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Stronger Together: Composition Schools as a Means of Affirming Aesthetic Goals

Drauge stipresni: kompozicinė mokykla kaip priemonė įtvirtinti estetinius tikslus

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Abstract

Notions such as “composition school”, “composition class” and “group of composers” whose meanings are similar and often overlapping need to be rethought and delineated in order to understand and contextualise them better. An attempt has been made in this article to see how they exist and coexist in Serbian music since the beginning of the 20th century.

Keywords: composition school, composition class, art movements, 20th-century Serbian music.

Anotacija

Šavokų „kompozicinė mokykla“, „kompozicijos klasė“ ir „kompozitorių grupė“ reikšmės panašios ir neretai persidengia, todėl siekiant geriau suprasti ir kontekstualizuoti reikėtų jas permaštyti ir iš naujo apibrėžti. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama apžvelgti, kaip šios prasmės atsiskleidžia ir sąveikauja nuo XX a. pradžios parašytoje serbų muzikoje.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kompozicinė mokykla, kompozicijos klasė, meno kryptys, Serbijos XX a. muzika.

Introduction

Being essentially individualists, composers, like all artists, rarely form groups sharing the same or similar aesthetic credos. If they decide to do so, it is mainly because they believe that their individuality will not suffer and their work will have more chance to be appreciated if they become part of a small collective promoting certain specific stylistic or technical features. The term “Composition School” is problematic in that it is often unclear whether it applies just to cases involving the pedagogical activity of an outstanding composer and a restricted number of his disciples (such as in the Second Viennese School). Or a grouping of composers of similar aesthetic standpoints, usually with one or two leading personalities, but without a teacher-pupil relationship (Les Six), or where “composition school” might overlap partly with the term “movement” (Darmstadt School). The formation of groups is often provoked by a will to fight against some earlier or contemporary dominant individual or group. This matter will be discussed further, later in this article.

My aim is to shed more light on the importance of composition school in the art music of the last 150 years or so and to do that by observing the phenomenon in Serbian music that is undeservedly almost unknown outside my country. However, I will try to compensate for that state of affairs by focussing on the “little stories” that may prove to have something important in common with the “stories” that took place in well established music centres with longer traditions.

Composition schools, classes, groups, movements

In the history of Serbian art music, all the main types of composition schools can be observed.

1. The national school of Serbian music, which achieved its first high point with the oeuvre of Stevan Mokranjac (1856–1914); while taking over his aesthetic ideal modelled on that of the other national schools, his pupils were very much engaged in modernising their expression under the influence of Janáček’s and Bartók works; it is important to note that some composers who were not Mokranjac’s pupils are also considered as belonging to the same national orientation;
2. The so-called “Prague school”, the members of which were Serbian composers born in the first decade of the 20th century whose orientation was cosmopolitan, meaning that they were opposed to the older generations who worked along the well-established national course. They turned in a quite opposite direction when, during their studies in Prague, they became students and followers of Alois Hába and some other contemporary Czech, Austrian and German composers; they shared similar avant-garde ideas, but never regarded themselves as a homogeneous group; they were in fact an alliance of colleagues denominated as a group only afterwards, when the period of their synchronized activities was already over;
3. After World War 2, Stanojlo Rajičić, an ex-member of the Prague school, became one of the leading authorities

- as a professor at the Music Academy in Belgrade and his class produced several of the most distinguished Serbian composers of the second half of the 20th century; they were often colloquially called “Rajičić’s school” and were assigned as adherents of that school “from outside”;
4. The members of “The New Generation” (later: “Opus 4”) were young people who studied composition in Belgrade during the 1970s and rebelled against Rajičić, who still taught composition at that time (he was already regarded as conservative and academic by the 1960s); several of those students and graduate composers founded a group, with the wish to better promote their ideas. At the same time, they attended courses in electronic music and conceptual art given by Vladan Radovanović, an outstanding avant-garde composer who never taught at the Music Academy but was an undoubted authority in those domains: thus, those courses could be considered to have been an informal composition school;
 5. In the mid-1980s, several young composers founded a group called “The Magnificent Seven”, oriented towards post-modernism; they managed to attract a great deal of attention in the media and musical public, but their activities didn’t last long, mainly due to the outbreak of the war in 1991.

