

Sofia Neglobinska's Influence on the Development of Music Life in Struga between World War I and World War II

During the October Revolution (1917) one part of the Russian people colonized in different parts of the world. There were a few organized boarding reception-houses in the Kingdom of SHS (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia), where from the settlers were reassessed in different cities. They were most concentrated in Belgrad. We can find these settlers also in Macedonia. They were concentrated in Skopje and Bitola, but also in Veles, Stip, and the other cities. In this new fatherland, they were united only by the global vision for the collectively country, most of all, the language, the Russian language used between themselves, but also in the other type of communication.

Their living is recognizable by the "Russian communities". Of course, these communities aren't extremely Russian, in fact, they aren't colonies. They membered educated persons from different parts of the Kingdom-Russia, from the North-Sea to Kavkaz, from Poland till the Quiet-Ocean; so, there were Russians, but also Ukrainians, Belorussians, Ermenians, Cerkezians, but also people from the East.

The Russian community of Bitola started in year 1916, when Thessaloniki front is occupied; some of the Russian war-units's soldiers decided to colonise into the city. Some of them, particularly military people came with their wives, or also girls. The second Russian settlers-wave came starting with the October revolution. But the difference is that except military-people, also civils, entire families had come. In Bitola, the coming of the Russians went into waves. By time, there are five of these waves we know. The Russian colony of Bitola was most-memberabled between 1920 and 1930. A time in which they were most active. In that period in Bitola lived hundreds of Russians. Every large community had its committee with a president. In this committee membered active, smart and honest persons. In cities where they were mainly settled they had their personal church-their largest gathering place. For example, in Bitola, that was the Church of the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit ("Sv. Trojca") 1926. That was an occasion of meeting, gathering, informing about the fatherland and the common friends. Before and after the divine liturgy, it was spoken on Russian. Very often the Russians had their clubs, where they had appointments and made decisions of public community interests. Cultural groups which performed in front of the all populace were organized here.

These persons, individuals, mostly educated, by time have addicted to the life in towns where they lived. With their education and culture contributed to the city culture into different spheres.

There were Russian monks; in Bitola in the period between 1928 and 1934 as a friar, but also professor at the Bitola's seminary there was one of the future Christian saints St. Jovan Sangajski.

Between the numeral Russians, most of them came from aristocratic society. Some of them had family-trees that lasted with centuries ago. These aristocrats had a very good education, the generals and the high officers had high military or special

schools . In the new surrounding, leaving the military , they worked as profesors, ingeneers who contributed into cities where they have lived. In Bitola they were mostly geometers who constructed pathways, so the present catastary documentation in Bitola is their workpiece. Also, there were doctors and other medicine personals. The most important thing is that they were good experienced doctors, who worked into institutions and contributed for the healthiness culture of the populace, which mostly believed in humble medicine. Some of them had opened private praxis, so by their successes in the therapies they became favourite and highly honored. Also, there were artists and people with other professions.

There were also musicians among the ~~serbians~~ Russians . One of them is musician Sergej Mihailov , who came at the territory of the Kingdom of SHS in 1921, and settled in Macedonia in 1922. For a short period of time he stayed in Gevgelija, and in 1924 he went to live in Stip. Fortunately with his music education he has worked as a teacher in the Secondary gymnasium school in Gevgelija(for a short period 1922-1924) , and after in Stip. During his life he contributed into cultural and musical city-life of towns. In 1924, at the Secondary gymnasium school in Stip, where he has teached , he formed a string-orchestra , which was a musical curiosity for the city in that time. In Stip in 1925, by his vocation, for the first time in Macedonia, the operas “ Pallacci” and “ The Sevillian Berber” , but also the operettas “ Geisha(1935) and “ Mamzal Nitush(in 1936) were performed. His work caused high public interest , for which it was written in the papers. So, the manuscript from the journal “ Politika” from 07. 03. 1926, titled “Iz juzne Srbije “ (“ From south Serbia”), speaks about a party at The Secondary gymnasium school in Stip which was organized as a humanitarian concert with a dance, in use for the Fond for helping poor students. The operetta “ Ruzica” was performed, made and played on piano by Sergei Mihailov, in which participated students. He was one of the initiators for opening a Primary music school in Stip, where he retired as the school’s principal .

