

TWO STRATEGIC DECISIONS
a backward glance

In almost all spheres of social life, and also of culture, it is common practice that not only strategic but also many practical decisions are (partly) defined and realized outside of the professional institutions and without participation of people who by nature of their profession should be involved into their creation and realization. How many times have we heard from artists and pedagogues objections on the work of the omnipotent bureaucrats who, instead of us, occasionally «make decisions» about our destinies, our art of painting, theatre or music. Such a notion of cultural policy creation is most frequently motivated in the majority of artists or pedagogues by creation of an apparent cover for their imposed or chosen passive role or lack of desire, why not say lack of ability as well, to deal with this kind of work.

Important decisions, it is needless to say, are very frequently made based on somebody's will and desire not on expert opinion, and in essence, the role of those who are directly creating culture in relation to those who, allegedly on our behalf, make decisions on it is quite insignificant. It is not difficult to prove that without actors and directors there can be no good cultural strategy in theatre or that the most valuable ideas and crucial decisions in music are primarily the work of musicians. When due to various circumstances the opposite happens, and unfortunately it does happen, sooner or later, but quite certainly, we obtain the result which nobody wanted.

Even though a quarter of a century divides them and although they were created and realized by different people, two strongly interconnected examples I would like to point to speak clearly about opposing approaches to creation of two strategic decisions and their different influences on Montenegrin music.

More than half a century ago, when Montenegro regained its subjectivity within the postwar Yugoslavia, it experienced intense economic, social and cultural progress. Important institutions that witness development of all forms of spiritual activities were formed: The National Museum, Theatre, University, Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts, Television, The National Film Archives... The postwar development brought about many innovations in music, but not as many as in other spheres of culture. Maybe this was so also because in order to reach real and complete base for future development, in relation to other kinds of art, in music more had to be done and for a longer time period, and maybe also because at the time only a small number of people dealt with it who most probably could not do more.

The symphonic orchestra, as the most important music institution of every social community, was formed in Montenegro fifty years ago. Apart from the enormous significance of that fact for the music culture of Montenegro, even at that time it confirmed a kind of «falling behind» in relation to the surrounding countries and the objectively modest national music tradition. The aspiration of the then authorities for Montenegro to have its symphonic orchestra like other Yugoslav republics, sufficiently wise and noble in itself, was realized relatively quickly. The fact is that at the time there were not many people in Montenegro whose expert opinion could quite freely be relied on, but the chance was missed to listen in the right way at least to the opinion of experts from other parts of the then state. We need not remind of the fact that the practice of that time preferred the other, primarily ideological and not expert kind of authority, and that the decision to form the orchestra, just like many other strategic decisions in all spheres of culture, was really made with the symbolic participation of those that create it. The symphonic orchestra, as well as other smaller ensembles, was established within the then Radio Titograd and was composed mainly from musicians who came outside of Montenegro, for there were only few domicile musicians.

Unfortunately, in a time which in its own peculiar way offered an opportunity to establish the necessary, much wider and more comprehensive base for development of music culture in the Republic, nothing more was done.

The opportunity was missed to initiate, in parallel with the establishment of the orchestra, numerous other necessary segments of music life, primarily to ensure the necessary base of professionals for the complex ensemble by establishing a complete and rounded up system of music education. Every expert opinion of those and of later times, would confirm the fact that the functioning and the survival of larger ensembles for a longer time, cannot be secured without adequate base of professionals. In the then Montenegro, with only one secondary music school, this condition could not be fulfilled. Unfortunately, at that moment it did not exist or was not appreciated sufficiently.

In the decades that followed, and in significantly improved economic conditions, we faced all the consequences of the «revolutionary», by all means benevolent, but insufficiently deliberated and to a limited degree realized strategy of Montenegrin music development, whose main bearer was to be the orchestra. As a direct consequence of the lack or insufficient development of fundamental segments of music culture, primarily at various levels of music education, problems soon arose that brought into question not only the survival of the symphonic orchestra, but also in a dramatic manner marked the overall position of music in Montenegro. Outstanding concert activity of the orchestra during the fifties and the sixties did not preserve it from the consequences of numerous transformations in Radio Television Titograd, which, as a rule, brought only new financial reductions for it. However, the main problem was the fact that already a decade-two later, there was nobody to replace the remaining part of the first generation of musicians that came from abroad

and was completing its working life. That problem has not been resolved in the right way up to the present day.

Apart from the Symphonic orchestra, at the time of postwar enthusiasm or later not a single professional music institution was formed in Montenegro. Completely isolated, and working within the complex system of radio-television, the symphonic orchestra could only partly realize the role of the real bearer of music life. Thus, left without a real point of support and depending on the needs of others and not of itself, music in Montenegro soon ceased to be one of, at least outside priorities of the national culture.

Probably for many other reasons, but certainly for this one, there is still no adequate concert space in Montenegro which, notwithstanding the size and the capacity, would completely suit the needs of music performances and the quality of music production, nor is there an institution which would deal professionally with the organization of music life and promotion of Montenegrin music culture. With an exception of Podgorica, there is no town in which concerts are held regularly, and the summer festivals in the coastal towns at which music is usually not the priority or even rarer «promotional» concerts held in towns in the north only confirm the continuity of non-existence of an organized music life in the Republic. Also, there is no institution in Montenegro which would deal with the research and valuation of music heritage. Even very rare and valuable instruments are used mainly in the pedagogical process, because they are owned by educational institutions.

