

MACEDONIAN COMPOSERS IN THE 21st CENTURY

I.

The development of events through history creates unrepeatable situations, assigns new tasks which demands quick action from the contemporary actors, requires adaptation, reconsideration of the previous decisions and making new ones with the final goal of continuing the form of existence.

Throughout the centuries, the stages of human evolution with its rises and falls have been reflected in music and art in general. They condition its history, model its aesthetics, dictate its inimitable development.

Music culture in Macedonia, together with its integral component – the tradition of composition (which begun with the publishing of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in 1897 by Atanas Badev from Prilep) - significantly developed during the past century, especially after the formation of SR Macedonia as a federal state within SFR Yugoslavia in 1944.

During the first six years of the formation of the Macedonian socialist society many music institutions were established. They directly or indirectly conditioned compositional activities: the Philharmonic (1944), the Association of Composers SOKOM, the Opera (1947), the Ballet, the Copyright Agency ZAMP (1950). The following institutions were established somewhat later: the Faculty of Music FMU (1966), the festival Days of Macedonian Music – DMM (1978), the Chamber Orchestra and the MRTV Choir.

The creation of an institutional music infrastructure had two unsuccessful (nowadays slightly forgotten) attempts of forming a state concert agency. After these attempts, the organization of concerts by Macedonian composers became SOKOM's permanent function, i.e. directly through a chosen author with presupposed organizational skills.

On a federal level, apart from the Association of Composers of Yugoslavia which included the Federal Copyright Agency, large festivals of contemporary Yugoslavian and world music were established – such as the Opatian Tribune and the Zagreb Biennale.

II.

The 21st century, i.e. the second century of the Macedonian compositional tradition, confronts the contemporary Macedonian composers with a new, for them specific atmosphere of action – restrictive in comparison to the atmosphere of the second half of the 20th century.

The spectrum of major or minor changes which shaped this atmosphere in the short period of just one decade is a reflection of the mosaic of the end of the 20th century historical events which have *global and local significance*.

The changes on a global level, on one hand, are a reflection of the massive ability of quickly and easily transmitting information through the electronic media and the Internet. Therefore, all composers, including those from Macedonia, had access to the experiences and achievements of geographically distant music cultures – thus becoming “composers of the world”. On the other hand, these changes reflect the disappearing of the ideological barriers which had divided the world for centuries. This is particularly evident in Europe, where different conditions for action had been established.

With the global changes, Macedonian and world composers saw the open possibility of joining the global stream of music – a possibility for *world cultural cooperation* under different socio-economic environments.

The changes on the local level have been generated by two major historical events before the coming of the 21st century: *the fall of Yugoslavia* and *the change of the economic conditions*.

With the fall of Yugoslavia in 1991, a large auditorium for the presentation of compositions was dissolved. The formerly renowned Yugoslavian festivals of contemporary music were partially canceled, partially transformed and continued to exist in a reduced form and range. The number of performed works thus reduced, the cost of their preparation increased, decreasing the Macedonian composer's income from copyright.

In 1991, the main focus was on the domestic, the Macedonian music scene. The only festival of contemporary Macedonian music works DMM became increasingly important and necessary for both composers and performers. The space for action became unbearably narrow in comparison to the one the Macedonian composers had access to through the Internet.

These conditions triggered the need for going beyond the borders of Macedonia, contacting foreign associations of composers and ensembles, organizing concerts of Macedonian music out of Macedonia. In this period a number of younger composers left Macedonia as a place of residence and as a source of attaining means of living, and for different reasons moved abroad for a longer period.

The change of the social structure of Macedonia led to the *transformation of the status of SOKOM* – from a nearly state organization it became a non-governmental institution with an individual but uncertain financial situation. The change of the association's status was followed by a gradual but essential decline of the funds which the government had provided for the creation, concerts and publishing of works by Macedonian composers.

The government's decision to cut the budget caused the MRTV Choir and Chamber String Orchestra to discontinue their work, reducing the possibilities for the performance of pieces for choir and string orchestra. The loss of the choir proved great since the MRTV Choir was the only professional choral ensemble in the country. The amateur choirs, numerous and notable in their activities, also began to disappear because of the situation.

