

REVISITING MACEDONIAN MUSICAL CULTURE DURING WORLD WAR TWO

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Abstract. *Existing musicological papers concerned with Macedonian musical culture during World War Two usually skip the period between 1941 and 1943, a period marked by the German/Bulgarian occupation. This pilot research project aims at revisiting the articles published in Macedonia during World War Two, and at checking missing or contradictory data.*

Key words: *Macedonian Music Institutions, Choirs, Education, World War Two*

Distance in time opens opportunities for undertaking a relatively unbiased analysis, and aims at eliminating the influence of political and social attitudes. Having in mind that Macedonia used to be an administrative unit (“Vardarska Banovina”) in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (until 1941), later on divided, i.e. annexed to Bulgaria and Albania (1941–1944), and in the end proclaimed an independent republic in the new Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (ASNOM 1944), we assumed that these political changes have always influenced the coordinates of Macedonian music culture.

We would like to point out that this period finalized the process of ‘westernization’ of Macedonian music culture, a process that started at the end of the nineteenth century and was particularly intensified during and after the Balkan Wars (1911). The oriental features of the Ottoman music culture were gradually replaced by western genres, tunes, harmony, instruments and particularly musical education. The first traces can be found at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, with the joining in of instruments of Western origin, as well as the first brass bands, the guitar, the mandolin, and the piano. Unfortunately, there is no evidence about when the first piano, or pianos, arrived in Macedonia (Islam 2011, 3). The piano symbolizes the shift towards the Western tradition, and up to that point it was never part of the ensembles playing folk or traditional music in Macedonia. The German and Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia during World War One,

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when the new western education was introduced, intensified the acculturation processes, which continued in the following “Yugoslavian” period in between the wars. Once again, music education was among the main windows for the replacement of the monadic makams and usuls with the western tonal and homophonic/harmonic music systems. Macedonian musical culture received its final western shape right at the end of World War Two and over the subsequent years. It was paralleled by the formation of the Macedonian Republic, as part of the Yugoslav Federation, and the appearance of the typical representatives of the western music culture: the opera and the ballet, as well as the philharmonic orchestra.

Consequently, Macedonian musicology took its first modest steps during the late 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, beginning with the first western educated musicologists Dragoslav Ortakov (a graduate of the Belgrade Faculty of Music), and the three Ljubljana-educated musicologists: Branko Gligorov, Vlado Chuckov and Dragan Bojadziev. The first official history of Macedonian music appeared in 1982 by Dragoslav Ortakov (*Music Art in Macedonia – Muzichkata umetnost vo Makedonija*), followed by the instruction book by Sotir Golabovski, *History of Macedonian Music (Istorija na makedonskata muzika)* from 1999. The next important step was the large project of the Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts, *The Music on the Macedonian Soil (Muzikata na pochvata na Makedonija)*, which addressed the history of Macedonian music through a collection of articles (Stardelov, Ortakov & Buzarovski, eds. 1999; 2004).

Nevertheless, in all existing musicological reviews related to the period of World War Two, we can notice a bypass from the end of the 1930s through to the revolutionary struggle and partisan songs (Karakash 1970; Ortakov 1974, 516; 1982; 2004; Proshev 1986; Golabovski 1999). One can get the impression that music culture and music life were eliminated from the start of World War Two through to the music events related to the activities of partisans in the liberated territories.

This is obvious in the biographies of the Macedonian composers of the period, and particularly in the biographies of the so-called composer’s “petorka”, which is considered a founder of modern Macedonian music culture (Jordanoska & Buzarovski this edition). Keeping in mind that until recently Macedonian music culture was predominantly analyzed through the activities of the composers of the “artistic” music, the fact that there are missing or contradictory data about their activities during World War Two provided a sufficient reason for launching this project. This was particularly important when we have in mind that there is very little research devoted to the performers, and the only other data are the monographs published during the celebration of the anniversaries of the major music institutions in Macedonia.

This was provocative enough to design a pilot research regarding the musical culture during World War Two. In our research hypothesis, we assumed that there are missing and contradictory data for two major reasons:

- political (ideological)
- ethnic (the Bulgarian attempts to assimilate Macedonia ethnically, territorially, culturally and linguistically)

Our decision to undertake a pilot project was the result of the complexity of the subject we aim at researching. From a methodological point of view, we have obviously approached the problem very carefully, trying to avoid some of the mistakes of the past. Once we have enough proof for our assumptions, there is more profound and complex research to be accomplished. Also having in mind the complexity of the subject, we decided

that Trena Jordanoska will do a pilot survey regarding the activities of the Macedonian composers during the observed period, and the paper as such will be dealing with the culture in its integrity.