In such, very unfavourable circumstances, partly caused by the desire, the speed and the symbolic participation of musicians in the process of postwar creation of cultural policy, we encounter a completely different, not less characteristic phenomenon, whose long-term consequences for the national music culture have quite a different nature.

Based on a complete consideration of the music life needs of our community, twenty five years ago the Music Academy was formed in Podgorica. The role of one person, its first Dean, academician Manja Radulovic-Vulic in the formulation, promotion and realization of that idea and its formal transformation into one of the priorities of the then educational and cultural policy was simply immense, as well as her skill, effort and time spent to persuade institutions and individuals in Montenegro, in which the music life was on the margin, that it was necessary to establish such a higher education institution. With high pedagogic standards set from the very beginning of its work, during the past two decades the Academy has had a crucial influence on the forming and development of lower segments of music education in the Republic, so that today thirteen primary music schools and two Secondary Music Schools work in it. Although these institutions are burdened by all the deficiencies of the overall educational system in the Republic, they represent quite a solid and permanent base for development of the national music culture.

Unfortunately, underdevelopment of important segments of music culture, primarily the long standing passiveness and unresolved status of the Orchestra of Radio Television of Montenegro, caused massive leaving of graduate students of Music Academy away into other spaces.

During the past decade, within the concert seasons in the new building of the Montenegrin National Theatre in Podgorica, after a long time all the domestic performing potential was gathered and the door was opened to numerous artists and ensembles from the surrounding countries. The performing of the capital works of music heritage in domestic production and attractive guest performances of foreign artists provided the necessary positive impulse and orientation for the youngest generations of musicians. In a relatively short time «public hunger» for music events was aroused and a favourable atmosphere created on the stage and in the audience. Enormous and extremely creative part in the revival of all segments of music life, through performances of its professors and students was played by the Music Academy, which functions in Cetinje today. Within its intensive international communication, through organization of numerous seminars, master courses of summer and winter schools, the youngest generations of musicians were given the opportunity to affirm and improve their previous experience. Along with that, several international summer festivals at Montenegrin coast, even though of almost identical program orientation, by gathering an ever increasing number of domestic and foreign artists, contributed significantly to profiling of music as the necessary segment of every attempt to give meaning to the cultural policy of a space. Annual competitions for instigating music activities and awards from renowned international competitions that started coming into Montenegro helped consolidate better treatment of music in the society and a better self-respect of musicians.

It is quite certain that the synergic effects of several factors' action, as the consequences of a well deliberated, grounded and more professional planning and realization of cultural policy that has led to the establishment of Music Academy, have created a better and significantly broader base for the development of music culture than was the case with the establishment of the Symphonic Orchestra fifty years ago.

A positive trend in the key segments of music life of the past decade and their presence in the overall social life could not be neglected by those who directly define and realize priorities in culture, so that recently the Government of Montenegro has made the decision to establish *the Public Institution Music Centre of Montenegro*. With its organization and work the Music Centre should respond to the complex requirements of the long term professional organization, dispersion and promotion of various fields of music culture, as well as the coordination and stimulation of top quality pedagogical activity. Taking into account the current state in the music culture of Montenegro and the perspective of its future development, the Music Centre, which will have two concert halls, shall include the following: the Symphonic Orchestra, the National

Orchestra, the Concert Agency, and the Music-Information Centre, Music bookshop, and CD shop, Music Instruments Shop and Service Shop as well as various forms of Music Classrooms... In relation to other countries, this belated but necessary step which puts into the fore the creation of the national symphonic orchestra, implies complex preparations, complex organization, new material investments but it almost quite certainly secures instantaneous qualitative changes in the music culture of Montenegro.

To a certain extent, the establishment of the Montenegrin Symphonic Orchestra today reminds of the establishment of the orchestra of Radio Titograd fifty years ago. For the beginning, just like at that time, a large number of orchestra members will be engaged from outside of Montenegro. And here, we believe, every similarity ceases. With complete infrastructure, primarily through stable base for permanent renewal of professional staff, the Montenegrin Symphonic Orchestra will be in a position to fulfill completely its function in the present and in the future times.

A conclusion is almost unnecessary. Still, a good and well-intentioned strategic decision as the one made fifty years ago to establish the symphonic orchestra in Montenegro, because it was not fully deliberated, primarily as musicians did not participate in its planning, did not give the expected results. Starting to build the house from the roof turned out to be as it ever has been.

On the other side, the establishment and functioning of the Music Academy, based on the real and well thought priorities and needs, created conditions for long term development and improvement of the overall music life.

These two examples, each one of them extremely important in their own time, as well as their achievements, are presented with the desire to remind of how dangerous it is to make strategic decisions in culture without participation of those that are creating it, but, at the same time to express the conviction that defining of cultural policy of every community depends on the ability of its protagonists to define in a particular time in the right manner the right priorities and the realistic ways of their realization. Musicians are no exception in this respect.