
REVIEWS

Article received on 28th October 2015
Article accepted on 29th October 2015
UDC: 78.071.1:929 Мокрањац Стојановић
С.(082)(049.32)
COBISS.SR-ID 223354636

SONJA CVETKOVIĆ*

University of Niš
Faculty of Arts
Department of Music

**Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac
(1856–1914) –
Inostrane koncertne turneje sa
Beogradskim pevačkim društvom,
Biljana Milanović (urednik)**

**Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac
(1856–1914) –
The Belgrade Choral Society
Foreign Concert Tours,
Institute of Musicology of the Serbian
Academy of Sciences and Arts
Serbian Musicological Society
Belgrade, 2014**

The extensive and heterogeneous body of studies and writings about Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, a key figure in the development of modern Serbian music, is complemented by a bilingual collective monograph (in Serbian and English) about an important, although in our musicology and musi-

cal historiography still insufficiently researched aspect of his versatile artistic personality – foreign concert tours with the Belgrade Choral Society. The monograph was created as part of the project *Mokranjac in foreign contexts*, published as a joint edition of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and Serbian Musicological Society, whereby these two institutions have joined the Program of marking last year's jubilees: the centenary of the First World War and Mokranjac's death.¹

A very complex initial task – researching and investigating different sources from the venues of the events, that is, from those foreign cities of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where in the late 19th and early 20th century Stevan Mokranjac went on concert tours with the Belgrade Choral Society – was successfully completed in this book which offers many new insights and authentic data, primarily about the reception of Mokranjac's work and his interpretative range as a conductor of the elite national choral institution (but also about the reception of Serbian musical culture in general), situating them in different artistic, ideological and socio-political contexts. The book contains ten studies written

* Author contact information: cvetkos@mts.rs

¹ The book was published with the support of two ministries of the Republic of Serbia (Ministry of Culture and Information and Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development) and SOKOJ – Serbian Music Author's Organization.

by experts from Serbia, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, and represents an unique example of cooperation between domestic and foreign authors in the research of national music.

Beside the Preface and the Introduction, the studies are grouped in three parts, which in the manner of a symbolic, “musical itinerary” map the geographic areas and territories of the BCS concert tours: I IN THE SOUTHEAST OF THE BALKANS, II MAPPING EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE, III TOWARDS SHAPING THE YUGOSLAV TERRITORY. The Appendix section includes a chronological list of the BCS foreign tours from 1892 until 1914 (List 1) and a list of preserved or reconstructed concert programs and repertoires (List 2), a segment of illustrations² and Index of names.

The monograph presents plenty of material, hitherto little known or inaccessible to the scientific, professional and general public,³ which is explained distinctly and rich in information thanks to insights into

² Among which are particularly significant ones so far unknown such as front-page photos of the BCS at the guest performance in Athens in 1914, published in the Greek newspapers *Patris* and *Empros* and Berlin Theatre Weekly Schedule with announcement of concerts by Mokranjac and the BCS in *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1899.

³ A guest performance in Sofia in 1904, not known in earlier literature on Mokranjac and an almost unknown guest performance in Athens in 1914, when Dragutin Pokorný was the conductor instead of Mokranjac, who was ill. A new fact came to light about the concerts in the German cities, which were held within the framework of large musical-theatrical events comprising theatre plays and operettas.

primary sources (approximately 200 bibliographical units from foreign periodicals) and archival research. Thus, what have so far been a rather general historical view of Stevan Mokranjac and the BCS concert tours, as the earliest example of the organized and successful promotion of Serbian musical culture abroad, has become much more substantial. The contextual overview in the actual ideological discourses of Pan Slavism, the Balkans-Allies and South-Slavic/Yugoslav mutuality, as well as the viewpoint of the official strategy of Serbian cultural diplomacy before the outbreak of the First World War, afforded a meaningful perspective of the historiographical dimension and provided plenty of relevant information about the general cultural, political and diplomatic trends of that period.