Of particular importance, the democratization processes which followed the fall of communism, and the formation of the independent Republic of Macedonia (1991) enabled a stripped off ideology approach to the observed events.

We assumed that it would be very difficult to collect material artifacts such as scores, programs, posters etc., as probably they were hidden or destroyed in the post war years. That is why we decided that as a starting point we could only use the newspapers published in Macedonia during the World War Two. Thus we could compare the results from our research with the published papers in the Macedonian musicology. For this purpose, and having in mind that this is only a pilot research, we decided to select information only from one newspaper i.e. the newspaper *Celokupna B'lgarija (The Whole Bulgaria* – the title clearly points out to the goal of annexation of Macedonian territory) which was the leading printed media in Skopje from 1941–1944. We checked the articles related to music in the months July, August and September 1942, assuming that during this period there were no larger military activities, which could have influenced the events and the structure of music life. We did a rough search through the other issues of 1941/1942, too.

During the formulation of our research hypothesis we recalled a private conversation with the founder of the Macedonian ethnomusicology Zhivko Firfov (1906–1984) in the late 1970s, where he referred to the influences of the German and Bulgarian music education in the Macedonian music folklore. He mentioned that he was an elementary school student during World War One. The education in the schools was organized by the Bulgarians, as he stated, and it had a lot of music. In fact, he said that majority of the classes were devoted to learning Bulgarian and German songs. In the 1970s he found these songs in the repertoire of the traditional music amateur societies in smaller Macedonian towns as a part of the urban folklore, with tunes adjusted to the newly added Macedonian lyrics. Unfortunately, he did not point out a particular song, only that one of the groups was from the city of Resen.

We expected that similarly, education and particularly musical education will be the focal points of the assimilation activities carried out by the Bulgarian government. The main subject of the instructions in the schools was *B'lgaroznanie (knowing Bulgaria)* which comprised a large portion of music (Terzioski 1974, 81–89, 106–107). In accordance with the instructions from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education “every day at least half an hour should be devoted to singing, with a special accent the Bulgarian national songs” (ibid, 81). Macedonian songs were also included but there was a recommendation that they should be adjusted to Bulgarian rhythms (ibid, 89). The repertoire included the Bulgarian anthem *Shumi Marica* and the *Anthem of the Tsar*, the songs about Cyrilus and Methodius, the Bulgarian national songs *Gordej se, majko Bugarijo* and *Zhiv e toj, zhiv e*, and the marches *Velik e nashiot vojniki*, *Titane Kalemanski* and *Velik zavet*, all with the same purpose to induce Bulgarian ethnic feelings (ibid). Moreover, the teachers were obliged to “allocate time to the religious songs, in order to reinforce the religious feelings of the students” (ibid). The most effective way for using the songs as a didactic means was the student choirs:

There was a recommendation that every school should have a choir which should be used for educational purposes, and this was particularly important for the schools in the villages, having in mind that the other forms can not access the peasants due to their low cultural level (ibid, 107).

One can also expect that more serious music activities would have been performed in the higher classes of the high schools. This was confirmed by the article related to the choral concert marking the annual anniversary of the Skopje High Schools:

The celebration started with the performance of the national anthem and the Anthem of the Tsar, performed by the All-Girls High School choir conducted by Mr. Stefan Gajdov, followed by the selected poetry and music evening. The First All-Boys High School choir conducted by Mr. Aleksandr Motzev performed the choral songs "Trakija", "Do moeto prvo libe", "Moreto sni" and the popular song for Mile pop Jordanov. As soloists were senior classes students Dimitar Krangov, Vladimir Atanasov and Roman Lechev... After that we listen to the performance of the Second All-Boys High School choir and the conductor Mr. Trajko Prokopiev, who also performed several beautiful songs (*Celokupna B'lgarija* 1942, no. 332, 3)

