

Article received on 26th Jun 2014

Article accepted on 28th Jun 2014

UDC: 78.071.1:929 Мокрањац Стојановић С.
784.077:061.2(497.11

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THE DISCOURSE OF TRAVELOGUES ABOUT STEVAN MOKRANJAC AND THE BELGRADE CHORAL SOCIETY IN THE NATIONAL- POLITICAL CONTEXT BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR*

Abstract: The paper deals with the travelogues *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje* by Spira Kalik (1894), *Sa Avale na Bosfor* by Dragomir Brzak (1897), and *Na Adriju* by Milivoje Komarčić (1911), which describe the concert tours of Stevan Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society to Thessaloniki and Skopje (1893), Sofia, Istanbul, and Plovdiv (1895), and Sarajevo, Mostar, Cetinje, Split, Šibenik, and Zadar (1910). The goal is to examine the discourse of these travelogues and to interpret it as a source on Mokranjac and his ensemble's missions abroad in the national-political context of the 1890s and the years preceding the First World War.

Key words: Stevan Mokranjac, Beogradsko pevačko društvo / Belgrade Choral Society, Spira Kalik, Dragomir Brzak, Milivoje Komarčić

Beogradsko pevačko društvo [Belgrade Choral Society], led by Stevan Mokranjac, had major concert tours of foreign countries, most notable being the visits to the centres of the most powerful European empires at the time – from Budapest, Skopje, Thessaloniki, and Istanbul to various Russian and German cities during the 1890s. The Society also travelled the region, which was chronologically condensed mainly at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century. These tours were among Serbia's first attempts at systematic presenta-

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This study was carried out within the project *Identiteti srpske muzike od lokalnih do globalnih okvira: tradicije, promene, izazovi* [Identities of Serbian Music from a Local to a Global Scale: Traditions, Changes, Challenges] (ON 17704) by the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The project is funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia.

tion of its national music abroad, encouraged by its aspirations to overcome the utter inferiority, or, in fact, anonymity of its national musical culture on the international stage. The Society's distinctiveness was an important factor in solidifying its elite status on the domestic stage and contributed towards blending the institution, its composer-conductor, and repertoire into a unique notion of national music, which was constantly built and rebuilt in public.¹

Certain important tours were accompanied by published travelogues, as another exclusive practice cultivated in the same context. These included *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje* [*From Belgrade to Thessaloniki and Skopje*] by Spira Kalik (1894) and *Sa Avale na Bosfor* [*From Avala to the Bosphorus*] by Dragomir Brzak (1897), with detailed descriptions of the Society's tours of Thessaloniki and Skopje (1893) and Sofia, Istanbul, and Plovdiv (1895), respectively, as well as *Na Adriju. Sa Beogradskim pevačkim društvom kroz Bosnu, Hercegovinu, Crnu Goru i Dalmatinsko primorje* [*To the Adriatic. With the Belgrade Choral Society through Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, and along the Dalmatian Coast*] by Milivoje Komarčić (1911), which described the choir's concert appearances in Sarajevo, Mostar, Cetinje, Split, Šibenik, and Zadar in 1910.² Their other tours were not accompanied by separately printed records, but it is worth noting that the foregoing editions covered both chronological stages in the Society's concert tours.³

Parts of Kalik's and Brzak's travelogues were abundantly quoted in *Spomenica Beogradskog pevačkog društva* [*In Honour of the Belgrade Choral Society*] from 1903 and Brzak's notes were republished in 1980, but access to

¹ Basic data on the tours can be found in: Roksanda Pejović, *Pevačka društva* [*Choral Societies*], Vol. 1, Belgrade, *Pro musica*, 1986, 36–40; Danica Petrović, "Osnivanje i prvih šest decenija" ["The Founding and the First Six Decades"], in: Dinko Davidov (ed.), *Prvo beogradsko pevačko društvo – 150 godina* [*The First Belgrade Choral Society – 150 years*], Belgrade, SANU, Muzikološki institut SANU, Galerija SANU, 2004, 53–78.

² Spira Kalik, *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje s Beogradskim pevačkim društvom. (Putničke beleške)* [*From Belgrade to Thessaloniki and Skopje with the Belgrade Choral Society. (Travel Notes)*], Belgrade, Štamparija P. K. Tanaskovića, 1894; Dragomir Brzak, *Sa Avale na Bosfor. (Putne beleške sa pohoda Beogradskog pevačkog društva)* [*From Avala to the Bosphorus. (Travel Notes from a Sojourn of the Belgrade Choral Society)*], Belgrade, Izdanje i štampa Dragoljuba Mirosavljevića, 1897.

³ It should be mentioned that two earlier travelogues, by Sreten Stojković and Miloš Cvetić, were a sort of harbingers of these editions. They described the celebrations accompanying the unveiling of monuments to Hajduk Veljko in Negotin and Ivan Gundulić in Dubrovnik, where the Belgrade choir also participated. Sr. J. Stojković, *Na lepom srpskom Dunavu. Od Beograda do Radujevca* [*An der schönen serbischen Donau. Von Belgrad nach Radujevac*], Belgrade, Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1893; An emissary [Miloš Cvetić], *O Gundulićevoj proslavi* [*On the Gundulić Celebration*], Belgrade, Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1893.

all of these sources remains incomplete.⁴ Although literary historians have examined the two older travelogues, none of the books has ever been subjected to detailed musicological research.⁵ Hence, the question arises: what kind of knowledge and/or interpretation has this material to offer?