In an area with wealthy ~~music~~ music, but also traditional music folklore, bringing new information , organizing concerts, placing works of the world’s music literature , Sergei Mihailov achieved tremendous , remarkable extraordinary results into affirmation of the classical music in Stip.

Among other Russians there is the sopranist Elisaveta Katerinich Plotnicka Savchenko, who had come with her husband. She was a noble lady.

In 1938 at The National Theatre of Skopje, Savchenko performed in the opera “Cavaleria Rusticana” and “Trubadur” with The Serbian music society. Also, she took a part in the operetta “Poland blood “, accompanied by other russian performers : Blagorodna Arsenjeeva, Neli Fredo etc. The rising of The Macedonian National Theatre , Savchenko as one of the earliest educated musicians at the opera ensemble, sang at the premiere of the first opera “ Kavaleria Rusticana” in 1948. A few years after the liberation she has lived in Bitola where she has achieved extraordinary results as a music educator. At the Secondary gymnasium in Bitola wher her husband taught singing and lead the gymnasium chorus , she placed the Russian operetta “ Pavlik, Pavlik, zanimasja”. The operetta became so well-known and favourite , that all of the students were interested in its arias which they sang as hits. That way she created concert audience and by her concerts and contribution she has developed an interest for the art of the music.

Viewing by another side, the Russians in Skopje had a Russian theatre society with its drama section, chorus, church. In 1937 the Russian theatre society performed the play “ Nevoljnik” ; after the show performed varied and mail chorus

with Ukrainian country songs. These shows in fact meant a develop of the Russian music tradition.

In Struga there were also emigrated Russians. One of them is the marriage couple Nikola and Sophia Nezlobinski, also Rudnjev, a laborant by profession, Maccarov-aviator, and Vladimir Devidenko, who had music education. They settled in such a rich culture – essential surrounding. Struga has such a rich culture tradition: the Holy Church music tradition with the involvement of Naum Miladin, as a writer of the country treasures, the manuscript for note-singing, the forming of the school for music education, the activity of Krstan Sandjak or Kalistrat Zografski, who in time of his life as a monk in Sveta Gora (Athos) appeared as an author and composer of different church songs, but also the contribution of Gjorgi Pop Ikonov, who even in 1863 in Struga has formed a church chorus and created his book for note-singing.

The instrumental music tradition of the city of Struga at the beginning of the 20th century the so-known instrument-calgija was very popular, also ensembles who played on zurla, very popular was the french dance, so called “Cadrile”, which was brought in Struga by a man from Struga who studied in France; also, existed a tambour-ensemble. Initiated by Nezlobinski, in 1924 the tambour-orchestra numbered around 20 instrumental players, with Dividenko as a leader of the orchestra, who has educated the members (who were amateurs in music), so they managed to perform short music compositions from the field of the serious classical music.

Nikola Nezlobinski was a wood-engineer, but he has studied medicine also, as a military scholarshiper. During the October Revolution he has worked as a doctor of the Black Sea military forces, where from he deserted. He emigrated with his wife Sophia Nezlobinska from Russia in the Kingdom of SHS in 1921. Sophia Nezlobinska was also musically educated. Dr. Nezlobinski worked in Belgrade at The Ministry for health, at the hygienic sector, where from he was appointed as a doctor in Kriva Palanka, till his coming in Struga in 1924, where he worked as a doctor in the malaria-station, with an assignment for destructing this disease. For this purpose, first of all he preventively built artery-wells, gave medical advices and cured the ill-people.

From the very first beginning of his coming in Struga, Nezlobinski started with collecting insects, birds and sucklings, so he could prepared and create bigger collection of exponates. The citizens of Struga offered great help and great interest. His collection was released in 1928 at the Malaric-station. He donated this collection, now numerously bigger at the city in 1938, when according to his merit, was built a special building for a museum. That is the present Natural Science Museum of Struga. His success against the malaria and the building of the museum are his inheritance for the citizens of Struga.

Still there isn't information about Sophia Nezlobinska's work in Struga at the field of music before the Second World War. But, we know that in this period she has supported her husband in his activity and working. She has cooperated with the women in Struga. She was a kind of an instructor, she has worked on the education of the people, she has taught courses about the hygiene and against the malaria and the stomach tifus in Struga and the nearby villages.