When reviewing the articles it occurred to us that the newspaper we used was a central propaganda tool both in a political and ethnic sense. This was obvious from the first glance at the title page which was always filled with articles about the "successes of the German army on different battle fronts". In our case, we expected that in addition to the propaganda, the newspaper would be used to promote the assimilation policy of the Bulgarian government, particularly against the Serbian influence. This was obvious in the article about the concert of the choirs of the All-Girls and All-Boys High Schools, conducted by Stefan Gajdov and Aleksandr Motzev in Sofia, where the author concluded that "thanks to the songs of the Macedonian Bulgarians, we are witnessing the fast return of the young generation to the pristine and correct native language" (ibid. no. 355, 4). This article with the title "Makedonskata pesen" ("The Macedonian song") clearly states the intent of the author to launch the thesis that the songs, particularly the folk songs were the area which helped "the Macedonian Bulgarians" survive the extremely hard and difficult life during the previous regimes (ibid).

We can conclude that choral practice was preferred to instrumental practice from several reasons. First, choral singing did not require any additional investments for buying and maintaining instruments (in comparison to orchestral, or chamber music practice); then, it enabled mass participation; last but not least, it was consistent with the spiritual choral practice, a forerunner of the secular choirs. In the absence of wide use of mass media (the radio was a luxury product), singing was a very popular form of music practice. In the interview with Leta Bardzieva, the famous folk singer from the group Bapchorki, (recorded in the BuzAr documentary movie *Bapchorki*), she states that young girls were singing almost every day, as they were going into the fields to work or in their houses – during work and entertainment (Buzarovski 2002). Consequently, choral practice was very adequate for the masses in both, cultural and musical sense. With the introduction of the new repertoire, and homophonic as well as polyphonic structures, choral practice played a major role in the westernization of the Macedonian musical culture.

Together with the cultural aspect, equally important was the social aspect of mass gatherings. Before, during and after World War Two, all social players considered mass gatherings of the choral practice as an important opportunity not only for disseminating ideas, but also for recruiting human resources. Therefore, even before World War Two it is possible to observe the setting up of the so-called "workers' choirs" formed around the workers' union, bigger factories or enterprises (such as tobacco), as well as the citizens' choirs. There are a lot of statements that between World War One and World War Two, as well as during the war, these choirs were very active in support of the socialist illegal

activities and recruitment of resistance fighters (Kostadinovski 1983, 40–41; Burnazovski & Trajkovski 1984, 59–62; Shuplevski 1999, 51–52; Kitan Ivanovska 2003, 39).

Thorough research is required in order to determine the objectivity and the reality regarding the political activities of the choirs existing in Macedonia before and during World War Two, the repertoire and the changes of names during World War Two period. In our pilot research of *Celokupna B'lgarija* we found two articles about the concert of the “Georgi Sugarev” citizens’ mixed choir from Bitola, consisting of 90 members and conducted by Todor Skalov(ski) in Sofia in July, 1942 (no. 325, 4; no. 339, 2). There was also an article about the “Boris Drangov” choir (ibid. no. 355, 4), which in some of the resources is related to the “Vardar” and “Mokranjac” choirs from the previous period (Kostadinovski 1983, 40). We have good reasons to believe that one of these choirs was used in the special events, as we could see a choir singing during the visit of Tsar Boris in Skopje in 1942 (Skopje. April... 2012). We found other controversial data about the activities of the “Boris Drangov” choir related to setting up the Music School in Skopje (for example, see Ortakov 1974, 516) which adds arguments to the main hypothesis of this paper.

Coming back to the question of the music education and politics, we expected that the Bulgarian regime would devote special attention to the training of the teachers. In fact, a combined strategy was applied: sending Bulgarian teachers to Macedonia (Terzioski 1974, 89), and sending Macedonian teachers to Bulgaria for additional training. For example, in the book about the Macedonian folk violinist Nikola Galevski, the author Mihail Beldedovski (2007, 30) mentions Bulgarian music teacher Dimitra Lilova, sent for this purpose in Berovo during World War Two Danka Firfova. The latter was one of the leading Macedonian opera singers, attending these courses in 1941/1942 (Pavlovska-Shulajkovska 2006, 99, 123; 2009, 95). After a period of teaching in Sofia, in 1942, she was appointed a teacher at the Veles High School and later at the All-Girls High School in Skopje (ibid. 2006, 99; 2009, 15, 95). We can assume that the other Macedonian music teachers also attended some training courses in Bulgaria.