In order to take a stand on the problem stated above, it is necessary to describe the phenomenon of the travelogue as a polymorphic genre, which can approximate various other forms or even blend with them – ranging from novels, essays, letters, reports, diaries, and autobiographies to cultural-historical, ethnographic, and other kinds of treatises, either with large quantities of facts or as a completely personal expression of its author.⁶ It almost manifestly confirms Jacques Derrida's claim about the illusion of a 'pure' genre,⁷ while its quality of mimicry presents a joint scholarly challenge to literary studies, imagology, cultural geography, post-colonial, Balkan and other studies, coming together in the domain of iterology as a post-disciplinary convergence of different types of knowledge.⁸ The openness of the travelogue as a genre is also demonstrated by certain studies of compositional creativity, which use this concept mostly in the metaphorical sense.⁹

If "putovanje kao pojedinačno iskustvo" ["a journey as an individual experience"] produces "višak znanja" ["a surplus of knowledge"] compared to all those who did not participate in it, then "narativno oblikovanje toga znanja" ["narrative shaping of that knowledge"] is a process in which the traveller be-

⁴ Spira Kalik, *Spomenica Beogradskog pevačkog društva prilikom pedesetogodišnjice [In Honour of the Belgrade Choral Society on its Fiftieth Anniversary]*, Belgrade, "Miloš Veliki" – Štamparija Bojovića i Mičića, 1903; Dragomir Brzak, *Sa Avale na Bosfor [From Avala to the Bosphorus]*, Knjaževac, Nota, 1980. (Subsequent quotations are taken from the 1897 edition.)

⁵ Cf. Goran Maksimović, "Putopisna Makedonija Spire Kalika i Branislava Nušića" ["Macedonia in Travelogues by Spira Kalik and Branislav Nušić"], *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, 2006, 54/2, 33–50.

⁶ Slobodanka Peković, "Putopis – uslovljenost žanra" ["The Travelogue – The Contingency of a Genre"], in: Slobodanka Peković (ed.), *Knjiga o putopisu [Book on the Travelogue]*, Belgrade, Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2001, 11–26.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre", *Critical Inquiry*, 1980, 7/1, 59–65.

⁸ Dean Duda, *Kultura putovanja. Uvod u književnu iterologiju [Travel Culture. An Introduction to Literary Iterology]*, Zagreb, Ljevak, 2012.

⁹ Cf. Melita Milin, "Ciklusi obrada narodnih pesama kao specifični muzički putopisi" ["Cycles of Arranged Folk Songs as a Sort of Musical Travelogues"], in: Slobodanka Peković, op. cit., 261–268; Srdan Atanasovski, "Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac and Producing the Image of Serbian Folk-Song: *Garlands from 'Old Serbia'* as a Form of Musical Travelogue", *Muzikološki zbornik*, 2012, XVIII/1, 75–90.

comes the narrator.¹⁰ In all three travelogues about the Belgrade Choral Society's tours, the act of narration was assumed by notable representatives, i.e. officials of the Society.¹¹ They labelled their documents as "travel records" or "travel notes", which was meant to understate their positions as authors and instead suggest an unpretentious chronicler or record keeper. Nevertheless, they used various literary techniques in their texts and so their narrations about history, important buildings, people, and nature, as well as digressions in the form of dialogues and monologues, are precisely a proof of the hybrid nature of the travelogue genre. At the same time, the diversity of their discourses and inclusion of personal observations were meant to contextualize the main goals of these books, which permanently commemorated the distinctive "putnički kapital" ["travel capital"]¹² of the ensemble and shaped it as a tool of institutional self-presentation. Therefore, Kalik's, Brzak's, and Komarčić's records were a kind of collective autobiographies. Written along the way, they followed the travels chronologically, thus bearing the marks of a collective diary and report. In a nutshell, they described the distinctive 'travel culture' of the Belgrade Choral Society. This culture was concerned less with the performances themselves and more with the junctures of time, places, encounters, and impressions that, in the process of mobility, were read into their meanings. Since the crucial role was played by the link with the official national and political discourses of Serbia, it was this domain that, besides all their mutual connections, generated the main differences between the travelogues from the two time periods – Kalik's and Brzak's on the one hand, and Komarčić's on the other. Therefore, these are also the fundamental relations whereby these travelogues become a major resource for musicological research.

Unlike Kalik and Brzak, whose voluminous narratives can also be interpreted as the result of a certain literary experience on their part, Komarčić's travelogue is more concise, imbued with his journalistic and feuilletonistic approach. However, all three writers had the same task: to use the genre of

¹⁰ Dean Duda, op. cit., 48.

¹¹ Spira Kalik (1858–1909), a grammar-school teacher, translator, and author of studies in literature, history, and education, was vice-president (1893–1896) and manager (1897–1909) of the Belgrade Choral Society. Dragomir Brzak (1851–1904), the first secretary of the Public Funds Administration, translator, poet, writer, and playwright, popular for a while and remembered for his play *Dido [Hero]* (1892), co-written with Janko Veselinović, was the secretary of the Society in 1893 and 1896–1900. There is no available information on Miliwoje L. Komarčić, son of Lazar Komarčić, a writer and journalist. According to the list of members of the Belgrade Choral Society administration, published in his travelogue, we know that he worked as a clerk and was the Society's secretary at the time of the tour.

¹² Dean Duda, op. cit., 14.

the travelogue to portray an ideal picture of the ensemble as a distinguished representative of a nation, thus contributing to the preservation and consolidation of the Society's position at the top of the hierarchy of the nation's artistic values.

