

***Macedonian Music Culture 15 Years After the Fall of Socialism***

The Constitution adopted by the Macedonian Parliament on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991, marked the end of almost five decades of socialism in Macedonia, and the beginning of a new political, legal, economic, and social system based on a parliamentary democracy. Culture, as an overall representation of history at a given moment, was also affected by these changes.

Our main interest in this paper is to discuss the consequences of these changes in Macedonian music culture.

We have singled out four categories that may reflect the relevant aspects of our problem:

- music market
- music genres
- music institutions
- education.

The music market was one of the first agents which immediately reacted to the new environment. In fact, we could say that the period of transition in the 90s was the period of “marketization” of music culture and products. During the socialist era, most of the official music culture was offered as public good, having either small price for the music events, or no price at all. Most of the tickets for the concerts were distributed for free, and the revenue was mainly generated through government funds. Only entertainment music was considered business, and a form between perfect competition and monopolistic competition market was established for the events with pop/folk and later rock music. The entry was free, there were large numbers of participants and the products were standardized or slightly differentiated. The socialist economic system

could not control the private initiative in this real music market. During this period, parallel with the “official” music jobs, there was a large number of musicians who worked part, or full time in the entertainment business (restaurants, weddings, night clubs etc.) During the 80s, there were music managers who worked as impresarios for the pop and rock musicians, and organized large scale events. The generated income was not registered in the official tax and auditing system.

The introduction of the market economy provided a new impetus for the further development of this segments of Macedonian music culture. During the 90s the processes were accelerated to the extent that demand became a major factor in the control of the music production and distribution in the new millennium. This was reflected both in the ticket prices and the number of visitors per event. “Marketization” is undoubtedly the most appropriate concept for the changes which moved most of the products and services which once were offered for free into the category of “priced” products and services. There are fewer “free” tickets, and music managers are forced to think of the importance of the tickets and other forms of revenue.

At the same time, it is still impossible or very difficult to get precise data about the volume or the value of the music market in the Republic of Macedonia. The new copyright legislation and the improvement of the system of control and reinforcement provides at least some indicators about the exchange level of the goods and services, the structure of the music market, and its growth and share. For instance, the obligatory payment to the Macedonian copyright society for the use of the entertainment music during wedding ceremonies generates records which could serve as such indicators. The strengthening of the tax and auditing system, particularly during the last decade, enables much better access to data regarding the situation in this sector. In terms of generated income, such figures could compete with some of the major players in the Macedonian GDP.

But the results of the changes in the music market are not only of an economic nature. They have changed the system of social, cultural and aesthetic values that governed public opinion until the beginning of the 90s.

This conclusion is supported by the genres evaluation during the period of socialism. Until the 80s, the official (governmental) cultural policy was making a distinction between the genres that were considered art, and the others considered as entertainment (meaning much lower axiological position). Entertainment musicians had to fight for artistic recognition, while jazz musicians were risking accusations of being decadent and “bourgeois” in the late 40s and early 50s. Until the end of the 60s it was strictly forbidden to play any other music than classical in the music schools in Macedonia. Gradually, such distinctions disappeared in the 90s. Pop and rock concerts are visited by the highest government officials, and Skopje Jazz Festival is one of the most prestigious events for the upper social layers. Ministry of culture is supporting jazz events and printing of CDs of the Macedonian pop and rock musicians.

An illustrative example for these changes is the transformation of the Macedonian Copyright Society during the last 15 years. In fact, the Copyright Societies in the Former Yugoslav Republics were composers associations with a department taking care of royalties. Membership was restricted to the composers of artistic music with few exceptions of the most prominent pop composers, mainly musicians with classical music training. In the mid 90s, the Macedonian Copyright Society was transformed into a separate institution with membership related to the share in the total revenue of the Society. The establishment of full control of the composers of “artistic” music resulted in changes of the governing of the Society, i.e. the introduction of equal representation of the two groups of composers and authors (artistic and entertainment) in the governing bodies. There are no doubts that in the nearest future we will witness the total dissolution of the “artistic” group in the group of “entertainment” members, due to the insignificant ratio of their share in the total revenue.

The transformation of the Macedonian Composers and Authors Copyright Society opens the problem of the adjustment and the reaction of the music institutions to the new environment. During the first two decades of the socialism in Macedonia, in accordance with the proclaimed cultural policy, there were large government investments in the development of classical music institutions: Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra, Macedonian Opera and Ballet, music schools, concert agency and international “Ohrid Summer Festival”. The next supported segment was the music folklore represented in the establishment of the State Ensemble “Tanec”, but also in a numerous amateurs societies. Amateurism was considered as an important tool for the development of artistic skills of the workers, which contributed not only to the proliferation of the folk amateurs ensembles, but also numerous choirs, performing a very wide range of repertoire. Macedonian Radio, with its folk music ensembles and later on, big band, professional choir and chamber orchestra, was the next important institution employing a large group of musicians. During the 60s, contemporary music ensemble “St. Sophia” managed to get the government support, again considered as an extension of the classical music genre.

Although most of these institutions survived the transition period, it is typical that today, they all struggle with financial problems. One of the most serious problems of these institutions is their management, still controlled by the government and influenced by the changes of the general manager after each election cycle. Meanwhile, almost all music ensembles of the Macedonian Radio and TV were dismissed, and only few of the music amateurs societies survived.

On the other side, there are new emerging institutions in the private initiative domain, perfectly adopted to the extreme dynamism of the culture of the XXI century. We could assume that most of them will have shorter life cycles (although Skopje Jazz Festival successfully existing for 25 years is an opposite example), but they operate with flexible schemes and management consisting of very small number of employees. They follow and quickly adjust to the changes in the global and local music market. Typical examples are Avalon Production, Lithium Records etc. Usually they start as organizers of live music events, expanding their activities in audio and video recording and publishing.

The first steps of private initiative could be seen in the education area, too. Music education represented by the specialized elementary and high music school and since 1966 the Faculty of Music, once lavishly supported by the governmental funds, was experiencing continuous and permanent cuts. As we have already mentioned the educational policy for decades was preparing musicians for the occidental classical music. In 1996 UKIM Faculty of Music opened the program for folk instruments, and meanwhile there are initiatives to extend the curricula with jazz and other genres courses. The opening of the sonology and multimedia program, also at UKIM FM, was another step to react to the new technology environment. Despite of the resistance toward the expansion of the curricula, courses and programmes—mainly in order to defend the old “conservatorium” type of music education—external social changes support the changes in music education, too.

There are definitely other aspects which could be related to the presentation of the Macedonian music culture in the new legal, political and economic system. Having in mind the word limit for this paper, one of the goals was to bring an increased awareness of the changes which have affected Macedonian music culture. Yet we have sidestepped a broader discussion about the influences of the new global music environment, and particularly digital technology and Internet.

In fact, this paper was elaborated to be used as an introduction to the 13 IRAM *Conference Cultural Policy and Music Education*. Although it was concerned only with the Macedonian music culture, we could assume that the situation is very similar in the surrounding former socialist countries, and in a broad sense even further. The titles of part of the papers that will be presented at this conference confirm that they also will reflect the changes and problems that have been discussed here.