

Article received on October 18, 2005  
UDC 784.4(497.16)(086.76)(049.3)

Selena Rakočević

**MUSIC FROM MONTENEGRO**  
Concerts Sweden, Caprice Records  
& Swedish International Development Authority  
Stockholm, Sweden 2005

The Swedish record company Caprice Records recently released a compact disc entitled “Music from Montenegro”, recorded in June and July 2004 on several locations (Budva, Podgorica, Ulcinj and Belgrade). The sound treasure of Montenegro in all its diversity and abundance has been recorded in a total of 28 numbers in the duration of almost 80 minutes, which represents sizeable material compared to usual ethnomusicological releases.

This compact disc exudes both traditional and contemporary spirit: alongside the ever topical singing to the accompaniment of gusle, music-making of tambura players and café orchestras, there is also an abundance of archaic examples which are a real treat for the connoisseurs of traditional music. Male singing known as “directly from the throat” is recorded as wedding singing (the example from Grblje *Domaćine na tvoje poštenje /Host, Upon Your Honour/*) and singing during harvest (*Sjedela je fina Mare /Sweet Mare Was Sitting Down/, Mataguži*). The lament for a brother performed by Darinka Kaluđerović from Mataguži reveals an inspired textual and musical improvisation. Female wedding singing is represented by examples from the seaside (Boka Kotorska and Grbalj) and from the continental region of the country (Zeta), so that the subtle differences in music characteristics of different examples of this formerly ritual vocal genre can be observed in one place. Sounds of the past also include the extraordinary example of a “song in kolo” entitled *Primorkinja konja jaše /Seaside Woman is Riding a Horse/* (Paštirovići) and the humorous song *Što 'no sinoć večerasmo /What Did We Have for Dinner Last Night/* (Grbalj). Vocal group (*klapa*) singing is represented by several examples: in addition to the usual *a cappella* performances of vocal groups from Bjela and Kotor, the disc also features an example of the singing of an Albanian vocal group from Ulcinj accompanied by the mandolin and the guitar.

The former instrumental practice of Montenegro is sonically illustrated by examples of shepherds’ playing performed on pipes, kaval and double flute. In addition, there are three examples of the inevitable gusle playing performed by Vasko Doljanica from Grbalj, Dragan Malidžan from Šljivansko (Brdo) and Ljubo Majić from Mataguži. The selection of songs

performed to the accompaniment of gusle is such that it illustrates the diversity of the gusle players' repertoire. The classical epic poem *Od kada je Kotor nastanuo /Ever Since the Founding of Kotor/* (Doljanica) and Njegoš's verses *Bez muke se pjesma ne ispoja /Without Effort No Great Song Can Be Sung/* (Maliđan) are accompanied by a contemporary humorous text entitled *Sad poslušaj dobro, mladoženja /Now Listen to Me Carefully, Bridegroom/* (Majić), whose textual content directly points to the topicality of the gusle playing practice today.

Music-making in ensembles is equally represented on this compact disc. The playing of tambura players, which is once again very topical nowadays, is illustrated by the excellent performance of the song *Trkom trči Maliča (Maliča is Running Fast)* by the orchestra "Zvuci sa Ribnice" from Podgorica. There are also examples of mixed ensembles which illustrate the music practice of Albanian Christians (the village Zatrijebač on the very border with Albania), Muslims from Plav, as well as the town music of old Podgorica and bigger towns (performed by the excellent orchestra "Podgorica"). Rural music practice is complemented by selected examples of town music, and archaic song and playing – by contemporary repertoire, all of which ensures that the sound "image" of Montenegro is presented in full.

The order of examples on this compact disc strictly follows the logic of achieving a musical contrast and building a specific music dramaturgy of the whole. The Swedish producer Sten Sandahl was not interested in national, religious, or even geographical guidelines, strictly in musical ones. Thus the first example of gusle playing, which undoubtedly represents the most distinctive characteristic of the music practice of the Montenegrins, does not appear on this edition until after the male and female competing in singing in the song *Oj, đevojko, da sam te video (Oh, Girl, Had I Only Seen You)* and the singing of a vocal group from Kotor. It is obvious that this compact disc was arranged by an expert who does not belong directly to the Montenegrin environment, but rather by someone who treated the recorded material without taking into account any extra-musical features. Such an attitude resulted in a real, one might say "European" product of contemporary ethnomusicologically based *world music* production, which even the Montenegrins themselves can be very proud of. The multiculturalism and the sound, instrumental and genre richness and diversity of this specific musical postcard forever refute the somewhat ingrained stereotype that the highlanders from Montenegro are unmusical. All examples are of high quality in terms of production and recorded especially for this occasion. In addition to excellent photographs which were also taken and selected by a Swede instead of a Montenegrin (a Montenegrin's selection might have been different, especially when choosing the cover photograph, which by no means diminishes the quality of the booklet), the booklet also contains the usual informative introduction into the history of this region, as well as

accompanying texts explaining each number, which were created with the help of ethnomusicologists Professor Dimitrije Golemović, Ph.D., Zlata Marjanović, M.A., and Mrs. Dobrila Popović.

Translated by Jelena Nikezić