Therefore, all three travelogues begin by giving a special treatment to the Belgrade Choral Society's national mission abroad. Kalik presents it as the pinnacle of the institution's gradual development, progressing side-by-side with occupying an ever larger geopolitical space, even with announcements of future tours:

Svesno svoga zadatka i verno svojoj devizi 'Pesmom za Srpstvo', ovo je društvo za nekoliko godina prešlo unakrst celu Srbiju šireći srpske pesme ... Docnije, puno vere u svoju spremu, ožareno rodoljubljem, prnelo ih je u srpske krajeve izvan Srbije, pa se, ohrabreno tolikim uspesima, odvažuje na pohod u Peštu i Beč, da tamo pred obrazovanom publikom ... iznese srpske kompozicije i pokaže, da Srbija i u toj grani umetnosti zauzima znatno mesto [Aware of its mission and true to its motto, 'Singing for Serbdom', this Society, over the course of a few years, had travelled all over Serbia, spreading Serbian songs ... Later, highly confident of its capabilities, burning with patriotism, it brought them to Serb-populated areas beyond Serbia and after that, encouraged by such great successes, it undertook a voyage to Budapest and Vienna in order to present Serbian compositions ... there, before educated audiences, and show that Serbia occupies a high place even in that branch of art".¹³ In his travelogue, Brzak regards its national mission abroad as something that already belongs to the tradition of the ensemble, which "širi divotne zvuke srpskih narodnih pesama po belome svetu ["is spreading the wonderful sounds of Serbian folk songs around the whole wide world"],¹⁴

while Komarčić, writing considerably later, was able to speak of a long-standing historical continuity. Not forgetting to sketch a map of all of the Society's previous tours abroad, he emphasizes the Society's merit for enabling "lepa srpska pesma, obučena u svoje umetničko, savremeno ruho, kulminirala [je] med' pesmama svetskoga glasa" ["the beautiful Serbian song, in its contemporary artistic guise, to reach its summit among world-famous songs"].¹⁵

With Kalik and particularly with Komarčić, these discourses, conspicuously pertaining to an engaged national historiography, had some polemic overtones as well, criticizing the perceived lack of public awareness in Serbia of the importance of music. Kalik spoke of "crv razdora" ["the apple of discord"] that undermined and obstructed "sve naše ustanove" ["all of our institutions"],

¹³ Kalik, op. cit., V–VI. Unrealized tour of Vienna is not mentioned in the other sources.

¹⁴ Brzak, op. cit., 6.

¹⁵ Komarčić, op. cit., 3–4.

blaming narrow-minded personal interests for neglecting choral art, “koju svi kulturni narodi poštuju i s najvećom zainteresovanošću prate i potpomažu” [“which is respected, followed, and supported with the greatest interest among all civilised nations”] and considering it shallow, thus preventing the survival of choral societies in smaller towns.¹⁶ Komarčić openly pounced on partisan and political divisions and the destructive influence of petty politics on the activities of choral societies: ensembles “treba da imaju i viši i plemenitiji zadatak, no što je to sićušna i bedna dnevna politika” [“should have a task both higher and nobler than puny and deplorable petty politics”], because “pesma služi jedinstvu, mirenju i ljubavi, ne samo jednokrvne braće, već i čitavoga čovečanstva ...” [“the purpose of song is the unity, reconciliation, and love, not only of consanguineous brothers, but of the entire humankind ...”].¹⁷ Their criticism was spurred by the fact that the Society’s tours of Budapest in 1894 and Montenegro in 1910, that is, the ceremony marking the elevation of that principality to a kingdom, were assailed by a part of the Serbian press.¹⁸ The travelogue authors stood by the Society, stressing that its mission performed “velike usluge Srbiji i Srpstvu” [“a great service for Serbia and Serbdom”]¹⁹ and elevated them “na dostojnu visinu kulturnih država i naroda” [“to a height worthy of civilized states and nations”],²⁰ while their discourses suggest that they were also reflecting on broader cultural issues.

However, it was impossible to ignore the fact that the national mission of Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society was connected to politics. The choir’s great tours abroad were assisted by representatives of the state and its diplomatic service, which was made possible thanks to contacts that Mokranjac and some prominent choir members had with important figures from Serbian political circles. Their links with state officials, as well as membership in Masonic lodges and cooperation with the Saint Sava Society were important factors that helped the realization of the tours. Particularly helpful during their terms in office as high-ranking state officials were Freemasons Svetomir Nikolajević, who was Prime Minister in 1894, and Vladan Đorđević, Serbia’s ambassador in Istanbul in 1895 and Prime Minister in 1899 – the time when most of the tours took place.²¹ Also, the tours emphasized the strategic loci of Serbian politics,

¹⁶ Kalik, op. cit.

¹⁷ Komarčić, op. cit., 29.

¹⁸ More on the negative reactions to the tours in: Mirka Pavlović, “Sto četrdeset godina od rođenja Stevana Mokranjca” [“140 Years since the Birth of Stevan Mokranjac”], *Zbornik Matice srpske za scenske umetnosti i muziku*, 1996, 18–19, 174.

¹⁹ Brzak, op. cit., VIII.

²⁰ Komarčić, op. cit., 32.

²¹ Biljana Milanović, “Odnos sfere države prema pevačkim udruženjima u Srbiji i Kralje-

which created an important dimension of the national mission of the Belgrade Choral Society. The presentation of Serbian national music among groups considered an integral part of the Serbian nation was carried out in the context of Serbia's long-standing aspirations for cultural unification and territorial expansion. And the tour of Thessaloniki and Skopje was the first instance of including music in Serbian national-propaganda activities in the South, which at the time were an official responsibility of the Educational-Political Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Serbian Consulates, as well as the Saint Sava Society. While the visit to Sofia and Plovdiv was marked by Serbia's ambition to improve its relations with Bulgaria after the war of 1885, the rest of the tours were oriented towards the centres of all the great powers, which were not only the main factors in Serbian state's foreign policy, but also the dominant factors of politics in the Balkans and Europe in general.

Kalik's and Brzak's travelogues not only complement all of the foregoing but enable us to interpret the broader context of the relation between politics and the national mission of Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society on their tours of Thessaloniki, Skopje, Sofia, Plovdiv, and Istanbul.