As a rule, the training of the teachers was an obvious attempt of the Bulgarian regime to suppress the dominant Serbian influence from the pre World War Two period, particularly as all of the Macedonian musicians, had completed their musical education in the Belgrade Music School (Jordanoska & Buzarovski this edition).

At the same time, music education and the training of musicians played an extremely important role in the gradual oriental towards occidental transition of the Macedonian music culture. The existing data points out that the Ottoman music education practiced in the *islahane* and the *idadia*, was substituted by private music schools, until the official opening of the Music school in Skopje in 1934, which was named “Mokranjac”. Yet, even this segment needs further clarifications as data regarding the beginning of the instructions is currently contradictory (for example, compare Karakash 1970, 10; Kostadinovski 1983, 26, 40; Ortakov 1982, 69; Proshev 1986, 51; MBUC 1995, 5; Golabovski 1999, 106; Dzimrevski 2005, 315–317).

The same school continued to work during the Bulgarian occupation, with the intention to be transformed into a Music High School with 5 years of instructions, but due to the military activities in the late 1943, and 1944, it is unclear if there were any classes until the liberation of Skopje and Macedonia (Terzioski 1974, 31; Kostadinovski 1983, 40; MBUC 1995, 5). By December 1944, the newly formed Macedonian government issued the decree for the establishment of the Music High School. This school was the major center for

designating musicians and specialized music teachers during the following decade, particularly before the establishment of the higher music education system.

In addition to the obligatory choir activities, the educational policy of the Bulgarian government used different forms of music evenings, matinee – also organized by the schools. These types of events:

should have been effective means for national education of the students and the citizens. The programs were determined by the teachers' councils and they were always subordinated to the national goals... often presented outside the schools, or transmitted through the radio programs (Terzioski 1974, 107).

We could not find enough data regarding the instrumental, i.e. orchestral forms of the music culture during the World War Two period. More of the data points out that before World War Two almost all major cities in Macedonia had brass or wind instruments bands, mainly gathered around the “Sokol” societies (Dzimrevski 2005). The “Sokolanas” which were primarily designed for sports activities, were covering also the cultural, i.e. the musical activities, as in the absence of concert and other public halls, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia they were used for larger public events. We can only assume that occupation cut the connection between the “Sokolana” and the music bands, and the musicians probably went playing in the military or other smaller bands (for entertainment, at wedding ceremonies etc.). Consequently, additional research is needed to determine what happened with musicians such as Metodi Dokuzov (Mitevaska 2004, 235), Ilija Todorovski (Karakash 1970, 43; Buzarovski 2011), Ilija Nikolovski-Luj (Karakash 1970, 49) and Gligor Smokvarski (who, for example, was trained at the Military Music School in Vrhshac, before World War Two, *ibid.*, 52).

Almost all the issues of *Celokupna B'lgarija* which we surveyed had numerous photographs of Macedonians in national costumes. In addition, we found several articles related to the music folklore, such as the one about the wedding custom from Galichnik (*Celokupna B'lgarija* 1942, no. 331, 4). As we have already mentioned the music folklore was considered a very important means for the ideological, political and ethnic influence. Still, the division between folklore and artistic music (reflected in the division between ethnomusicology and musicology), was – and in most of the educational systems of the Balkan still is – the major prism for observation of music culture, neglecting particularly the popular music genres.

Among the other articles of the surveyed period we found several about the concert tour of the Tsar's philharmonic orchestra, in Kumanovo, Shtip, Veles, Ohrid and Skopje, in August and September 1942 (*ibid.* no. 373, 3; 376, 3; 377, 1; 384, 3). The articles inform the readers about the conductor Sasha Popov pointing out – in the same propaganda manner – that the audience was thrilled by the performances of the anthems at the beginning of the program. However, there are no indications about the repertoire performed at these concerts (*ibid.* no. 384, 3). In the article about the concert in Kumanovo, it is mentioned that the citizens will have an opportunity to listen and enjoy a philharmonic orchestra after 25 years, which indicates that there could have been similar performances during World War One (*ibid.* no. 373, 3). Some of the concerts were organized in the central squares (for example, Ohrid), while the two concerts in Skopje were hosted by the National Theater (*ibid.* no. 376, 3).