In fact, state sponsorship declined year by year and no alternative sponsors seemed to appear. In the mid 1990s a parliamentary discussion was held on passing a law for stimulating art with tax relief – but without success. Music creation from the field of classical music – even though without profit – was left to its own devices during the establishing of the new market society.

The attitude of society towards Macedonian music writing made it necessary for the Macedonian composers to enrich their skills and knowledge. It was assumed that the composers should be capable of supplying financial means for the performances of their works, i.e. the composer also played the role of the manager.

The emergence of the needed educated music managers who were necessary in all fields of music culture did not happen even though the Faculty of Music opened a post-graduate program in this field – currently inactive because of the low interest.

With these circumstances all was left to the enthusiasm of the composers: they could create and organize concerts in the name of art because it was impossible to do so and be paid – much like the previous period.

Here I shall recall the conversation between two notable Macedonian composers from the beginning of the 1990s, my dear professor Toma Proshev and Dimche Nikoleski. Learning how much they would earn from their commissioned compositions, they ironically remarked that composing was their hobby.

The financial gain of composing in the last decade of the 20th century is analyzed in Stefanija Leshkova-Zelenkovska's paper *The Economic Factors in the Production of Macedonian Music Works 1991-2001*. The conclusion is not recommended for those who are currently choosing the profession of composer and are not prepared for a modest living.

III.

The 21st century Macedonian composers are adapting to the new social atmosphere of work, at the same time trying – through SOKOM or individually – to continue playing an active role in the creation of contemporary Macedonian music culture in the newly created social conditions.

Thus the composers were left were 12 larger and smaller ensembles, from which 7 were professional, and 5 amateur (only two modestly supported by the state!) and highly professional soloists recognized outside the borders of Macedonia. The EU embassies also helped by sponsoring music projects. The obvious rise of interest for composition studies at the Faculty of Music within the last ten years brought in new energy and hope.

From an economic point of view, at this stage of development, we may conclude that enthusiasm is the core of continuity – again it is “living for music” and not “living from music”.

The list of situations that need to be changed in order to maintain this continuity is long and complex.

One of the basic disadvantages is the undefined national music policy which would consider the experiences of small music cultures in Europe similar to Macedonia. Without this policy, the possible cooperation on a global scale is transformed into a kind of cultural colonialism and assimilation.

Copyright law for composers is under constant pressure and influence of the media which try to avoid paying for what they use in their programs, whereas the ministries of culture, finance and internal affairs react slowly and idly in enforcing the law. The court cases concerning the ones who do not obey the law last for years, damaging both the authors and the country.

Nowadays no one, not even MRTV, makes studio recordings of new works. The concert recordings are recorded with outdated technology. The inadequate equipment with mobile technology selectively restricts the concerts. Some hope is seen in the Faculty of Music, which has provided modern equipment and rooms for music production. The results of this effort are accessible through the Faculty Internet Radio.

The registered media in Macedonia are not currently able to create a genre-balanced program, since they do not have adequately trained music staff at their disposal. The programs usually feature music shows with a popular, neo-folk or foreign production repertoire. The result – classical music, world and Macedonian, and especially contemporary, has been reduced to the minimum amount of broadcast. No one is concerned about music ecology, nor about creating a taste in the audience through offering a wide supply. A dehumanization of the worst kind is in progress.

Within the past decade, music education in the primary and secondary schools has also been marginalized. In these schools the students rarely sing in the choirs, and

they listen to everything but universally accepted music values – neither Macedonian nor foreign.

The state of music criticism is unique. The newspapers neglect criticism, since, unfortunately for the employers, it is considered that the educated journalists with a degree in journalism aren't qualified for judging public classical music appearances and can only give information about someone performing somewhere. Again we see hope with the Faculty of Music's initiative to open studies in multimedia music journalism which are to start next year, with already available means and professional equipment. The University and Ministry of Education are to give the final word for this initiative.

