

Blagoja Ivanovski's Papers on Cultural Policy

This text presents the concept of music cultural policy in the Republic of Macedonia during the period of the 50s until the end of the 80s of 20th century through the papers written by the Macedonian composer Blagoja Ivanovski (1921-1984). Blagoja Ivanovski started his creative work in the post-war period and his symphonic works have pioneering importance for Macedonian contemporary music. Most of his works are created on folklore basis. We have analysed them in the diploma work "The Beginnings of Symphonism in Macedonian Contemporary Music in the Works by the Composer Blagoja Ivanovski".

Besides composing, Blagoja Ivanovski develops important activity in Radio Skopje, which represents one of the pillars in creating the music cultural policy in Republic of Macedonia in the mentioned period. His articles mostly refer to his continuous activity in Radio Skopje, so in this text first we will present his engagements in the Radio departments and other institutions in which he had been involved, and then we will present his articles.

Radio Skopje

Blagoja Ivanovski has spent all of his work age (28 years) in Radio Skopje. His first employment was in 1954 as head of the department for folk music ensembles. With these ensembles he participates in numerous folk music festivals organized in the country and abroad. In the radio program *Traces in time* by the author Dimche Nikoleski, broadcasted on Radio Skopje in 1991, Blagoja Ivanovski says:

*...By coming in Radio Skopje, in some way, I've professionalized the folk music...
In that period we had particular success... the festival in Cetinje, in 1957 where we were
proclaimed as the best... Later on, we had folk festivals in Novi Sad, Sarajevo, Skopje, every week we
had open concerts, shows... I didn't know what my working hours were...
My work day started at 9 a.m. and I stayed until midnight...*

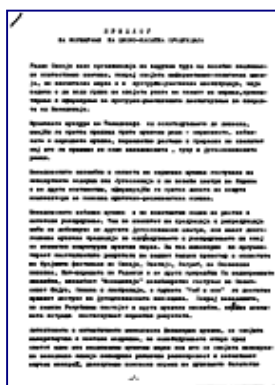
In 1962, the Music Recording Department was established where Blagoja Ivanovski started to work as chief in editor. Later on, in 1964, he was promoted to a managing director of the department. Some of his activities during his long-term period in the management at the Music Recording Department are: reunion of the choir of MRT, foundation of Radio Skopje Chamber Orchestra with the conductor Oldzhih Pipek and foundation of *Skopje* popular music festival (1967/68). The foundation of this festival had its example in *Opatija* popular music festival. Blagoja Ivanovski and his colleagues (Dragan Bojadjev, Gjoko Georgiev, Dimitar Masevski, Slave Dimitrov, Ljubomir Brandjolica and the conductors Aleksandar Djambazov i Dragan Gjakonovski-Shpato) have organized 10 of these *Skopje* festivals:

*...Contrary to the other festivals, like Opatija, where more then 40 people were engaged in the
management of the festival, I have organized it with 4 of my colleagues
and those festivals were very successful...
(Ivanovski,1991)*

It is also important to mention that Music Recording Department, at that time, started to record Macedonian music folklore of the urban, old urban and rural tradition, with vocal and instrumental soloists and ensembles, folk songs and dances

arrangements for bigger ensembles (choir, symphonic orchestra). These arrangements of folk songs were the usual cultural pattern of the socialistic concept of the culture because it was considered that they provide continuity with the folk tradition. Blagoja Ivanovski is one of the authors of these folk music arrangements.

During Blagoja Ivanovski's activity in the Music Recording Department a need for foundation of Music and Cassette Production has occurred. The productions in other republics of Yugoslavia - *P.G.P*-Belgrade, *Yugoton*-Zagreb, *Helidon*-Maribor and *Diskos*-Aleksandrovac are taken as an example. In the "Project for foundation of Music and Cassette Production" (1979) Blagoja Ivanovski states several reasons for foundation of the production. One of them is the surge of disco-cassette products from the other republics:



...Disco-cassette productions on the Macedonian market generally broadcast contemporary or so called urban folk songs, mostly from Serbian and Bosnian and Herzegovinian region... until now cassettes with Macedonian popular music were not produced, and the produced gramophone records can be count on the fingers of one hand. Some of these songs have been recorded on Serbo-Croatian language for commercial reasons...

Other activities

Blagoja Ivanovski was also a long-term member of the management of the National ensemble *Tanec*. It is also important to emphasize his managerial and artistic support in the development of Macedonian Amateur music societies (*Mirche Acev* - Prilep, *Kocho Racin* – Skopje, *Vancho Prke* - Vinica) and the folk song and dance festival *Ilindenski denovi* – Bitola. His engagements in these societies were very often awarded with gratitudes, memorials, and medals.