Among the other events which randomly appeared in our pilot research, it is worth mentioning the performance of the operetta *S'n't na Violeta* by the “Princess Maria

Luisa” Women’s Charity Association from Skopje in the National Theatre in Skopje (ibid. no. 239, 4), and the tour of the German military band (ibid. no. 396, 4).

Particularly interesting additional information was broadcast by the Radio Skopje program with music playing a major role. As the technology of the period allowed only use of records, we expected that there might have been live music performances included in the program. The regular announcements pointed out to two ensembles: the Chamber radio orchestra (ibid. no. 370, 2) and Entertainment orchestra (Salonski orkestar) (ibid. no. 384, 2). Unfortunately, there is no information about the repertoire, musicians, and the conductors, i.e. the leaders of the orchestra. We cannot be sure if these orchestras existed in Skopje at all, or if in fact, they were live performances from Sofia. Assuming that it was the same building where, after World War Two, Radio Skopje continued to broadcast the program, we can recall that there was a small hall that could have been used for such purposes.

These announcements are the only references to popular music during the World War Two period. The program of Radio Skopje had a very strict schedule, divided in blocks for:

- folk music: songs and dances, and programs devoted to the different Macedonian regions (we could find again the wedding customs from Galichnik, ibid. no. 331, 2);
- popular music: music for entertainment, concert of the Entertainment orchestra, light and dance music, Bulgarian and foreign music;
- classical music: mostly in the evening hours with opera, recitals, orchestral works, transmission of concert (for example, electrophonosynchronized concert, ibid. no. 352, 2) etc.

Having in mind that the information we collected from the newspaper *Celokupna B’lgarija* was censored and biased, i.e. instrumental in propaganda sense, we expect that other important segments of the music culture are missing, such as the tradition of the Jewish community in Macedonia (see *Spanish romances from Bitola*, Romano [1985] 2012). Another very poorly presented area is the spiritual music with occasional articles such as the formation of a “Brakja Miladinovi” church choir (*Celokupna B’lgarija* 1942, no. 352, 2) and the information about the liturgies in the morning Radio program (ibid. no. 325, 2).

To conclude, we might say that our pilot research entirely demonstrated the need for an extensive project to revisit and re-evaluate the entire musical culture during World War Two, addressing the question of music genres, music institutions and music education. We have also confirmed that the democratization processes which followed the period after the fall of communism, enabled more opened, unbiased and realistic approach to the historical events and the sensitive social, political and ethnic issues.

We only hope that the enthusiastic musicologists in the future will have better access to all Balkan archives. This could contribute to an improved understanding and respect of the complex and inter-related Balkan history of cultures.

SUMMARY

The democratization processes that followed the fall of communism, and the establishment of the independent Republic of Macedonia (1991) have assisted the creation of a methodological approach that enables a de-ideologized observation of events from the past. Having in mind that existing musicological papers concerned with the Macedonian music culture during World War Two usually skip the period between 1941

and 1943, marked by the German/Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia, we undertook a pilot research project with the aim of reviewing articles in the newspapers published during World War Two in Macedonia and checking if political issues influenced the musicological surveys.

The pilot research reviewed the articles in the newspaper *Celokupna B'lgarija* during three months in 1942. Despite the obviously censored and biased approach of the newspaper – particularly instrumental in the Bulgarian policy of the assimilation of the Macedonian territory in a political and ethnic sense – the data about the numerous music events entirely demonstrated the need for an extensive project to revisit and re-evaluate the music culture during World War Two in its integral form, addressing the question of music genres, music institutions and music education. The methodological frames should be based on a meticulous scrutiny of all data, avoiding the misinterpretations generated by biased political, ideological, cultural or ethnic perspectives.

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PONOVNO RAZMATRANJE MAKEDONSKE MUZIČKE KULTURE TOKOM DRUGOG SVETSKOG RATA

U dosadašnjoj muzikološkoj literaturi koja se bavi makedonskom muzičkom kulturom tokom Drugog svestkog rata uglavnom je izostavljen period nemačke/bugarske okupacije od 1941. do 1943. godine. Ovaj rad je deo pilot istraživačkog projekta koji je nastao sa ciljem da se analiziraju članci objavljeni u novinama tokom Drugog svetskog rata u Makedoniji i da se proveru da li postoje nepoznate ili protivrečne činjenice.

Ključne reči: *muzičke institucije u Makedoniji, horovi, obrazovanje, Drugi svetski rat*

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