If Mokranjac's creative and melographic work was at least partly aimed at mapping the space of Kosovo and Macedonia, i.e. Old Serbia, and if his concert appearances with the choral ensemble in Thessaloniki and Skopje were an even more direct involvement with the Serbian propaganda in the South, then Kalik's travelogue was part of the same activities, which enabled the Belgrade Choral Society and its prominent members to become an active part of the network of the political and intellectual practices of negotiating Serbian identity in the ethnically diverse regions of the Balkans that were still under Ottoman rule. Kalik's text adhered to the pattern of a large number of travelogues dealing with the South at the turn of the century and hence this context can be used to interpret its glorification of Serbia and Serbdom, patriotic fervour, and wish to familiarize its readers with regions, places, areas, and people, cities like Skopje, Veles, and Thessaloniki, through detailed historical reminiscences, demographic facts, legends, and descriptions of nature.²² Kalik's discourse also includes other usual travelogue topoi, such as descriptions of distrustful Turkish customs officers, or coping with Bulgarian educational propaganda,²³ but his travelogue shows that including music in this entire context could offer a possibility to overcome the complex and conflicting relations in this area. This new

vini Jugoslaviji" ["Attitude of the Government Sphere towards Choral Societies in Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia"], *Muzikologija*, 2011, 11, 224.

²² Goran Maksimović, op. cit.

²³ Kalik, op. cit., 12–15, 20–21, 46.

way of communicating by presenting music is particularly prominent in Brzak's travelogue, because it was "neutrven put" ["an untrodden path"], where one had to, as the author points out rather picturesquely, "zaokružiti šiljkaste diferencije, koje stoje između Srba i Bugara" ["blunt the spiky differences standing between the Serbs and the Bulgarians"] and compel the elite of Istanbul's Pera to bestow to the Choral Society "parčence svoje aristokratske pažnje" ["a morsel of their aristocratic attention"].²⁴

Kalik's and Brzak's travelogues show that it was primarily the Serbian consuls and ambassadors who took care of the ensemble's need in these foreign environments.²⁵ They were in charge of the reception, accommodation, and public appearances of the choir, as well as many other formal and informal events, protocols, and interventions whilst presenting the ensemble to foreign officials, thus making the tours strategic events in the context of Serbian diplomacy.

The tours included contacts with representatives of local Serbian communities, while in Thessaloniki the promotion of the concert and ticket sales were greatly improved by the help of prominent merchants and industrialists from those circles and the Jewish Community.²⁶ The Society kept contact with Musa Bey, the governor of the city, who greeted them at the railway station, "da se društvu nađe pri ruci" ["to assist the Society if need be"], and "tolika predusretljivost od strane turske vlade" ["such attentiveness from the Turkish government"], as Kalik notes, made everyone feel "slobodnije u ovim novim

²⁴ Brzak, op. cit., 5.

²⁵ These included the consul and vice-consul in Skopje, Todor Stanković and Miloško Veselinović, consul Vasiljević in Thessaloniki, and ambassadors Rista Danić (Sofia) and Vladan Đorđević (Istanbul). The two diplomats stationed in Skopje were also prominent members of the Saint Sava Society. Moreover, Veselinović wrote a travelogue about Kosovo, which Mokranjac used as a reminder of folk-song texts whilst gathering folk-music material in Kosovo in 1896. Cf. Miloško Veselinović, *Pogled kroz Kosovo [A View of Kosovo]*, Belgrade, Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1895; Borislava Lilić, "Znamenita ličnost Srbije, nacionalni radnik i narodni poslanik, Todor Stanković" ["Distinguished Serbian Personage, National Worker, and Member of Parliament, Todor Stanković"], *Peščanik – Časopis za istoriografiju, arhivistiku i humanističke nauke*, 2003, 1; <http://www.arhivnis.co.rs/cirilica/idelatnost/br%201/cznamlic.htm>.

²⁶ Kalik mentions the Alatini brothers, industrialists whose factory was visited by members of the Society; Antonije Jakša, a merchant; Nikola Savić; and a certain Bajona, a representative of *Schenker and Comp*. The Society's representatives also met Serbian teachers in Thessaloniki and visited their school. Writing about the Jewish Community, Kalik stresses the affability of the Chief Rabbi and an advertisement for the concert published in Jewish papers in Thessaloniki. By contrast, the Greek consul was reserved – he even returned his concert ticket, a gesture of dissatisfaction with the programme notes, which were printed in French and Turkish, but not in Greek. Cf. Kalik, op. cit., 26–40.

i nepoznatim krajevima” [“more at ease in these new and unfamiliar parts”].²⁷ According to Kalik, the ensemble’s performances at the Italian Theatre in Thessaloniki and the *Turati* hotel in Skopje took place in packed halls and were met with standing ovations, whereas the audience in Skopje was particularly heterogeneous, made of Serbian officials, Turkish dignitaries, the Russian and Greek consuls, members of the Greek clergy, Bulgarian teachers, and many female spectators.²⁸

This was only the beginning of the international and decidedly élite tours that the ensemble undertook during the 1890s. During their tour of Sofia, Istanbul, and Plovdiv, described by Brzak, members of the Belgrade Choral Society began having meetings with individuals occupying various positions in foreign governments, who expressed their interest in the ensemble not only by attending their public concerts, but also by providing official audiences, receptions, and opportunities to perform for the most exclusive royal and diplomatic circles.

