



Yugoslav musicians.

THE MUSIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Dr. Mirka Pavlovitch's Talk

THE following is the text of a talk given by Dr. Mirka Pavlovitch, Professor of Music, Belgrade University, at the Bharatiya Kala Kendra, New Delhi, recently. Dr. Mirka Pavlovitch is at present in India on a Government of India scholarship for a comparative study of Indian and Yugoslav music.

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First let me tell you how happy I feel to be present on this occasion. Allow me also to convey through you the best regards of Yugoslav musicians to their Indian colleagues.

Because of the broadness and diversity of the material and the short time at my disposal, I am obliged to speak only about basic facts, although I am sure that many

of you would be more interested in the detailed analysis of various aspects of the subject.

The reason why I took up such a broad theme is because I know that you have not had much opportunity of hearing Yugoslav music and also because I feel that the specific details and characteristics of any music culture can be perceived only by having a panoramic view.

Before I attempt to speak about the music of the Yugoslavs, I must acquaint you with some facts without which many details in my talk would not be clear. So, when speaking of Yugoslavia, one of the first things to bear in mind is the fact that Yugoslavia is in the Balkan Peninsula. This fact has determined many details, both in the history of the

ÖSTERREICH

MAGYAR N. K.

JUGOSLAVIJA

ITALIA

SLOVENIA

CROATIA

BOSNIA

SERBIA

R. P. ROMIJA

JADRANSKO MORE

R. P. SHQIPËRIJA

N. R. BULGARIJA

MACEDONIA

HELLAS



Yugoslav people and in their social, economic and cultural development.

Geographical Position

Yugoslavia's geographical position is such that it is at the cross roads of West and East. Because of the importance of these roads and of the strategic position of these regions, the territories occupied by the Yugoslavs were exposed to various invasions — by the Goths, the Huns, the Avars, the Mongols, etc., and the victim of many conquerors such as Turkey, Venice, Austria, Hungary, Germany, etc. Thus, while the Yugoslav people began to settle in these areas as early as the 5th Century A.D. and created their first independent States as early as the 7th and 8th centuries, while they had one kingdom in the 10th century and a great Empire as early as the 13th and 14th centuries, they did not have any possibility of uniting in a single State until after the First World War (1918).

The whole history of Yugoslavs is a grim struggle to liberate themselves from a foreign yoke, a fight for freedom and independence. Needless to say, this fact deeply influenced, or rather hampered the development of the Yugoslav people in the spheres of art and culture. On the other hand, contacts with various peoples and different cultures enriched their creative genius; as a result, both in their most difficult and in their best years, their artistic achievements were of extraordinary value. Let us mention only the wonderful mediaeval monasteries with their unique frescoes, which are scattered all over Serbia and Macedonia; the monumental religious structures adorned with magnificent sculptures which are found in Dalmatia; or the beautiful popular epics and poems in which the Yugoslav people described many an event in their history, up to their recent struggle for freedom during the years 1941 to 1944.

The First Attempts

As far as Yugoslav music is concerned, one may say that as it is difficult to find a country with richer and more varied natural beauty, so it is to find a country with a richer and more varied music folklore. As far as the history of Yugoslav music is concerned, we shall have to refer to the past century, that is from the time of the first great successes of the political and cultural

struggles sustained by the Yugoslav people to free themselves from foreign domination.

It is from this period that we can date the first attempts made by the Yugoslavs, on the basis of an exceptionally rich folklore, to create a specific musical expression in art-music. The first attempts which represent a really significant and original contribution date from the end of the past century. Thus, as far as music is concerned, the Yugoslavs covered in 50 years a road which European music needed several centuries to cover. However, one must not think that the Yugoslav composers limited themselves to adopting the achievements and styles fostered in Europe. That would only be a limited success. The significance of the achievements of the Yugoslav composers lies in the fact that they made use of these technical experiences and realisations of European music which suited them, while they searched for a specific Yugoslav musical expression.

Works by Yugoslav composers inspired by Yugoslav or foreign folklore have up to now for Yugoslav art music a much greater importance. I will today speak the most on such kind of work, and first of all, on that aspect which is inspired by Yugoslav folklore.

Yugoslav Folklore

However, before I introduce to you the compositions of the Yugoslav composers, I would like to give you some idea about Yugoslav folklore as such. As I said before, Yugoslav musical folklore is extremely rich and full of diversities. Before I dwell on its forms and characteristics, it is necessary to draw your attention to the fact—this due precisely to the geographical position of Yugoslavia and the history of her people — that Yugoslav art is, in the true sense of the word, a living bridge between the West and the East.

Now, when this fact is known, the diversity and colourfulness of Yugoslav music can be more easily understood and better appreciated. The writing down of Yugoslav folk-tunes began relatively early — in the beginning of the last century (1815) and still continues.

