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**PAVLE STEFANOVIĆ: PUTEVIMA
SIMFONIJE [THE ROADS OF THE
SYMPHONY]**

**Belgrade, RTS, *Opredmećeni zvuk*
[*Reified Sound*] Series, 2009, 271**

Pavle Stefanović's (1901–1985) book *Putevima simfonije* [*The Roads of the Symphony*] includes twenty six essays broadcast twice, with musical examples, within the cycle of the same name on Radio Belgrade 1: first, in 1959–60 after 6 p.m. and then as a rerun in an expanded edition in 1964–65 at 9 p.m.¹

This “new and old” edition of *radio lectures*, as the book's euphemistic subtitle goes, in keeping with the lexical tradition of the time – that is, manuscripts intended for reading and edited for print 45 years after they were last broadcast – is important from many aspects and should be studied both in the context of the time in which it was created and from the viewpoint of the present-day treatment and share of cultural programmes in the media, primarily in audiovisual ones. Undeniably, the material is remarkably erudite, intellectually highly profiled and enlightened with emotional

intelligence, surpassing the didactic tone established for “cultural and educational needs” – the expression used toward the middle of the last century – of Radio Belgrade 1 of that time where Pavle Stefanović worked as a music commentator since 1948. It was a period of breakthrough resulting in a more flexible cultural policy in Belgrade, modernistic ideas and the opening of new media, and also a time when the aesthetician and music writer Pavle Stefanović was at the height of activity and recognition. Bearing in mind that several years earlier Stefanović published his book *Tragom tona* [*Following the Track of Tone*], a collection of post-war articles from magazines and daily periodicals (*Književnost*, *Mladost*, *Književne novine*), in which he advocated for the promotion of modern music and its protagonists within the territory of Yugoslavia,² it seems logical that, at the suggestion of the reputable author,³ the editorial board of Radio Belgrade accepted an ambitious cycle of broadcasts dedicated to the development of an emblematic musical genre and even reran it subsequently as a result of the audience's response. The original approach and passionate tone radiating from the written lines still today can be attributed to the very fact that the cycle as a whole was not the outcome of a given task, but an autonomous creative act resulting from a personal conviction and need.

Despite the multitude of public and private radio and television channels, it is hard to imagine that the present cultural policy prevailing in the Serbian electronic media would make it possible to produce such a great theme in the realm of artistic

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1 Editor's notes in Stefanović, Pavle, *Putevima simfonije*, RTS, 2009, p. 5

2 Stefanović, Pavle, *Tragom tona*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1956.

3 Information provided by Vera Bogdanović, author's wife

music and broadcast it for six months at prime time. "First of all, it bears testimony to the character and seriousness of the Radio music programme of that time",⁴ as emphasized by Sonja Marinković, the consulting editor and author of the afterword for this book; her statement could also include the greatly diminished overall importance that the radiophonic medium has globally in promoting and supporting cultural programmes and innovations, particularly in the musical sphere, in which Radio Belgrade participated equally as a part of the European network.

Of all choices, why the symphony?

Although we shall probably never know the correct answer to this question, based on the texts written by Pavle Stefanović and an insight into his written and spoken word, we can assume that "encouragement outside music" should be sought in the author's efforts to promote the autonomy and language of music on the radio waves using examples of genre without specific programmes specially "recommended" for broadcasting at that time. In any event, Stefanović clearly regarded the symphony as an exceptional, monumental musical genre reflecting humanistic principles *par excellence*, having the potential of the audio counterpart of ancient tragedies, of authors in the line of Sophocles - Dante - Goethe - Dostoevsky - Sartre, and the greatest periods in the visual arts, such as the renaissance or abstract art, and their representatives, who the author often refers to throughout the cycle.

Even though the author does not essentially move far away from the established academic, chronological, three hundred-years long continued development of symphonic

music, rarely referring to several Russian musicologists (Sposobin) and the French music writer Antoine Golé, he enlivens his monumental project with vivid and brilliant "genre scenes" and remarks that are original even today, which surely left a powerful impression on the listeners of that time, combined with the inserted musical examples. To this "heavy, complicated, massive, profound, thoughtful, or whatever they call it, symphonic music,"⁵ as the author describes it, he counterpoises his fascinated viewpoint and enticing discourse in which, soon enough, we too become adepts. Although he is not averse to using philosophical and aesthetic terminology, meandering and using waves of long sentences, without any fear of "hermetism", like an authentic radiophonic creator, Pavle Stefanović is in constant latent contact with his invisible audience, never failing to observe its reception. While complying with the practices of the time in excluding the first person from his *lectures*, the author always speaks for himself, carefully avoiding a didactic tone, general points, and clichés. Taking one of his variations on the subject of the symphony, his account is "a subjective, personal story, the psychological disclosure of a man with all his troubles and joys, doubts and hopes, aspirations and speculation".⁶

Having passed through all the twenty six gates of the symphonic style, one has the impression of the integrality of the Eurocentric world, its authentic representative being the symphony with its best examples, a world whose monolithism starts to fragmentize towards the final broadcasts.

