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**Mark Fori: *Saglasje tradicije i  
 kulture u tamburaškoj muzici  
 Vojvodine***

**[Mark Forry: *The Mediation of  
 ‘Tradition’ and ‘Culture’ in the  
 Tamburitza Music of Vojvodina/  
 Yugoslavia*], trans. Dušan Brankov  
 and Angelina Čanković Popović,  
 Novi Sad, Prometej, 2011, 322 p.**

These days Duško Radović’s aphorisms are circulating around as group emails. One of them can be a cue for the recently published book *Saglasje tradicije i kulture u tamburaškoj muzici Vojvodine* [original title: *The Mediation of ‘Tradition’ and ‘Culture’ in the Tamburitza Music of Vojvodina/Yugoslavia*] by Mark Forry, ethnomusicologist: ‘We have what others don’t, but what good is it when they love it more than we do.’ Mark Forry, American

researcher of musical folklore, chose the tamburitza music of Vojvodina as the focal point of his interest. This is undoubtedly the phenomenon known in the social sciences as emic/etic – the author from the position of an ‘outsider’ (i.e. a person not ‘from here’) considered the key issues of tamburitza music in our area maybe more responsibly and dedicatedly than many ‘insiders’. Something similar was previously done by Andrew Baruch Wachtel in an excellent study *Making a Nation – Breaking a Nation*, where he analyzed the history of the state of Yugoslavia better than most of our historians. Apparently, there is something about it that things can be perceived more clearly from a ‘distance’, as a Pointillist painting or a Cubist scene. Possibly the risk of being regarded as a ‘layman’, an ‘outsider’ (literally) is increased if one is a ‘born stranger’ in a certain field; hence the responsibility is all the more ‘sharpened’. Anyway, tamburitza music ‘enchanted’ the American Forry, who, in an exceptionally contemporary and professional way, yet nevertheless using a vocabulary which is more accessible to a wider readership, wrote a study on possibly the most popular folk instrument – besides the accordion – in our country. Its content, however, suggests research in strokes much ‘wider’ than the narrow profession of ethnomusicology. The subject is not only the history of one of the most easily recognizable cultural ‘brands’ of Vojvodina, namely the tamburitza and the music for it, but also the contexts of its existence: the social, the political and, in a way, economic context. Thus, the readers who decide to consume this content will get much more than what is generally regarded as tamburitza music, much more than information about ‘tavern

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music', the cheerful mood, the sharing of anecdotes, jokes, scandals, eccentric moments. Above all, they will get a serious insight into the interethnic relationships through a seemingly innocuous medium – tamburitza music. Then they will get the openly presented uncertainty of its future. Finally, they will get the practical interpretation of all the previous points, 'first-hand', with the Gadamerian 'being here is taking part', since the author experienced and perpetuated in words the present (those days!) of the famous ensemble *Srem* (which unfortunately is no longer active).

In his study, Forry follows the phenomenon of the tamburitza and tamburitza music through chapters structured from the general to the particular, admitting that this was the same way that he travelled from etic to emic, from a tamburitza-playing foreigner to an equal member of the *Srem* ensemble, where, in practice, the 'hard' way, he felt the mediation he writes about. The author offers to readers almost the same thing: firstly he presents the notion of tradition and its meaning in the area of Vojvodina, both from the scientific aspect and from the standpoint of the *Srem* members and himself personally, and then he discusses its opposite – that which is 'bourgeois', 'cultured', which these musicians perceive in a certain old-fashioned way as a 'Austro-Hungarian legacy', and the author perceives as an 'anathema'. In multiple chapters and subchapters dedicated to these primarily historical, sociological and cultural phenomena (Uvod – Medijacija, Shvatanje kulture, Shvatanje tradicije, Priroda standarda, Tradicija Vojvodine, Kultura Vojvodine [Introduction – Mediation, Conceptions of *Kulturnost*, Conceptions of *Tradicija*, Nature of Standards, The

'Tradition' of Vojvodina, The 'Culture' of Vojvodina]), Forry displays his great knowledge of political circumstances in the areas of ex-Yugoslavia and Vojvodina. The next broadly conceived chapter (The Tambura u Vojvodini [*Tamburitza* in Vojvodina]) deals with the 'life' of the tamburitza in Vojvodina from its origin, the way of playing it, the ensembles featuring it, to its makers and players. The next circle of issues (the *Srem* orchestra and its musical life) is connected directly to the practice of playing the tamburitza, and acquires concrete form in the 'biography' of the tamburitza ensemble *Srem*, where the reader becomes acquainted with the emergence, functioning and 'management' of such a musical group. However, commenting these particulars, the author never forgets the *context* of his writing; hence every contact of the ensemble with the environment is analyzed from the ethnological, and even socio-religious standpoint, as well. Forry's knowledge of theory and practice is shown in presenting the old and the contemporary repertoires of the *Srem* ensemble members, repertoires which exactly reflect the mediation of the aforementioned opposites between tradition and the cultural environment. The authenticity of the author's personal artistic engagement is proven through the description of various musical events which *Srem* took part in, especially wedding celebrations as the most important tamburitza 'performances'. The next section (Orkestar *Srem* i njegova muzika [Orkestar 'Srem' and Their Musical World]) is a certain view of the rehearsals and the significance of concert practice, as well as some aesthetic criteria which guided the ensemble members. The closing chapter of the study (Zaključak: idealne slike i savremena stvarnost [Con-

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clusion: Ideal Images and Contemporary Realities]) emphasizes the key positions of this ensemble in the context of the environment in which it worked, as well as the author's approval of such practice after this specific 'learning by doing' project.

Mark Forry approaches his unusually conceived, but extraordinarily imaginative study (which stems from his doctoral thesis!) as some 'sorcerer's apprentice', with the justified conviction that eventually he will also be 'enchanted' by the skill he is discovering. The poetry of the narration in the first person, as well as referring to the players only by their nicknames, however, does not diminish the scientific level of this text in the slightest, but actually refines it. The significance of such a project for the

culture of Vojvodina, and the commitment of all the people who contributed to creating its printed form (and there are certainly many of them, apart from the *Prometej* publishing house) is directly proportional to the result which definitely does not need to be subject to any kind of 'merciless' critical analysis. All the questions arising during the reading of the book, either musicological, ethnomusicological, sociological, anthropological or other, the author immediately answers in one of the possible ways (since definite answers, as we know, do not exist). It is a shame we have waited more than two decades for the publication of this book.

*Translated by Goran Kapetanović*