Blagoja Ivanovski's membership in the Composers Association of Macedonia (SOKOM) results with his position as general secretary several times, starting in 1955. In 1981 he was elected president of SOKOM, but just a month before his mandate expires he gives his resignation. The reason for this lies in the fact that the membership did not accept the cultural policy which he pleaded for. Some of the reasons for his resignation are:

My efforts to activate the members of the presidency of SOKOM remain with no results... Our presidency resembles a mini government with secretaries or ministers with no portfolio, or better with no obligation... The boards of ACM: the publishing board, the musicology section, the concert activities and the popular music section are completely deactivated...

Blagoja Ivanovski`s papers

Blagoja Ivanovski periodically wrote papers in the journals. Music folklore is the dominant subject in his papers. We have registrated papers in the period 1956-1987. The first article by Blagoja Ivanovski "Bela Bartok – portrait" published in the journal *Razgledi* (Views) no.21 1955 (Kolovski, 1993: 119) cannot be found in the libraries. We managed to find these published papers:

Year	Title	Journal
1956	"About folk music"	<i>Razgledi</i> (Views) no.5
1956	"On <i>Prispivna pesna</i> from T.Skalovski"	<i>Razgledi</i> no.13
1963	"Works based on folklore"	<i>Kulturen zhivot</i> (Cultural life) no.2
1986	"And pro and contra contemporary folk songs"	<i>Ekran</i> (Screen) no.816

Blagoja Ivanovski's legacy includes problem papers manuscripts regarding Radio Skopje's and Folk fest *Valandovo*'s (1986) cultural policy. There is a data about a manuscript titled "Folk fest *Valandovo* – revitalization of Macedonian folk music and business" written in 1987 (Kolovski, 1993: 119), but this paper is not part of Blagoja Ivanovski's legacy. The followed manuscripts are available:

Year	Title
Unknown	"The broadcasting problems of the presentation of the genuine folklore music"
1980	"Review of the concerts celebrating 35th anniversary of RT-Skopje"
1986	"Folk fest <i>Valandovo</i> and the social criteria related to the function and evaluation of ethno-pop music in Macedonian and other republics of SFRY"

Themes in the 50s and 60s

Blagoja Ivanovski's interest in the 50s and 60s are the followed themes:

- the position of folk music on the radio programs
- works based on folklore
- educative role of folk music

In the paper "*About folk music*" (1956) Blagoja Ivanovski imposes the question, which is the way our folk music should follow? Whether the composer should succumb to the urban listener's taste, when it is well known that this taste for years has been distorted imposing 3ths and 6ths which becomes banality, or one should hold back rustic primitive music? Blagoja Ivanovski is for neither of both. Instead he says:

Every composer's duty is to create, in artistic manner, atmosphere close to our people, which should act aesthetically and educative... It's high time for our composers and musicologists to think profound regarding this problem, creating our own artistic expression and to approach systematically in purification and refining, and elimination of everything that is harmful to and foreign in our folklore...

The paper "On *Prispivna pesna* from T.Skalovski" (1956) gives support to the works of the Macedonian composer Todor Skalovski, works which are generally based on our folk songs motives and themes.

Opposite to others, in Skalovski we can see emotional sound progression, which has tendency towards getting out of classic-romantic sound pattern, not always latent to our folk melody...

The paper "Works based on folklore" (1963) presents reaction contra some of the younger composers who run into barren experiments, with tendency to follow mostly the extreme world music.

...This phenomenon sometimes bounds even with pathological...

... Some of our composers (I mean the young ones) are trying to escape and it seems that they are ashamed of their own national music heritage. In this case I don't mean of original folk quotations.

Our music should be created on the basis of the Macedonian folk music, because the greatest authorities, like Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky and others have created on same ground...

In the paper "The broadcasting problems of the presentation of the genuine folklore music" Blagoja Ivanovski actualizes the problem of lacking cross-country recordings registered on tapes or gramophone records. He encircles the technical problems at recording the genuine folk song: radio broadcast time limit, the problems of transcriptions etc. In addition, he gives comment on the situation with the folk music at that time and he writes:

...Everything that is authentic music expression should be recorded and broadcasted and presented not only on national, but also on international proportions, in cultural initiation and rapprochement interest...