In his developmental crescendo, leaving aside the origin of terminology, the au-

4 Ibid, *Putevima simfonije*, op. cit., 253

5 Idem, p. 9

6 p. 179

thor commences from the 16th century and Gabrielli's *simfoniae sacrae*, pausing at different stages of the evolution of the sonata form and symphonic music, and its gradual emancipation from vocal genres (a particularly interesting chapter is dedicated to the "composers of transition" – C. P. E. Bach and Stamitz),⁷ with lengthy elaborations on the standards of the macro-symphonic form and the conquests of spiritual and civil freedom of Haydn. "The circle of Haydn's moods expressed through symphony, always with a clear and bright existential and philosophical atmosphere of spirit in their background, is very large and free",⁸ Mozart ("a signpost to a poetically radiant personal metaphysics... the high-altitude journey of an Apollonian, Hellenic personality")⁹ and Beethoven ("this citizen-idealist, and, as such and as a metaphysician close to a Jean-Jacques Rousseau-esque deism of Europe's recent revolutionary past").¹⁰ All the changes in genre development, including "the transformation of the classicist symphony into the romanticist one", are documented "on the symphonic matter itself... and the armour of the sonata form,"¹¹ since "this internal liberation, this growth of the individual's inner world could never be achieved without the profound effects and influence of original and innovatively fresh expressive forms".¹² One cannot help noticing that, on reaching the symphonies of his contemporaries, including those from Yugoslav territory which have never been set apart in "reser-

vations" but placed in the context of their time, Pavle Stefanović's narrative tone and rich vocabulary occasionally show signs of fatigue, probably due to the continuous, six-month process of writing. However, he compensates for those setbacks by opening new cognitive dimensions, penetrating some less known works of the 20th century and the works of his contemporaries.

While insisting in almost each text/broadcast on the autonomy of musical language, "the inner principles of form", and "logical development and continuity", the shadows of wars, revolutions, ideologies – sometimes disastrous – often loom up in the course of this tumultuous reading, as in his dedications to Bartók, Hindemith and Predrag Milošević,¹³ or to Prokofiev and Shostakovich.¹⁴ In the latter text portraying to a certain degree the two Soviet composers as antipodes and while not explicitly stating the terms communism or socialist realism, Stefanović ventured into what is now considered a cautious, and, at the time in which he was writing, surely bold criticism of the ideology which "denied the right to all experimental searching and wandering" so modernism penetrated with difficulty "through the bottleneck of prevailing musical aesthetics and sociology".¹⁵ Still, similar remarks and certain inserted interventions from the ideological materialist and dialectic vocabulary of that time most often remain in parentheses or between commas, acquiring their "antithesis" further on in the sentence. ("Scriabin's deep conviction about music's prophetic and missionary role in the world, although a misconception resulting from his philosophic idealism, in-

7 Idem, p. 29-35

8 p. 44-45

9 p. 55

10 p. 79

11 p. 81

12 p. 129

13 p. 195-202

14 p. 203-209

15 p. 205

spired his creative imagination to a level of exaltation at which all the expressive means of symphonic style up to then seemed insufficient and incomplete").¹⁶

The music and speech parts in these authorial, but accurately planned fifty-minute broadcasts in view of dramaturgy and "radio" concepts, were always balanced in favour of music (one third of speech and two thirds of music), according to the usual, long-term practice in Radio Belgrade. Thus, the 26-week cycle featured an impressive anthology of symphonic sound which, in addition to the familiar classicistic and romanticist repertoire, included a selection of music pieces that were considered a rarity for that period, indicating Pavle Stefanović's preferences, designed to widen the sound horizons of the radio audience and the wealth of Radio Belgrade's record and tape library toward the middle of the last century. For example, we can mention movements from the First and Second symphonies of Gustav Mahler, still a rarely performed author in Europe at that time,¹⁷ one of the last broadcasts featuring certain movements from Malipiero's Sixth Symphony, Wolfgang Fortner's First, Karl Amadeus Hartmann's Sixth and Stjepan Šulek's First and Fourth symphonies,¹⁸ or Messiaen's symphony *Turangalila*, finished in 1949,¹⁹ the broadcasting of which would be front-page news today, except on Radio Belgrade 3. Although the author does not tackle the interpretation of the symphonies in question, it would be interesting to make a virtual list of the performers taking part in this *anthology* based on the Radio Belgrade archives. Unfortunately, the efforts to present the im-

portance of this authorial radio project from various angles lack the polyphony and simultaneity which can be achieved only with the instruments of radiophony. If we could imprint the unique voice, diction and alluring interpretation of the author who entrusted his articles to broadcasters only towards the end of his life, and introduce musical examples into the text, thus making them inseparable dimensions of it, only then would we restore to life Pavle Stefanović's authentic radiophonic workshop. Since, according to the available information, not even a single tape has been preserved in the Radio Belgrade record and tape library, these printed *lectures* should be experienced as an intricately notated score, both performances of which have been lost.

Introduced by Vojislav Vučković in the years preceding the Second World War, the open-minded modernist reflection on music was resumed on the waves of Radio Belgrade right after 1948, primarily owing to authors like Pavle Stefanović and the editorial policy of that time. The generation of musicologists and music writers the doors were open to for cooperation since 1970, the undersigned author of this review being among them as well, had the good fortune to inherit the gold radiophonic wire, brutally cut in the nineties. Further research into the influence that Pavle Stefanović's articles and interpretation exerted on the sound image of Belgrade Radio and Television, later to become RTS, would certainly bring new knowledge and perhaps reopen spaces for reflections on music, almost completely eliminated from the audiovisual media. *The Roads of the Symphony* is a starting point on the road of *reifying* a former music space that has descendants of its own.

16 p. 166

17 Broadcast on 13 January 1965

18 10 March 1965

19 17 March 1965

Translated by Goran Kapetanović