The monograph opens with an introductory chapter by Editor Biljana Milanović (Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade), entitled *Musical representation of Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society as a form of cultural diplomacy*. At the beginning of an extensive study, the author introduces readers to earlier literature about concert tours, the difficulties of tracing, collecting and studying original documentation in a number of European cities, and the problems involved in selecting quotations and the free interpretation of foreign critiques that appeared in Serbian sources. Pointing to the complex nature of these tours, which, besides an artistic, had a wider cultural and political significance, the author in three chapters (*Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society in the Serbian musical context*, *Foreign policy and ideology backgrounds of the tours: networking with state and civil institution*

from Serbia and abroad, *Strategies of representation and musical reception*) elaborated with convincing arguments systematically and closely related with various (ideological, political, and economic) phenomena and their connection with music, lays out the main problem areas of research: the importance and position of Mokranjac and the BCS within Serbian music at the turn of the 20th century, Mokranjac's creative work, the Society's ideology and mission, the foreign policy framework of the tours in the process of the ensemble's contact with representatives of the state and civil institutions both in the country and abroad and finally, the strategies of the musical presentation to others.

The next chapter contains three studies which consider the BCS concert tours in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. Athanasios Trikoupis (Faculty of Music Studies, School of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University, Athens) in a paper entitled *The Belgrade Choral Society as viewed by the Hellenic press: concert tours 1894–1914* tracks the historical background of the BCS concert tours (guest performances in Thessalonica, Constantinople, Philippoupolis and Athens), based mostly of newspaper reports and articles printed during this period, which confirm the friendly relationship between the Serbs and the Hellenes and carry information about the repertoire and concert programs, honors organized by the Hellenic cultural foundations and authorities for the guests from Serbia, with the conclusion that the BCS set a good example and encouraged the establishment of the first Hellenic music institutions (Hellenic State Conservatory in Thessalonica in 1914).

Evren Kutlay (Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul) in the study *Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society in Istanbul* writes about the Sofia – Istanbul – Plovdiv concert tour in April 1895. The concert program, full of Mokranjac's music and presented in the wider frame of an international repertoire, was very attractive for the citizens of the multi-ethnic Istanbul, while the presence of the diplomatic representatives and Sultan Abdul Hamid II suggests that the tour was organized at a high state level. In the author's opinion, the tour of Mokranjac and the BCS had a favorable effect on relations between the two countries, leading to a better, mutual understanding through the language of music.

The concert tours of Mokranjac and the BCS in Bulgaria were the subject of research by Elisaveta Borisova Valchinova-Chendova (Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia) in her paper *Stevan Mokranjac and his concert tours with the Belgrade Choral Society in Bulgaria*. The Sofia – Constantinople – Plovdiv concert tour (1895) and guest performance in Sofia (1904) testify that the Mokranjac's music was accepted in Bulgaria thanks to the connections between Serbian art music and folklore, the similarity of Mokranjac's *Garlands (Rukoveti)* to the *potpourri* forms of choral music (*kitki*) composed by Bulgarian authors, and the tradition of Orthodox Church chant.

The thematic segment about Mokranjac's performances in Eastern and Central Europe opens with a study by Virág Büky (Bartók Archives of the Institute of Musicology, Research Centre for Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest) under the heading '*Our Serbian guests*': *the reception of concerts of the*

Belgrade Choral Society in Budapest viewed in the light of the Budapest press. This text informs us that all the leading newspapers in Budapest reported on the two concerts held in December 1894. Although the concert tour was somewhat disturbed by the news about demonstrations in Sremski Karlovci and Petrovaradin which were directed against the guest performances of the Serbian artists, Mokranjac and the Belgrade choir ensemble were warmly received in Budapest. The toasts and speeches, as well as the reports and concert reviews, also referred to improving relations between the two countries.

The concert tour of the Belgrade Choral Society in the Russian press in 1896 was the focus of research by Alla Evdokimova (State Glinka Conservatory, Nizhny Novgorod). The Russian press highlighted the special role of Mokranjac, the talented composer and choir conductor on a concert tour in Saint-Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow and Kiev, while the audience not only appreciated the musical merits of the performed works, but also the patriotism and national identity of the Serbian artist, who had managed to preserve the folklore tradition under Ottoman rule. Two months after the concerts were over, a leading music magazine *Russkai muzykal'naiia gazeta* published an article especially dedicated to the BCS, and informed readers about the most memorable facts of this tour.