Further on, Blagoja Ivanovski presents the activity of the Radio Committee of the International folk music council and its radio broadcasting actions for coordination with other institutions and associations. He also presents the activity of the radio stations and radio folk ensembles. At the end of the text he emphasizes the educative role of folk music broadcast on the radio program:

...The care for quality of the music radio program regarding folk music, should be, at the same time, care for differentiation of everything that is our genuine music expression, which with artistic means, raised on the merit level, could be safe guaranty for successful presentation and broadcast of our genuine folk music...

Themes in the 80s

In the 80s Blagoja Ivanovski writes about:

- Radio Skopje anniversary concerts
- Ethno-pop music
- Folk fest *Valandovo*

In the "Review of the concerts celebrating 35th anniversary of RT-Skopje" Blagoja Ivanovski writes about the ignoring of the folk music historical and program development present on the Radio Skopje program in the past 35 years. He asks:

...Why (the vocal groups) didn't sing any of the arrangements by Trajko Prokopiev, Zivko Firfov or other composers which have great contribution to the rise and purification of the folk music on our program and which protect the folk music from deformation and denationalisation by numerous spitefulness for many years...

In Blagoja Ivanovski's review of the popular music concert it is written:

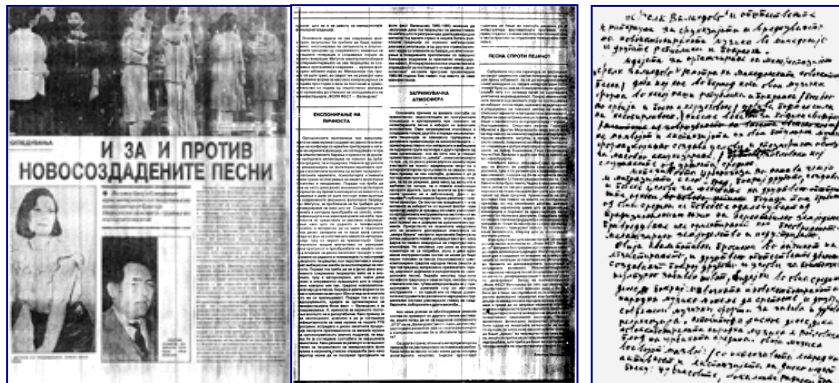
...In the popular music competition propositions the Macedonian folk melody and rhythm are always emphasized, but our composers are using everything but Macedonian folklore, i.e. Greek and all other, but because of it Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian composers very often use Macedonian folk melody and rhythm elements...

Only the concert of the Chamber orchestra under the guidance of the conductor Ozdzhih Pipek has proved its qualities and reputation enjoyed all around Yugoslavia and Europe.

The paper "And pro and contra contemporary folk songs" is provoked by the commencement of the folk festival *Valandovo* in 1985/86. Blagoja Ivanovski gives his own view on the new tendencies in the folk music. He starts the text with the words:

The wave of new folk music with its attributes of contemporary folk music expression and its "new-fangled" does not bypass our republic...

...The anguish attempts and experiments for creation of an original and contemporary - music ethno-pop expression in Macedonia in its development as contemporary form for mass communication, create visa for existence with social status which culminates to the level of fructification of the festival Folk fest Valandovo...



Blagoja Ivanovski points on several defects in the festival program, the evaluation criteria of the selected songs and the vocal soloists selection. He concludes that this new folk music generally moves on boundaries which distinct two different things: our rich folklore tradition on one side, and on the other music expression with elements of worthless imitating and borrowed prototypes with trivial driving theme and calculated commercial effect.

...This new Macedonian folk song created this way, doesn't "reaffirm" our folklore, but it "deforms" it...

Blagoja Ivanovski is pro contemporary folk song creation in the spirit of the folk tradition.

In the radio program *Traces in time* Blagoja Ivanovski gives similar opinion to the situation with ethno-pop music in the 80s:

...Contemporary folk music cosmopolitanizes our folklore more and more; our folklore gradually loses its own basic qualities... One goes to triviality and sensibility which, in some way, guides our public and our listener in completely different direction from the original... 3 or 4 years ago, walking down Skopje's Old town one could listen only Bosnian, Serbian contemporary folk songs, but now we can listen this kind of songs in Macedonian, that is benefit. When I say this, I don't mean that all of the contemporary folk songs are bad, there are many successful works and probably they will become more and more successful. That's that urban wave that drives the society and nobody can stop that, it exists and it will exist...

Conclusion

At the end, we can say that Blagoja Ivanovski's papers have contribution to the conservation of the Macedonian national identity and to the defending of and taking care for the Macedonian folk music. In consequence his papers reflect the typical opinions regarding music policy of the Macedonian political and cultural environment of the period from the 50s to the 80s of the 20th century.