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**Трагом античких метричких
стопа – компаративна
етномузиколошка проучавања**
[Nice Fracile, *In the Footsteps of
Ancient Metrical Feet – Studies in
Comparative Ethnomusicology*]

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Although the interest in Serbian musical folklore and its recording began already during the latter half of the 19th century, the beginnings of the scholarly study of traditional music, that is, of ethnomusicology in Serbia, are linked with later periods. Thanks to the hard work of numerous figures, such as Stevan Mokranjac, Vladimir Đorđević, Miloje Milojević, Kosta Manojlović, Miodrag Vasiljević, as well as younger generations of ethnomusicologists, diverse and today extremely valuable examples of Serbia’s traditional music, especially its vocal heritage, were written down. Depending on the geographical area, this valuable material is extremely heterogeneous, especially in terms of its rhythmic

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and metric organization. Though having faced numerous challenges in deciphering it, thus far, not only in Serbia, but also in the region, ethnomusicologists have not thoroughly addressed this set of problems in traditional music. This book, however, Dr Nice Fracile’s *Трагом античких метричких стопа – компаративна етномузиколошка проучавања* (In the Footsteps of Ancient Metrical Feet – Comparative Studies in Ethnomusicology) constitutes an important step in studying rhythm and metre not only in traditional, but also in music in general. This comprehensive scholarly study is based on the analytical considerations, systematization, and interpretation of extremely diverse rhythmic and metric forms in numerous examples from traditional music practice, recorded in Serbia and other countries of the region (Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, Albania, etc.) and their comparative presentations with certain examples from the classical repertory of artistic, that is, serious music. As the book’s title itself directly indicates, these forms are precisely and justifiably systematized by metrical feet that were already already in ancient poetry. And so, this book exceeds the characteristics of a regular ethnomusicological study in the direction of a comprehensive theoretical text in the field of general music theory and simultaneously constitutes a valuable contribution to ethnomusicology’s understanding of the regularity of the metric-rhythmic shaping of ethnically diverse musical styles of South-east Europe.

By means of a pithy and straightforward scholarly narrative based on a critical evaluation of existing writings that deal with these problems, followed by a clear

and consistent summary of the methodology of presentation, Nice Fracile begins by defining the concept of rhythm from the perspective of philosophy and literary theory (Chapter 1, “Introduction to the Theory of Rhythm”) and then discusses the concepts of rhythm and metre from the perspective of music theory and ethnomusicology (Chapter 2, “The Roots of Musical Rhythm”). A special contribution of this part of the book is its consistent conceptual and terminological separation of the concepts of rhythm and metre as different though mutually complementary, which are often carelessly conflated even in scholarly practice.

In earlier interpretations, music theorists for the most part discussed double and triple metrical feet in music, for example, the Romanian music pedagogue and teacher Victor Giuleanu in his research published during the 1960s, as well as the lesser known book-length study *Метроритмичка основа мелодије и мелодијских токова* (The Metro-rhythmic Grounding of Melody and Melodic Flows) by Belgrade-based theorist Milutin Radenković. Developing these concepts in his central chapter titled “A Comparative Analysis of Metrical Feet”, Nice Fracile identifies and methodically explains even the most complex forms of four-part (complex) metrical feet, which number as many as 16 different patterns. Wherever that was possible, Fracile discussed not only the basic, but also modified forms or, as he put it, evolved forms of metrical feet, and all of them are transparently presented from simpler to more complex. According to Fracile’s research, the discussed metrical feet appear in various genres of traditional music, which, from an ethnomusicological perspective, shows the

richness, complexity and heterogeneity of traditional music expression in Southeast Europe. This finding is supported by a comparative analysis of metro-rhythmic patterns in numerous music examples. The author also offers a series of significant particular conclusions about the spread of certain metrical feet. On this occasion, let us mention only the most general ones: the most common metrical feet in the traditional music of Southeast Europe are iamb (in its basic, augmented, and dotted forms), paeon IV, paeon I, minor ionic, epitritus II, and epitritus IV (in their basic forms). The most important among them is iamb, because it is “the most common and characteristic metrical foot underlying many melodies and ideally represented in a large number of melodies (with and without refrain) in Serbia, Romania, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria” (p. 185).

As already suggested above, Nice Fracile’s book *In the Footsteps of Ancient Metrical Feet – Comparative Studies in Ethnomusicology* offers a scholarly-theoretical survey of the regularities in the metro-rhythmic shaping of traditional music in Southeast Europe, systematized according to the metrical feet of ancient versification and compared to examples from the classical repertory of art music. This initially ethnomusicological analytical discourse thus offers an interdisciplinary and multicultural contribution to understanding the laws of music, that is, rhythm and metre in music theory in general. Finally, I should mention that this important book was published as part of a Tempus project, *In-MusWB*, whereby a significant contribution was made in the development of master and doctoral study programmes in Serbian ethnomusicology and musicology.