In Sofia, receptions for the ensemble were organized at the court of Prince Ferdinand I, at the residence of minister of foreign affairs Načević, and at the residence of mayor Ivan Grozev, and all of them, alongside other distinguished guests, attended the concert at the hall of the Slavyanska Beseda Cultural Club. Cooperation with civil society institutions and the Church was not neglected either: Mokranjac and the choir made contact with the Music Society and their leader Nikolaev, as well as the Metropolitan of Sofia, who served a liturgy with the Belgrade ensemble singing. Upon their return from Istanbul, the choir held a concert at the theatre in Plovdiv and the city officials organised a banquet for the city elite, alongside the mayor and several members of the Söbranie.²⁹

The author of the travelogue describes all of these encounters as full of amicability and Slavonic solidarity. Minister Načević expressed his belief that the goal of the Bulgarian government was “gajenje najprijateljskijih odnosa sa susednom bratskom državom Srbijom” [“to cultivate the friendliest of relations with the neighbouring sister state of Serbia”] and that the choir’s visit was “najpodesniji put da se ti odnosi što skorije i što lakše vaspustave” [“the most suitable way to establish such relations as soon and as easily as possible”].³⁰ He paid tribute to Serbian culture and to the choir in particular: “Ja sam vazda govorio Bugarima: da se imaju mnogome čemu dobrome od Srba naučiti, iako su mi to često puta sporili. ... Beogradsko pevačko društvo čuveno je sa valjanosti svoje i ja se veoma radujem što će moji Bugari videti koliko ste vi napredni i

²⁷ Kalik, op. cit., 28.

²⁸ Kalik, op. cit., 49–60.

²⁹ Brzak, op. cit., 14–36, 154–157.

³⁰ Brzak, op. cit., 20.

na kulturnom polju. U nas nema gotovo nikakvih pevačkih društava” [“I have always told the Bulgarians that they could learn a lot from the Serbs, although I was often contradicted. ... The Belgrade Choral Society is famous for its quality and I am very happy that my Bulgarians will see how prosperous you are in the field of culture as well. We have almost no choral societies whatsoever”] – he claimed, outlining a similarly dire situation in Bulgarian theatre as well.³¹ The reception at the princely court was marked by official protocol, including introductions with toasts, as well as performances of the Serbian and Bulgarian anthems by the court orchestra. The conversation with the princely couple turned more intimate, however, and the author of the travelogue thought he could glimpse a “trajno bratimljenje Srpskoga i Bugarskoga naroda” [“permanent fraternisation of the Serbian and Bulgarian nations”], but also an honest dilemma as to whether mutual assurances of rapprochement would bear fruit.³² Finally, at the banquet in Plovdiv, numerous toasts were proposed, which “skroz disale prema Srbiji i srpskome narodu” [“were full of warm feelings for Serbia and the Serbian people”] and stressed “savez između Srbije i Bugarske” [“the alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria”], while “mnogi su Bugari plakali” [“many of the Bulgarians cried”] while the choir sang *Our Father*.³³

In Istanbul, the singers were hosted by the Serbian ambassador on three occasions and greeted “kao prva velika korporacija Srba koja dođe na Bosfor, da osvetla ime Srbinovo” [“as the first great body of Serbs which came to the Bosphorus to honour the good name of the Serbs”], as pioneers of “srpske pesme, srpske muzike, srpske kulture na Istoku” [“of Serbian song, Serbian music, Serbian culture in the East”].³⁴ At the reception at Đorđević’s residence, they performed the Fifth and Eighth Garlands, which convinced the ambassador that the Society could “svuda producirati” [“entertain anywhere”].³⁵ The Istanbul concert, in the *Petits Champs* theatre in Pera, where mostly French and Italian companies performed, was also highly élite in character.³⁶ In addition to the Serbian ambassador and military attaché with their families, the audience included the ambassadors of the great powers with their entire missions, the Grand Vizier Cevat Pasha, ministers, marshals, pashas, feriks, rich people from Pera and Galata, as well as Serbian teachers and the rest of the Serbian community, together with

³¹ Brzak, op. cit., 21.

³² Brzak, op. cit., 34–35.

³³ Brzak, op. cit., 156.

³⁴ Brzak, op. cit., 74.

³⁵ Brzak, op. cit., 91.

³⁶ The price of a box was five golden liras (125 dinars) and due to a great demand, the entire balcony was refashioned into boxes; Brzak, op. cit., 117.

students of the Ottoman Academy. Brzak notes only the absence of the Greeks, which might have been related to an earlier decision by the Holy Synod not to allow the Society to sing in a Slavonic language in a church in Fanar.³⁷ As the singers' most exciting experience, Brzak described their concert at the court of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, when the Society was introduced to the ruler, adhering to a strict protocol, without direct intercommunication. Before the programme, Sultan's anthem, *Hamidiye*, was sung, the first time ever in a choral arrangement, and afterwards the Sultan asked for the Serbian anthem to be performed. He showed his satisfaction with the concert by presenting Mokranjac and a few other members of the ensemble with orders and medals for the arts.³⁸

Later tours by the Belgrade Choral Society, organized on the eve of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, included similar patterns of formal and informal performances, ritualised encounters accompanied by toasts, speeches, intoning the national anthems, but in a changed ideological and political context. The Belgrade ensemble actively supported the opinion of a large part of the intellectual and artistic elite that the Yugoslav nations needed to grow closer, which was supported by Serbian politics, too. Also, the pronounced permeability of the identity boundaries corresponded with feelings of ethnicity in the narrow sense and so the acceptance of Yugoslavism was often perceived as preservation and strengthening of individual nations from that common circle. This is precisely attested by Komarčić's book, showing that the tours of 1910 were marked by the ideologies of Serbdom and/or Yugoslavism, that the encounters and events, regardless of ideological positions, necessarily included representatives of different ethnic communities, and that cooperation was aimed not only at state officials, but also at civil society to a great extent.