The only document of her are her painted portraits, which today are at the Natural Sciences Museum in Struga. It is very interesting, the moment of how they were found. Dimitrije Duracoski, a poet from Struga, in his text “Nezlobinski, one sad Russian story” pointed: “... One day, while I was sitting in the chancellery,

watching the portrait of Sophia Nezlobinska, and I watched it every day, as it was hung up on the wall right across of me, I thought that maybe it will be good to clean the picture. I took out the picture from its frame, but I got very surprised when I saw another picture behind this portrait, a picture unknown to anyone who works at The Museum, another portrait of a beautiful young woman with a hat on her head, truly aristocratic appearance, which provoked admiration. We splat the pictures very carefully, as they were painted at the same carton, only at the both sides. Mine presume was correctly: both of them are pictures of Sophia Nezlobinska, one of them was painted in Russia, while she was very young, she was maybe 20 years old, with all of her grace and beauty, and the other one was painted in Struga, on which we see a middle-aged lady with fine shapes on her face, but a melancholic, also sad expression in her eyes “.

After the liberation, Sophia Nezlobinska has worked as a teacher of Russian language and singing. The very first documents about Sophia Nezlobinska's music activity which we have are spoken stories by her students: Violeta Golaboska and Olivera Evrova, both from Struga, who in 1944 were students in the high grades at the Elementary school in the building of the Female specified working school in Struga, built before The Second World War.

The learning of the language and developing love among the students for the Russian culture were the main target in the Russian language classes. Except the fact that Nezlobinska as a method in her work with the students always spoke on Russian language, at the classes they elaborated stories from Krilov, also songs from Puskin. The most favourite were “Paris” from Puskin, but also tales from Krilov: “The Cricket and the Ant” and “The Coucou and the Cockerel”. Even today, at present time, Olivera Nikolova performs them with exceptional excitement and artism. With her students she also created and performed the tale “Snow-white and the seven dwarfs” on Russian language.

After the liberation at the elementary schools the subject – music education meant singing. The classes depended by the knowledge and the quality value of the dedicated teachers. In that way Nezlobinska developed music activity. In first plan was the sreation of the school chorus. From the pupils from the higher grades, judging by their musicality and their listening -talent, she has constructed the chorus. The chorus- members regularly met three times a week, and sang country Russian, Macedonian, or patriotic songs at the rehearsals. In the spoken material from Olivera Evrova and Violeta Golaboska, they performed the country Russian song “Vo polje Verjodka stajala”, the childish song “Jolochka” and the song “Silent night”. They perform with such a lightness, so much musically and appropriate in the interpretation and in genre. The rehearsals went very professional, at the beginning - pre-singing, after -studying compositions separately voice by voice, at the end- all together. At the same time she worked at the pupil's vocal technique. The chorus performed at the most significant shows in town, those were grand occasions, but also holidays. At the start of the performing, they sang the anthem, and after they performed the songs. Nezlobinska conducted. To be a member of the chorus- that was a special privilege; except the learning of the proper compositions, she worked at the interpretation, so the pupil's cultural level grew up.

Those were simple melody songs, uncomplicated for listening, without high interval leaps, with simple structure by scale movements. From the spoken material we found out that they worked on these songs in one or two voice.

One of the most important moments is the piano-teaching. Nezlobinska had her own piano, and she teached the most talented pupils. The classes contained

learning of the music language, positioning of the hand, explaining the key-board, practising scales , but also performing compositions at a beginner's level .

Unfortunately, all of this education stayed on this level. None of these students continued with music education , although they still favour love and a special affection for the music . Looking from this angle, we can perceive the Sophia Nezlobinska's influence in the culture and music life in Struga: this aculturing process that happened by her labour and work , was conditioned also by the time of her stay in Struga- after the Second World War and the political situation at that time. Settled in a place with rich culture and spiritual past and tradition , mostly processing examples from the Russian literature and pieces from the Russian tradition, Nezlobinska illustrated , introduced some new elements in the culture and music life in Struga.

Even today, at present time, Nezlobinska's pupils converse between themselves on Russian language, make jokes and funny stories, Russian anecdotes, and they ordinarily sing those learnt music pieces from the time of their early school days.

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