The paper by Jasmina Huber (Institute of Jewish Studies, Heinrich-Heine-University, Düsseldorf) entitled *The German tour of the Belgrade Choral Society in 1899, viewed from the perspective of the leading musical nation* examines the way in which the concerts of Mokranjac and the BCS on

tour in Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig were received by contemporary musical critics in a country reputed to be the leading musical nation. The author's intention was to evaluate and analyze contemporary reports and the music reviews in the German newspapers in order to create a more objective picture of the tour, since reports in the Serbian press offered a one-sided interpretation. Most of the reviews reflected the German public's indifference to the national interests and national connotation of the tour (which according to Serbian reports constituted the main success of the tour), while general attention was drawn by the unusual, and for Germans, almost „exotic“ practice of performing epic poetry to the accompaniment of the gusle, folk melody arrangements, the singers' appearance (particularly the female choir members in traditional national costumes which, according to the reporters, were picturesque rather than appropriate) and Mokranjac's conducting technique without a baton.

The authors of the three studies in the last chapter of the monograph write about Mokranjac's performances with the BCS in the neighboring countries, which would become territories of the Yugoslav state community after the First World War. *Two performances of the Belgrade Choral Society in Cetinje* was the research subject of Sonja Marinković (Department of Musicology, Faculty of Music Arts, University of Arts, Belgrade). The paper presents hitherto unpublished archive records and sources from the local press about the guest performances in Cetinje in 1893 and 1910, and discusses the lesser known contribution by other researchers and chroniclers explaining certain issues connected with those guest performances. In spite of the promi-

nence of the social aspect of these occasions (Prince Danilo's birthday and the 50th jubilee celebration of Prince Nikola I Petrović Njegoš's reign), the preserved data undoubtedly shows the gradual shift of focus from political to artistic questions.

Lana Paćuka (Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology Academy of Music, University in Sarajevo) described in her paper '*Glory to the Belgrade people': the guest performances of Stevan Mokranjac and the Belgrade Choral Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1910*, the concert tour of Stevan Mokranjac and the BCS, which included performances in Sarajevo and Mostar, in 1910. Owing to the fact that musical life in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1878 until 1918 was influenced by Austro-Hungarian ideology and its socio-political and cultural vision, the author points to the treatment of these two artistic events in the reports published in the pro-regime newspaper *Sarajevski list*, and *Srpska riječ*, the most influential newspaper of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs and concludes that the visit by the artists from Serbia contributed in a certain way to the improvement of socio-political relations among the provinces of Austria-Hungary and the Serbian state.

The study by Nada Bezić (Library of the Croatian Music Institute, Zagreb) entitled *Performances of the Belgrade Choral Society and Stevan Mokranjac in Croatia* deals with the contemporary ideological and political context. The concerts in Du-

brovnik (1893), Split, Šibenik and Zadar (1910), Sušak, (Trieste) and Zagreb (1911) were well-attended and well received while the program selection of choral works by Mokranjac, Croatian and Slovenian composers spread a message of unity among the Southern Slavs. A valuable segment of this study is the rich body of data presented in the list of periodicals and archive sources (Enclosure 1) and the list of data on the repertoire of the BCS in Croatia (Enclosure 2).

It is obvious from this review that the monograph *Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856–1914) – the Belgrade Choral Society Concert tours*, as a significant contribution to the fundamental study of the history of Serbian music goes beyond the frame of an appropriate edition published to mark a jubilee occasion. Both the editor and the authors of the studies successfully accomplished the difficult task of logically and clearly presenting a wealth of new historical facts and archive records, and thus credibly reconstructed one segment of the Serbian musical past, explaining at the same time many aspects of the complex social, political and cultural environment of the BCS concert tours. Together with the book *Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac in the Writings of 'Others'* prepared by Ivana Petković and Olga Otašević, this monograph constitutes a unique thematic whole, which, in a synthesis of research, examines the artistic activities of Stevan Mokranjac through a creative dialogue.