Four Main Branches

On analysing the Yugoslav musical folklore, we can observe four main branches;



Yugoslav women dancers in a dance pose.

folklore of a distinctly Slav character, folklore close to Middle Europe, the folklore with clear oriental elements, and the folklore with gipsy elements. We can also find in some parts of Yugoslavia (for example in Istra or Montenegro) very interesting and specific remains of old folklore with strong archaic elements. It is sometimes very difficult to identify the tonal bases of Yugoslav folk-tunes and the modes in which they are built.

The melodies of the North Western part of Yugoslavia are more simple and more uniform than those of the East and South East of Yugoslavia. Most of the Yugoslav folk-melodies are in small intervals but we can also find some with big jumps. Most often, melodic phrases are very clear and usually short. The Yugoslav folk-music is monodic, with rare examples of polyphony in two voices. When many are singing, they sing in unison or in octave, seldom in other intervals, may be sometimes even in seconds.

The antiphonic way of singing is also known.

(Example: Chorus song from Serbia.)

The rhythm of Yugoslav folk music in the Western part is also simpler and more uniform and can be grouped into those on 2, 3 and 4 beats. Here, we can meet also a rhythm very popular in the West in 6 beats, grouped as a rhythm which we cannot find farther to the East and South East of Yugoslavia. The rhythm of this part of Yugoslavia is much more rich; we can even say extremely rich and diverse. There we can also find examples of rhythmic contrapoint. At one and the same time the rhythms of 2, 3 and 4 beats, we can also find rhythms of 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, etc., or different variations of rhythms or 6—grouped as 4 plus 2, of 8 as 5 plus 3, or 9 as 5 plus 4, or beats grouped as 7 plus 5, etc. But songs which accompany dances, especially of Slav origin, can have a very simple rhythm, for example as — or or as variety . . .

. . . Also common are so-called "upturned" rhythms, as for . . . with the division of unit alternate into 2 and 3, going . . . or with irregular division of the unit into 3, 6 or 7 parts, etc.

Main Instruments

The people in Yugoslavia sing with or without instrumental accompaniment. Also, instruments can be used without voices. The main folk-instruments in Yugoslavia are: several kinds of pipes — with one or two reeds, which may be a type of flute or a type of *shahnai*, and the bag pipe; then the instrument with the bow — the *gusle*, which can have one string made of horse-tail or two made of intestines; in the Northern part of Yugoslavia, very popular instruments are many kinds of mandoline, especially an instrument called the *tambura* and the big one — the *brach*. It is very characteristic of Yugoslav folk music that percussion instruments are not much in use. The main among them is the *tupan* or *goch*, akin to a big drum which hangs straight on the player who plays with both hands, with two sticks of different kinds.

All folk-instruments are made by the common people, but, unfortunately, they are being replaced more and more by instruments like violin and accordion. But the accordion in the North Western part of Yugoslavia is really a kind of folk instrument.

The Occasions

The occasions on which the Yugoslavs sing and dance are diverse; in brief, we can say that the song accompanies their life from birth to death. For the sake of clarity, some musicologists divide Yugoslav folk songs into three groups — "action" songs; songs which accompany dancing and songs of circumstance, among which we have ritual songs which are sung only on special occasions or holidays, and which by virtue of the rarity of occasions, have not changed much; so they can be mentioned without doubt as the oldest examples of Yugoslav folk songs.

I must also draw your attention to the fact that in Yugoslav folk-songs great importance is given to the text which always inspires the music. Sometimes, such importance is given to the text that the music serves only

as a background. On mentioning this, I am not thinking of epics which are performed more as declamation than as song, accompanied by the *gusle* — the bow instrument which I mentioned. Here, I am speaking only about the so-called lyrical folk songs, in which the text can also push the musical element into the background. As example of such kind of songs, we shall listen to one folk-song from Croatia, the central part of Western Yugoslavia. The text of this song is humorous, and I tell you, by the way, that in Yugoslav folk-art, we may very often find humour, the element which even the grim and long drawn out struggles of history could not eliminate from the spirit of the Yugoslavs.

(Example: The folk song from Croatia).

I can only add one more fact and that is, that all foreign elements and influences have undergone a transformation in the hands of the Yugoslavs. In music also, they always gave their specific stamp, so that "we can speak in the true meaning of the word about a phenomenon of *camosis*".

But when speaking about the ways of using original folk music sources by the Yugoslav composers, we can distinguish four essential kinds; the most simple — the harmonisation of folk melodies; second — the stylisation; third — the use of original folk tunes as themes in a free composition; and fourth — quite original musical language but in a spirit close to folk traditions.