The occasion for touring Sarajevo was the consecration of the flag of the *Srpkinja* Charity Association, followed by a separate concert of the Belgrade ensemble, organised after the celebration. The events were attended by members of all Serbian institutions in the city, Governor Varešanin, vice-speaker of Parliament Šola, banker Ješua D. Salom, and Croat and Muslim representatives. A dance party after the Society's concerts went on until dawn, and "srpsko kolo vilo se i na samoj ulici koju je prekrilio silan svet" ["the Serbian round dance kept going even in the street, filled with a huge crowd"].³⁹ The Society's visit to Mostar included a concert, church service, and a banquet organized by the Mostar Serbs, but the formal and informal events were attended by members of all Serbian and Croatian institutions of the city, the ethnic-Serb member of

³⁷ Brzak, op. cit., 118.

³⁸ Brzak, op. cit., 133–141.

³⁹ Komarčić, op. cit., 24.

parliament Stojanović, merchants, bankers, as well as writers Aleksa Šantić and Svetozar Ćorović.⁴⁰ According to Komarčić, in Cetinje, around 28,000 people had gathered for the coronation. The Belgrade Choral Society sang at the liturgy after the ceremony and gave three concerts for the representatives of the royal family, foreign courts, and the diplomatic corps, as well as a large number of journalists. They were guests at the banquet organized by the City of Cetinje and at the royal ball, they had an audience with Prince Aleksandar, as well as the newly-crowned King Nicholas, for whom they performed *Primorski napjevi* [*Coastal Melodies*] and Mokranjac's Ninth Garland.⁴¹ In Šibenik they were hosted by local Serbs, in Split and Zadar they were greeted by the Croatians, and in each of the three cities they gave a concert, followed by a banquet with entertainment and toasts. From Rijeka they returned to Belgrade by train.⁴²

The discourses of Serbdom and/or Yugoslavism were part of various aspects of these visits, most obviously in press articles and toasts, often quoted by Komarčić. In that context, an ideological discrepancy in two reports carried by the Sarajevo newspaper *Srpska riječ* [*Serbian Word*] is worth noting. An item entitled “Dobro nam došla srpska pjesmo” [Welcome, Serbian song] announced the arrival of the oldest choir “iz srpske metropole, na čelu sa Vukom srpske narodne melodije” [“from the Serbian capital, headed by the Vuk Karadžić of Serbian folk melody”], using strongly nationalist rhetoric about Mokranjac's art, which displayed “složenu melodiku srpske duše – od Budima do Jadrana, od Jadrana do Soluna” [“the complex melody of the Serbian soul – from Buda to the Adriatic Sea, from the Adriatic Sea to Thessaloniki”] and “zvucima obuhvata i ujedinjuje sve što je srpsko” [“with its sounds embraced and united everything that is Serbian”].⁴³ This was a suitable piece of propaganda for assembling as many Serbs as possible at the celebration mentioned above, especially on the occasion of the first organized arrival of guests from Serbia following the 1908 Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, a special edition of the same paper announced the Society's second concert in Sarajevo with an

⁴⁰ Komarčić, op. cit., 38–48.

⁴¹ Komarčić, op. cit., 60–76.

⁴² Komarčić, op. cit., 106–140. The individuals who greeted them in Split included mayor Jure Kapić and member of parliament Josip Smodlaka, one of the founders of the New Course policy. The president of the Belgrade Choral Society Mihailo Cukić appealed to Freemasons to cooperate with Croatian and Dalmatian politicians, in order to improve the position of the Serbs in these parts and spread Yugoslavism. It is possible that the Society's amicable contact with these Croatians was the result of these efforts. See Biljana Milanović, “Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac et l'aspects de l'ethnicité et du nationalisme”, *Études Balkaniques*, 2006, 13, 165.

⁴³ Komarčić, op. cit., 14–16.

article imbued with a sense of unity of the citizens of Sarajevo. The announcement emphasized the quality of the ensemble, which had toured great European capitals, and the public was encouraged to experience “do kog se savršenstva može dići srpska i jugoslovenska nacionalna muzika” [“the high level of perfection attainable by Serbian and Yugoslav national music”]; in particular, it was stressed that the Society, at the request of the officials and “braće Muslimana i Hrvata, odlučilo da jednu noć posveti sarajevskoj publici bez razlike vjere” [“our Muslim and Croatian brothers, decided to dedicate one evening to the Sarajevo audience of all creeds”].⁴⁴ Similar sentiments could be heard in toasts offered in Mostar, where Aleksa Šantić’s speech teemed with the poetical atmosphere of a burning Serbian patriotism, while others “dodirivale jedinstvo Srba i Hrvata, zbog čega je bilo oduševljenoga klicanja i burnih ovacija” [“related to the unity of the Serbs and Croats, which resulted in enthusiastic cheering and roaring ovations”].⁴⁵

Wishing to distance himself from political disputes at the time, Komarčić was reserved in his nationalist-political narratives regarding the Society’s visit to Cetinje. Therefore, his description of the reception and speeches in Split saw the pinnacle of the discourses on the unity of the Serbs and the Croats. Namely, due to high traffic at the port of Kotor after the ceremony in Cetinje, as well as transport difficulties on the way from Cetinje to the coast, the Society was late for their scheduled arrivals to the cities along the Croatian coast, the concert in Dubrovnik had to be cancelled, and other performances rescheduled. Although the ship carrying the ensemble landed in Split in the middle of the night, the reception was impressive. In honour of the guests from Belgrade, the port was illuminated with Bengal lights; a crowd of some two thousand people waving their head scarves and hats could be seen from the open sea and their cheers of delight mingled with the sounds of music. Kalik described the fascination “ovako kraljevskim dočekom” [“with such a regal reception”], which continued into an exchange of welcoming speeches by Jure Kapić and Josip Smolaka, on the one hand, and the Society officials, on the other. Their words about “međusobna sloga” [“common unity”], “zajednički jezik od Triglava do Balkana” [“a common language from Mount Triglav to the Balkan Mountains”], “bratska ljubav” [“brotherly love”], and “srpsko-hrvatsko jedinstvo” [“Serbo-Croatian unity”] were cheered by the large crowd, comprising mostly young people, who then spontaneously formed a single file in order to accompany the guests to their hotel.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Komarčić, op. cit., 20–22.

