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PERSPECTIVES OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The authors of this text have searched the Google entering the search term „music education in Republic of Srpska” and the result of 51 web sites has been disappointing. Such a small number of web sites would not be negative surprise at all, if they actually had something to do with the problem. Unfortunately, the truth is that *none* of those sites deals with any kind of discussion on the mentioned subject. Total lack of expert opinions and fresh innovative ideas on the possibilities of development and enhancement reflects ironically in the titles such as “Presentation of the town of Cacak”, “Local self-government has found a way to help the farmers” or “Jelisaveta Karadjordjevic for the president”, etc. Certain correlations can be found in any of the search areas, but we still do not understand how the music education in Republic of Srpska will reflect on the aid of the local authorities given to farmers in the future. Jokes aside, it is not funny anymore: not only there are no perspectives but also there are no basic prerequisites for it – points of view.

Current tendencies in the field of music education in Republic of Srpska remind us of a centrifugal force tending to move the object out of the centre of its circling route. In the form of concentric rings that are growing bigger and wider, music education has become its own purpose and meaning, moving far away from its fundamental role in a daily life of a society. *Musicians* are marginalised due to a formalistic-masochistic idea on “producing such deficient and yet necessary” teaching stuff, which shows that, at this stage of development of Republic of Srpska, musicians are not needed because of *music*, but due to an artificially produced *legal requirement*, according to which music is to be studied as part of curriculum or a syllabus. A stuff has been imported that is going to educate new stuff, which is then going to educate new stuff, which is going to educate...

Circling route has to be stopped at one point: classical music does not work by the system “from school to school (sometimes a café or a tent)”, or at least, that is not its primary purpose. In other words, with all due respect for the pedagoges – we do not need

them in such an extent, that they only educate the new ones. Key music fields that could oppose pedagogic centrifugal force in action are playing, singing, composing, conducting, arranging, recording and producing. Overall, we need PRACTICE.

Climate in our country is not favourable enough to grow practice, so it only grows in “rare areas and under extremely specific conditions” (e.g. in a greenhouse). That is why we have to try to induce precipitation needed for its growth, which is expensive, of course, considering our modest financial abilities, but it is also the only long-term solution. Occasional import of artists is a forced, temporary measure with no prospects and it will certainly do no good to our music scene. Without our own music practice we will become a black cultural hole.

In spite of the idiom that the best representatives of a country are artists themselves and sportsmen, prevailing opinion in Republic of Srpska is that it is quite enough to have a couple of sports clubs and outstanding sportsmen (individuals) and zero (0) professional ensembles and minus two (or more) (un) important individuals – so called independent artists. This is enough to ascertain the problem: perspectives are a conditional category and it depends on (as we have already said) the point of view. Conditions which should be fulfilled in the field of music are not there yet – for now, we have to wait for “more important” social activities and sciences to develop – cosmetology, management of the city cleaning department, etc. We will wait.

There are seven primary and four secondary schools of music and three academies of music in Republic of Srpska. This proportion, so “perfect” for us, means that practically every kid who has graduated from a secondary school of music is entitled to enrol the academy. Lack of future students has a direct impact on the drastic decrease in criteria set as the enrolment requirements at the academies of music, that is, children start their music education almost from zero there. On one hand, this situation can be justified only with the need to save certain people in this field from losing their jobs, and only from a distant point of view can we state that we really need those three academies. As generally known, music is something we learn from our childhood, not since we have enrolled an academy. Educational process treats music within a system of concentric rings, but, unfortunately, it has seem to lost its sense in our country. How else to justify situations in which students

often do not know where to write the note F sharp. Haydn and Tchaikovsky are “very important baroque composers”, and renaissance period is almost always accompanied by “optimism”, etc. What about our optimism in such moments? Motivation is sinking, stomachaching, depression is taking over, or you get some advice from a colleague such as, what to do in such a situation and how to prevent it in the future.

