and presentation of domestic music creation and artists (composers or interpreters) both in this country and abroad, and of the Serbian culture in general, was Pavlović’s main goal and focus.

The concerts of the ‘Skovrans’ held a unique place throughout the 1980’s and early 1990’s, within the rich *Jugokonzert*’s activities and endeavours, appearing in three cycles entitled the ‘First Performances’, ‘Serenades’ and ‘Together’. Concerts from all three cycles, repeatedly performed, but with subtle differences in respect to their programming, are remembered as the top music events in our country. The well conceived, clear, firm conception of the repertoire, which left substantial space for the new, unknown and still ‘non-positioned’, provided security. It also brought the realisation of the expected, *already heard*, i.e., ‘publicly proven’ (more or less frequently performed compositions in our country – from baroque music, to the specially stressed presence of the music from the first half of the

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20th century), but also the provocation of the unpredicted, *yet unheard*, that is ‘publicly unproven’ (premiere performances of the new works), both for the public and music critics. The common denominator of all these cycles was that they were all *first performances*, that is, *new Serbian works*. Thus the cycle of ‘Serenade’ – which began in 1980, and whose concerts (several per season) were performed in the Grand Hall of the Belgrade City Hall until 1987 – often included premiere performances of works such as *Concerto in modo antico* for oboe and strings (1980) by Radomir Petrović, *Recitativo e passacaglia funebre* for cello and strings op. 52 (1982) by Dejan Despić, *Divertimento* for vibraphone and strings (1984) by Dušan Radić, *Arco Bach* (1985) by Vuk Kulenović, or *Concert for viol and strings* (1986) by Ivan Jevtić, all of which are listed in the *Anthology*.

On the programs of the concerts of the ‘First Performances’ (whose title indicates the main place of the *Anthology* itself) – which were from 1981 to 1987 given in parallel with the ‘Serenade’ cycle, held in the Kolarac Foundation Hall – there were primarily new compositions such as *It’s Coming! Sound Objects for 11 Strings* (1981) by Srdjan Hofman, *Metamorphoses* for piano and strings (the premier performance in Belgrade) by Petar Ozgijan, *Concertante Music* for strings (the premiere performance in Belgrade) by Josip Kalčić, *After the Smell of the Blooming Cherry – pet haiku* by Rajko Maksimović, *Off* for double bass and strings (1983) by Zoran Erić, *the Ballad* for strings (1983) Berislav Popović, *Cartoon* for thirteen strings and harpsichord (1984) by Zoran Erić, or *Asymptote* for solo violin and string orchestra (1987) by Ljubica Marić. These works constitute a significant part of the *Anthology*. The cycle ‘Together’, established in 1988, continued the tradition of the two previously stated cycles, premiering Serbian works until 1990. These cycles soon won followers (it would not be wrong to say numerous followers among both musicians and non-musicians) and popularity, so that every subsequent concert of the ‘Skovrans’ was eagerly anticipated, while each ‘music event’ of this kind was accorded special media coverage on various TV and radio shows, and in daily press, periodicals, professional magazines and other publications.

The *Anthology of 20th Century Serbian Music for Strings* reflects Aleksandar Pavlović’s conceptualisation as the Artistic Manager of ‘Dušan Skovran’. The orchestra reached the highest standards of performing arts of that time in our country on the one hand, and the creative potential of the Serbian music of the last three decades on the other (not counting the individual careers of the orchestra members themselves, excellent string players who were building or had already acquired international reputations, and the soloists who took part in the performances, such as Stefan Milenković, Olivera Djurdjević, Aleksandra Ivanović, Irina Arsikin, Srdjan Grujić, Dejan Mladjenović, Ljubiša Jovanović, Sandra Belić, Nebojša Ignjatović, Boris Bunjac, Dušan Trbojević, Milenko Stefanović, Vera Ogrizović, Rita Kinka, Milica Barić, Istra Pečvari).

In addition to the compositions performed within *Jugokonzert* cycles, *Anthology* also includes the following works: *Concert for violin and strings*, *Black Goro*, *the Green Knight* and *Music for piano and strings* by Aleksandar Obradović; *Talea-Konzerstück* by Zoran Erić; *Bagatelle* и *Elegy* by Milan

Mihajlović; *Rondo-Sequence III* and *E Silentio* for mezzo-soprano, electronics and strings by Katarina Miljković; *Raskovnik, the Mechanic Orpheus* and *Lydian Landscape* by Vuk Kulenović; *Selište*, elegy for strings by Isidora Žebeljan; *Run!* by Ognjen Bogdanović; *Divertimento* by Vasilije Mokranjac; *Les barricades mystérieuses* by Ana Mihajlović; *Concert for strings* and *Threnody II* by Milorad Kuzmanović; *Prelude to the Forenoon of a Faun, Might be sleeping* and *Rosebud* by Rajko Maksimović; *Concerto sereno* op. 110, *Concerto grosso* op. 45a, *Epitaph* op. 95 and *Three Meditations* op. 99 by Dejan Despić; *I niotkud pomošti [No help to come from anywhere]* by Ivana Stefanović; *the Life of Iconographer of Ribnica* by Svetislav Božić; *Lament for Jefimija* by Rastislav Kambasković; *Basso e contra* by Slobodan Atanacković; *Fairy Tale: Who am I?* for mezzo-soprano, eight actresses, female choir, electronics and strings, and *Musica concertante* for piano, electronics and strings by Srdjan Hofman; *Music for Strings* by Ljudmila Frajt; *Proiectio misurata* by Igor Gostuški; *Variations for Strings* Ingeborg Bugarinović; *Arion – La Nuove Musiche per Chitarra ed Archi* by Vlastimir Trajković; *Transfigurations* for harp and strings by Dušan Radić; *Concertante music* for solo clarinet and strings by Josip Kalčić; *Sonata for violin, cello and strings* by Vera Milanković and *the Homolje* by Zoran Hristić.

The compact discs are ordered according to the make-up of the performing ensemble in the following way: pieces for violin and strings (CD 1), pieces for string orchestra (CD 2, 3 and 9), pieces for solo winds and strings (CD 4), pieces for solo voice and chamber orchestra (CD 5), pieces for solo violin and the solo viol and strings (CD 6), pieces for solo cello and solo double bass and strings (CD 7), piece (*Fairy Tale: Who am I?*) for solo voice, actresses, female choir, electronics and strings (CD 8), pieces for solo piano, electronics or solo harp or solo guitar and strings (CD 10) and pieces for varied solo instruments (solo clarinet or solo violin, solo cello or solo piano, or solo flute) and strings (CD 11).

Anthology of 20th Century Serbian Music for Strings – the premiere performances of the Belgrade String Orchestra ‘Dušan Skovran’ bears witness to the author’s exquisite sense and understanding of the uniqueness of the music of the last decades of the 20th, and transition into the 21st century, his ability to project realistic and interpretative directions and signs in the long run, his imagining of the specific creative policies, his interpretation and reception of music and/or musics in the sense of the constant creative impulses and creation in the domain of these dimensions, and the comprehensiveness of the cultural life of one environment at one moment. The colossal value of this edition is obvious. It gives a qualitative view of the music creation in Serbia during the last three decades, indicating the respect that Aleksandar Pavlović and ‘Dušan Skovran’ have for Serbian music and for the culture of our time. As a superbly created ‘record’ of the historical-cultural ‘trace’ of our (music) reality, with its quality, importance and a wide range of possible effects, this *Anthology* completely, in the best sense of that word, attracts and will attract the attention of both present and future creative moments in Serbian music, and music in general.