⁴⁵ Komarčić, op. cit., 46.

⁴⁶ Komarčić, op. cit., 112–116.

For the most part, the travelogues cover the concerts themselves rather briefly. It was important to emphasize their success, expressed through loud and long applause, frequent extensions to the programme and repeated performances of compositions on the audience's request, presenting Mokranjac with laurel wreaths, among other gifts, and soloists with floral arrangements, as well as appropriate speeches that confirmed an extremely positive reception of the performances.

This typified way of concise reporting on public concert activities sometimes also included a review of the repertoire. Thus Kalik lists most of the works performed at the Thessaloniki concert, but only as an aside, given in order to depict the joint enthusiasm of the performers and the audience.⁴⁷ Brzak writes about the responses of the distinguished guests, not missing to mention the Princess's praises to Mokranjac, since she thought that his interpretation was better even than the famous choir of Mr Slavyansky.⁴⁸ Unlike Brzak, who rarely mentioned individual works from concert programmes, Komarčić appended his travelogue with a list of compositions performed at the tours he accompanied (Example 1). However, he, too, focuses on isolated moments and emotions, the feeling of collective unity. For instance, at the first Sarajevo concert "bura je dostigla svoj vrhunac kad dvoranom zagrmje pesma: 'Što no mi se Travnik zamaglio...'. A suze nam na oči navreše kad ... oduševljeni slušaoci poneše na rukama kroz salu našeg horovođu g. Mokranjca, grleći ga i ljubeći ga" ["the tumult peaked when the hall thundered, singing: 'Što no mi se Travnik zamaglio...'. And our eyes welled up with tears when ... the overjoyed audience took our choirmaster, Mr Mokranjac, and carried him on their shoulders through the hall, hugging and kissing him"]. The second performance "bio je samo nastavak jučerašnjih ovacija. Muslimani su plakali slušajući turske pesme" ["was just a continuation of the ovations from the night before. The Muslims cried listening to Turkish songs"] and the audience generally preferred the Fifth Garland and *Kozar* [*The Goatherd*].⁴⁹ Komarčić also quotes two reviews from the local press: a report on the concert in Šibenik, summarizing the impressions about the ensemble, i.e. the remarkable training, quality, and character of the voices,⁵⁰ and one from Split, emphasizing local enthusiasm about some of the works. The men's choir was "burno aklamiran od općinstva, koje je poustajalo na noge" ["loudly acclaimed by the audience, who stood up on their feet"] when they performed the Croatian anthem. Mokranjac's compositions *Kozar*, the Twelfth Garland, and *Dve orijentalke* [*Two Oriental Songs*] "bile su upravo s udivljenjem slušane, a iznenadila

⁴⁷ Kalik, op. cit., 49–51.

⁴⁸ Brzak, op. cit., 28.

⁴⁹ Komarčić, op. cit., 19, 22.

⁵⁰ Komarčić, op. cit., 128.

je izvedba poznatih Primorskih napjeva” [“were listened to with nothing short of admiration, and there was surprise on the performance of the famous *Coastal Melodies*”]. Folk melodies “u krasnom umjetničkom ruhu” [“in beautiful artistic attire”] and “s beskraj varijacija, s divnim motivima” [“with countless variations, with wonderful motives”] established a strong rapport with the audience: “Bio je to jedan umjetnički užitak rijedak, i bio je to duh narodne duše, velike i poetične, koji je brujao kazalištem” [“It was a rare artistic pleasure, and it was the spirit of the national soul, broad and poetic, that resonated around the theatre”].⁵¹

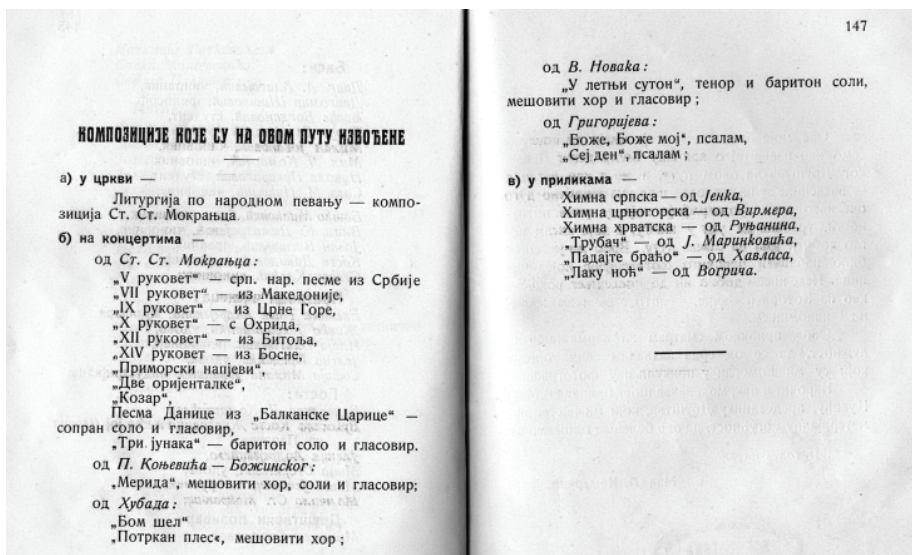
Admittedly, neither Kalik nor Brzak nor Komarčić were professional musicians, but nor were their travelogues, aimed at a broader readership, meant to discuss expert topics related to the compositions and their interpretations. The repertoire of the 1890s tours, which was always dominated by Mokranjac’s works, also included examples of German, French, Russian, and Czech choral heritage, drawing a line of national tradition on the map of an imaginary Europe, while the repertoire from 1910 mapped Yugoslav territories.⁵² The authors of the travelogues only hinted at that, writing about the impressions and the atmosphere of rapport with the audience created by Mokranjac’s performances. The concerts were significant moments, which – together with informal events, encounters, banquets, toasts, anthems, entertainment with music and dance, as well as many other activities – created an integral part of the ‘travel culture’ of the Belgrade ensemble. The authors also illustrated the atmosphere of these travel experiences by photographs. Kalik and Brzak mostly portrayed the cities, while Komarčić created a sort of parallel visual narrative about places, landscapes, the people, and the choir, depicted in 82 photographs (Examples 2–5).