And last, but not least is the management of classical music – a field whose importance has not yet been acknowledged even by the music audiences. The catastrophic situation of this field can be presented through a simple research which would show in which way, by what means and how often the concert programs are offered to the public. The recent practice of merging the artistic and management aspects of music gave doubtful results. The composers who were Head of the Days of Macedonian Music Festival have succeeded in the realization of the programs and in providing quality performers, but are still lack management qualifications in order to promote the festival into a demanded, expected national music event accessible and attractive for the wider audiences. Having in mind the unextreme aesthetics of the Macedonian composers, this seems possible. Until now this festival remains an elite show of what is esteemed outside of Macedonia – a presentation of the European dimension of the state before the European observers.

As already noted, in the music culture mosaic of Macedonia the Faculty of Music plays a significant and distinguished role. Its staff and, lately, technical potential has helped the institution grow into the possibly largest factor of generating the further development of all which begun a century ago in music and that nowadays faces an obvious crisis.

The projects of this institution such as the digitization of Macedonian authors, creating a database about Macedonian composers accessible to Internet users, organizing a concert series called "Pages from the works of..." within which are organized Macedonian composers' portraits, the participation of students from the student groups of composition and instruments at the DMM undoubtedly largely contribute to the Macedonian composing tradition.

There is a particularly large interest in the above-mentioned projects of opening studies in multimedia journalism.

If one considers that all of these activities have been realized with minimum financial means or have been supported by foreign programs – but with minimum technical staff, they should serve as examples of good management work in music culture even in the contemporary conditions in Macedonia.

IV

Who are the 21st century Macedonian composers?

Nowadays, the Macedonian music scene counts several generations of Macedonian composers whose creative life began in the 20th and continued in the 21st century.

At this point it is necessary to determine the notion of "Macedonian composer". It is unproductive and unrealistic to be limited to classical composers who

live and work in the Republic of Macedonia, and to discard the composers who live and work in other regions but promote their works in Macedonia and are members of SOKOM.

To separate the genre “serious music” as a specific genre – one of the most commonly criticized terms – is still justifiable in regard to Macedonian composers. The blurring of borders in traditional music genres, the technological development of music and the use of computers and electronics as a completely new genre which suggests a redefining of the term composing, performance, score in more avant-garde societies – all these are still atypical for contemporary Macedonian music creation.

All this implies that the names of Macedonian composers can be found in the list of SOKOM classical music members.

Statistics:

On January 1st 2000, the SOKOM catalog included 31 classical music composers. During the period January 2000 – September 2004, the composers Tomislav Zografski, Dragan Shuplevski, Vlastimir Nikolovski, Bogdan Shindilovski and Todor Skalovski passed away, with which the number was reduced to 26.

	Born	Stud. comp.	MA	Age	Residence	Work	PC	music
Avramovski	1943	SCG	0	1	—	MRTV	1	0
Andovska	1979	—	0+	0	—	Faculty	1	1
Andreevska	1967	—	1	1	—	Faculty	1	0
Brangolica	1932	0	0	2	—	Retired	0	0
Buzharovski	1952	—	1	1	—	Faculty	1	1
Velkovska	1976	—	0+	0	—	MRTV	1	0
Gavrilovski	1978	—	0+	0	—	Music sch.	1	0
Glishic	1954	—	0	1	—	Faculty	0	0
Golabovski	1932	SLO	1	2	—	Retired	0	1
Danajlovska	1973	—		0	F		1	0
Kavaj	1967	—	0	1	—	Music sch.	0	0
Kolarovski	1959	—	1	1	—	Faculty	1	1
Kodzhobashija J.	1942	SCG1	1	2	—	Retired	1	1
Kodzhobashija N.	1970	—	1	0	UK		1	
Lekovski	1933	SCG1	1	2	—	Retired	1	0
Manchev	1950	—	1	1	—	Faculty	0	1
Nachevski	1978	CZ		0	CZ			
Nikolovski Va.	1968	—	0	1	USA	Music sch.	1	0
Ortakov	1928	SCG1	1	2	—	Retired	0	1
Petrovski	1977	—	0+	0	—	Faculty	1	1
Spasov	1965	—	1	1	CY	Faculty	1	
Stojkov	1941	SCG	0	1	—	Faculty	0	0
Toshevski	1944	SCG	0	1	—	MRTV	0	0
Trandafilovski	1974	USA	1	0	UK		1	
Canev	1937	—	0	2	—	Retired	0	0
Shahov	1973	—		0	UK	Music sch.	1	0

From the fifth column we can see that 34,6% or 9 composers are below the age of 35 (0), 42,3% or 11 are between the ages of 35 and 60 (1), and 23% or 6 are above the age of 60 (2).