Almost as a rule, the answer is a critique of the music education system in primary and secondary schools, of the teaching staff educated (by accident) by an academic staff. It is a vicious circle that exists for years now, and it will not disappear until we try to induce awareness (within each individual’s mind) of a need to build a healthy music environment where modesty, creativity, knowledge, hardworking and youth would dominate. Therefore, the priority should be to expand the scope of music schools, by integrating them into the system of primary schools in Republic of Srpska. Apart from that, we should consider opening special music schools for talents discovered at the academies. It is also necessary to additionally educate and train current teaching staff working in primary schools of music, since a hundred and seven people (in seven schools!) are not adequately qualified to do their job. Considering three music academies in this country, the best way to find future teachers in potential regional divisions of music schools (there are a couple of those in Republic of Srpska), would definitely be a complete integration of mandatory students’ practice into the education process. That means around two hundred students of music academies in Republic of Srpska should be immediately sent to a guided work practice at schools where inadequate teaching staff is currently working. However, there are many obstacles in the way: sometimes school principals want this kind of cooperation paid for, they do not want to hire anyone from the academy with the excuse that, there are already enough people from the academy working in schools and while doing that they cover up the fact that only “suitable” students are employed, students that usually are not very talented. This serves the purpose of saving the integrity of the position of a principal by employing educated and intelligent staff. Therefore, due to deficient number of available jobs, employment is now an underground operation, whose policy remains completely secret and unknown to the academies.

A time has come to finally take ensembles, orchestras and talented musicians – individuals out of the ghetto called the ‘school’, and try to direct our human and financial resources towards the need for music practice. Certain people and relevant institutions should overcome their inertia and start a general educational and propagandistic campaign that would, as we hope, change the lack of interest in classical music. Personal quarrels and interests should be dealt with during this process, since those living on the expense of such an exposure of music could easily find themselves in a difficult position and isolated. Just as same as politicians always talk about the need to build government institutions, we in Republic of Srpska have to raise our voice for music institutions. For those who do not know, a music institution is a philharmonic orchestra, an opera, a chamber ensemble, a music association, an institute, solo performers, funds, network of patrons, concert agencies. Work of all the mentioned institutions must be followed by music production and archiving audio recordings. With that regard, the situation is similar to that of orchestras: instead of working in a professional music studio, we are very dependent on work and aid from abroad. Media situation is proportional to the image of life of music, in which rare examples of broadcasting some of the more important concerts and events are certainly not enough. Rare, short and often inexpert coverage of music events, which is usually reduced to “it was all very beautiful and nice”, is an overt example of lacking interest for music and the ability to critically review a musical event. We need to be criticised, we need the critique because it enhances our work, and we need adequate expert comment on our work to show us our position and positive and negative sides of our work. Therefore, we miss a general critique free of lethargy eulogies make.

All the above-mentioned factors of music education should be organised in a strategic manner. Elemental relation towards music, school, media and music society in general, cannot lead to a true exposure of musical practice, let alone to anticipate any kind of prospect in culture, music or education. With that aim, it is necessary to work on systematisation of existing capacities, where an important role should be given to managers in the field of music and institutions that can directly influence the Educational-Pedagogical Institute, Institute of Textbooks and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Srpska. Although certain strategic moves have already been made, such as integration into

the Bologna process and partnerships with a couple of academies in Southeast Balkans, certain steps have to be taken towards coordination of music academies and secondary and primary music schools. The essential problem is exactly the lack of cooperation in that regard, which has to be changed immediately by increasing the number of seminars for professional development, introducing representative master classes, summer schools, courses and trainings, by increasing the advisory role of the academy and, as already mentioned, participation of students within the realisation of the education process. Each of the steps in music education had to be examined in details, and it has to lead towards a higher level of music interpretation and theory, which would avoid situations in which the academies (by accident or design) have taken over the role of primary and secondary schools of music. Coordination realisation at that level would be a prerequisite leading to foundation of needed music institutions, in the first place orchestras. Coordination should not be reduced to individual projects, but it has to be permanently present at all levels of music education and with stable surveillance and correction.

The only project at the level of Republic of Srpska that has succeeded to integrate not only students of music in Republic of Srpska but also outside the entity, is a music festival “Days of Vlado Milosevic”, within which we can find concisely delivered music practice, adequately followed by a scientific assembly (the only one so far) in Republic of Srpska, and various choir oriented music events in bigger towns of Republic of Srpska. Lack of such events leaves an impression that there are big cultural and musical life holes in Republic of Srpska but, at the same time, it also shows that there are potentials to build perspectives.

The missing point of view is hard to find. As this text shows clearly, it depends on many conditions, but that certainly should not be the end and eyes should not be closed before the atmosphere of a cultural anarchy. We will discuss perspectives, as we hope, with open eyes and great pleasure at one of future seminars. We will wait.