The travelogues attest to an attempt to expand the domain of Serbian diplomatic activities by a systematic inclusion of music into these strategies, pinpointing its historical role in the development of Serbian cultural diplomacy. In the context of political instrumentalization, the tours were friendly missions abroad, supposed to leave the image of a peace-loving and prosperous Serbia, ready to present its national tradition in foreign contexts. The authors permanently commemorated the Belgrade Choral Society and Mokranjac as the main protagonists of that mission and, through a popular genre at the time, emphasized the significance of the ensemble and its leader, contributing toward maintaining and strengthening their positions at the top of the hierarchy of national artistic values.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

⁵¹ Komarčić, op. cit., 119.

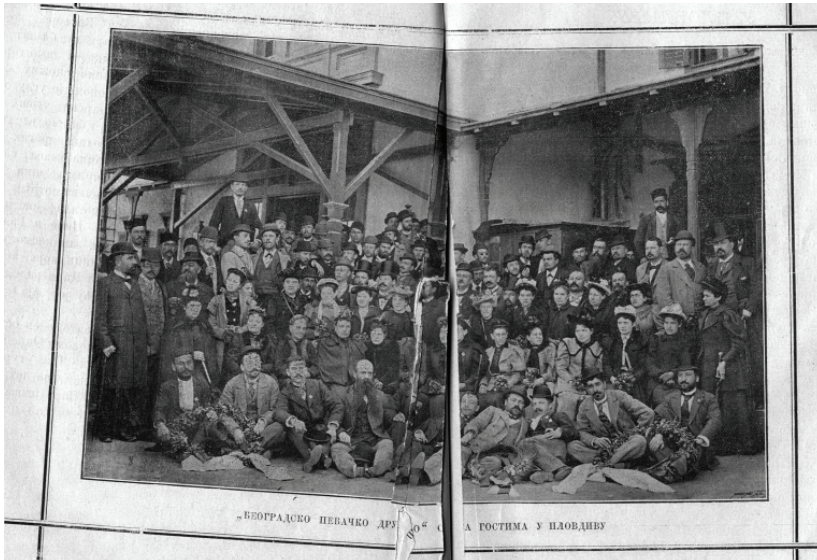
⁵² Cf. Biljana Milanović, “Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac et l’aspect de l’ethnicité et du nationalisme”, op. cit., 164.



Example 1: The repertoire of the Belgrade Choral Society on their tour of 1910. Choirmaster: Stevan Mokranjac, Choirmaster II: Hinko Maržinec. Mil. L. Komarčić, *Na Adriju*, 1911, 146–147.



Example 2: Belgrade Choral Society in Thessaloniki, 1894. Spira Kalik, *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje*, 1894, III.

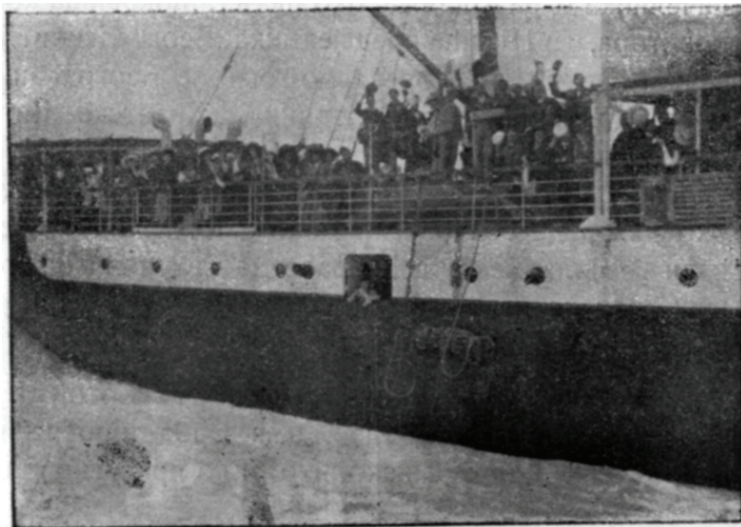


Example 3: Belgrade Choral Society in Plovdiv, 1895.
Dragomir Brzak, *Sa Avale na Bosfor*, 1897, 152–153.



Српско коло у дворишту Добротворне Задруге „Српкиња“.

Example 4: From the Belgrade Choral Society’s tour of Sarajevo, 1910. Serbian round dancing in the courtyard of the *Srpkinja* Charity Association.
Mil. L. Komarčić, *Na Adriju*, 1911, 23.



Шибеник: Удаљавање брода и опроштај...

Example 5: From the Belgrade Choral Society's tour of Dalmatia, 1910. Disembarking following their arrival from Šibenik.
Mil. L. Komarčić, *Na Adriju*, 1911, 129.