Original Folklore

Today, I shall give only examples of original folklore and its transformation in art music, compositions based on folklore and those inspired only by folklore. Both treatments are used by Yugoslav composers in all kinds of music: chamber, for solist, for orchestra, for operas, ballets, films, etc. My first example is a folk song from the North Western part of Yugoslavia, where music is closest to Western Europe's folk music especially to the so-called *Alypan* type, that is music full of energy and serenity which inclines to activity, rather than meditation, music pervaded by a sense of life.

(Example: Folk song from Slovenia).

I would now like to show you how the Yugoslav composers applied popular music of this region to artistic music. We shall take



A group of Yugoslav men dancers from Lazaropole (Macedonia).

onia, Southern part of Yugoslavia. The music as an example a work by a well known Slovene composer — Matija Bravnicar. Although any connoisseur will know immediately that this is the work of a Yugoslav composer, its style shows that, like the folklore of these regions, it is closer to the musical expression found in Central Europe.

(Music: Matija Bravnicar—"Kurent").

My next example of folk music is from Croatia, the central part of West Yugoslavia. It shows clearly that the Western frontiers of Yugoslavia are no longer so near. The musical folklore of these regions is often extremely interesting and very specific.

(Example: Folk song from Madjumurjo, Croatia).

And now, we shall hear one example of how folk music from Croatia was used in a composition for voice and orchestra by a contemporary Yugoslav composer — Nikola Hercigonja.

(Music: Nikola Hercigonja — "Kipci i popevke").

Now let us listen to one example of a Yugoslav folk song of the oriental type with a very clear element of Turco-Arabic music. It is from the central part of Yugoslavia, from Bosnia where such kind of music is also specific. The melodies are full of sorrow and rich with ornamentations.

(Example: A folk song from Bosnia).

Our next example will be a folk song from the North Eastern part of Yugoslavia, *i.e.*, Serbia. The music of that region is remarkable for its richness of expression and feeling. Unfortunately, the influence of Gypsy music began deeply to affect its original musical expression. But the example which you are now to hear is an original and quite characteristic example of pure folklore without any foreign influence.

(Example: A folk song from Serbia).

The composition which you will listen to now is a wonderful example of work based on folklore and I would like to draw your special attention to it. It is written by a classic of Yugoslav music — Stevan Mokranjatz. Mokranjatz lived at the end of the last century and at the beginning of this one. His compositions are the best illustrations of national Yugoslav style in art music, and even today, he inspires all composers who take as their basis Yugoslav folk music.

Most of the Mokranjatz compositions are written for chorus. You will hear two of them. The first is made up of folk songs from Serbia, *i.e.*, that part of Yugoslavia from where the last example was taken which you heard.

(Music: Stevan Mokranjatz — VIIIth "Rukovet").

The last example of original folklore, which I shall give you today, is a song from Maced-

of that region is also very close to Eastern music. Its chief characteristic is a wealth of melody and rhythm, among which we find rhythms of 5, 7, 11 and other beats, that is, rhythms which are never found in Western music, or even in music from the Western and North Western regions of Yugoslavia.

(*Example: A folk song from Macedonia.*)

And now, let us hear the folk music of this region which found its way into art music. This piece is also by Stevan Mokranjatz.

(*Music: Stevan Mokranjatz—The CVth “Rukovet”.*)

The last three compositions by Yugoslav composers which you will hear today are of three different kinds. The first is original Yugoslav folklore used in a composition for orchestra. The folklore on which this work is based is from south of Yugoslavia, *i.e.*, from the same part as that of the last composition you heard. It is the suite from the ballet, “Legend of Ohrid” by Stevan Hristich, one of the most important contemporary Yugoslav composers of the other generation.

(*Music: Stevan Hristich — I suite from “The Legend of Ohrid”.*)

The short composition which you will now hear is an example of music inspired only by the spirit of folklore. Here are four songs for voices and orchestra written by Stanoilo Raichich, one of the most important contemporary Yugoslav composers of the middle generation.

(*Music: Stanoilo Raichich — “4 Songs on the text from Bran Radichuvich”.*)

Finally, you will hear one piece by a Yugoslav composer inspired by music of very remote country. That is the third part of the “Symphony of Orient” from Yosif Slavenski, one of the strongest and most original personalities in Yugoslav music, who died two years ago. In this work, he attempts to express the development of the different religions. The third part is inspired by the Buddhist temple ritual music and written in Sanskrit text.

(*Music: Yosif Slavenski — III movement from the “Symphony of Orient”.*)

With this piece, I shall finish my talk. The purpose was to introduce you to the music of my country, to draw your attention to its characteristics and diversities, to familiarise you with some compositions by her musical authors. In short, to give you some idea of the musical culture of my country, the population of which is not numerically large, but which has shown so many times in its history how great and rich is its spirit.