The largest number 73% or 19 composers permanently reside in Macedonia (MK), 27% or 7 composers reside abroad (F, UK, CZ, USA, CY), 11,5% of them in the UK (see column 6).

Most of the composers make a living by teaching. 34,6% or 9 composers are employed at the higher educational institutions (Fac.) 30,7% or 8 composers of those are employed at the Faculty of Music in Skopje. 15,3% or 4 composers below the age of 35 work in music schools, one of which in the UK (music sch.). 23% or 6 composers are retired (retired). We lack information about 15,3% or 4 composers also below the age of 35 (see column 7).

The largest percent of Macedonian composers completed their studies of composition at the Faculty of Music in Skopje – 61,5% or 16 composers (MK). 11,5% or 3 composers studied at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade (SCG); the same percentage of composers studied in another department at the same Faculty (SCGI). Two composers below the age of 35, or 7,6% studied in the USA and the Czech Republic (USA, CZ) and at the moment reside abroad. One retired composer studied in Ljubljana – 3% (SLO) and there is one composer without music education (see column 3).

A percentage of 30,7 or 8 composers received an MA in composition or in another field (1) and 23% or 6 composers below the age of 35 are enrolled in post-graduate studies in composition or another field (0+). 46% or 12 composers of all ages do not have an MA (0). (see column 4)

While working on their scores and materials 16 composers or 61,5% use computers, whereas (1) 34,6% or 9 do not use them (0). We lack information about 4 composers or 15,3%.

In order to perceive the future number of Macedonian composers it is useful to know that currently the Faculty of Music in Skopje schools 8 students in composition, and 1 student studies in Tirana, Albania. Two students are of Albanian ethnicity – but not as a result of the Ohrid agreement!

From the statements above we may conclude the following:

- composers from all age groups are active and there is a young generation as well
- most of the Macedonian composers live in Macedonia, but also abroad
- the basic form of income is teaching in high and secondary educational institutions
- most of the composers were educated at the Faculty of Music in Skopje, some studied in Belgrade when a high educational institution in Skopje didn't yet exist
- half of the Macedonian studies completed or are in the course of completing their MA studies
- most of the composers use a computer when writing the scores
- approximately 1/3 of the composers are active in the field of musicology

V

From the above said we may draw a conclusion that Macedonian composers undergo phases whose features, even though particular only to Macedonian music culture, to a large extent are similar to the features of composers in Europe, especially those who work in former socialist countries.

This is an expected development in the time of galloping globalization in all fields.

One more reference to the term “composer”. At the moment, ZAMP protects through 3000 protectors from the departments of classical and popular music, who register compositions for the enforcement of copyright laws. Many composers leave their compositions with an arranger who uses harmonic symbols to arrange the

monophonic lines for different ensembles. Some composers, working only in a studio, do not use notes and do not feel the need of producing a score. Also, a number of them use ready samples. Can we use the term “composer” for all of these artists and if so, to which extent? Again, this refers back to the mobility of terms in music but also to the necessity of redefining some of them and introducing new terms for new categories of art. In fact, the situation is such not only in music but also in visual art, which refers to a larger problem – redefining art in general.

The current phase of development in the Macedonian composer tradition is in the process of defining the position of the composer in regard to the state and the market. The process is not completed owing to the questions that still concern national strategies, the stabilization of the enforcement of the copyright law and the development of an atmosphere for writing music by providing tax relief for music investments.

The potential realization of the future projects of the Faculty of Music raise the same amount of curiosity.

Let us hope that what Badev started will not only continue, but will also be perfected. The contemporary actors on the Macedonian composers’ scene owe so much to their forefathers but also to the following generations.