The activities of all these “schools” stretched throughout the 20th century, marking the main lines of the development of Serbian music, and revealing the aesthetical and ideological bases on which they were founded – a concrete reaction to a certain trend dominant at the time.

1. The national school of Serbian music

Stevan Mokranjac is considered the “father of Serbian music”, meaning that both his national ideology and his achievements can be regarded as worthy of standing at the forefront of Serbian art music. Of course, everybody is aware that art music in Serbia existed several decades before, since around the 1850s, but those were more or less composers whose contributions mainly prepared the ground for Mokranjac. His most significant works were the 15 choral suites (*Rukoveti*) based on folk melodies and church music (Liturgy, Requiem). Due to unfavourable political and social circumstances, although he was well educated at important European conservatoires (Munich, Rome, Leipzig), he composed almost exclusively for choir a cappella, as orchestras and opera were still quite rare and modest in the quality of their performance. Mokranjac was among the founders of the Serbian Music School in Belgrade, where he taught composition, among other subjects. His pupils included some of those who would become the

most important Serbian composers of the next decades, especially in the inter-war period, also some others of more modest talents: Petar Krstić (who learned music privately from Mokranjac), Miloje Milojević (studied 1904-07), Stevan Hristić (1903-04), Kosta Manojlović (cca 1907-09) and Milorad Crvčanin (in the School of Theology, from circa 1910-14). All of them later continued their studies abroad, as Mokranjac’s School did not have a conservatoire level, but they all felt very much indebted to him as their first teacher. Kosta Manojlović distinguished himself in the inter-war period as the most enthusiastic contributor to the canonisation of Stevan Mokranjac as the founder of the Serbian National Music School – he wrote books about him and was engaged in performing and publishing his works. Taking into consideration his numerous activities as a composer of mostly choral music, sacred and folk-based, also as a melographer and ethnomusicologist, and the editor of publications of Mokranjac’s works, then his pedagogical work and care for establishing important musical institutions, he seems to have really dedicated his life to continuing Mokranjac’s work in all the domains that he had been involved in. The other students of Mokranjac felt it their duty to contribute to the national musical culture by turning to instrumental music and composing symphonies, operas, chamber music. Some of them – primarily Milojević and Hristić, together with Manojlović but also Petar Konjović, who belonged to the same generation, but had never been Mokranjac’s pupil – were ambivalent towards the legacy of their teacher. On the one hand, they admired his vocal suites based on folk tunes, especially because of their masterful formal qualities and refined harmony bearing some modal features. However, on the other hand, they criticised them because, firstly, they seemed to them dangerously close to simple arrangements / harmonisations of folk tunes, and secondly, because of their limitation to a vocal / choral genre. They tried to come to terms with the notion of originality in connection with Mokranjac’s works, being aware of the fact that, although masterfully composed, there were aesthetic difficulties for *Rukoveti* to be regarded as belonging to high art music. Milojević’s writings on Mokranjac particularly provide many examples of contradictions he could not solve. Thus, in some essays he would express his view that Mokranjac was a “Serbian Palestrina” (Milojević 1936: 505), and in others, he claimed that Mokranjac “mainly just harmonised folk tunes”, and that he “didn’t care to develop and elaborate those melodies” (Milojević 1926: 99).

As has been already said, Mokranjac’s pupils were dedicated to continuing the national orientation in their music by using more complex and modern techniques. They were mostly inspired by Czech (Vítězslav Novák, Leoš Janáček) and Russian composers (Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Modest Mussorgsky), with Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky being too advanced for them to be taken as models.

They wished to put Serbian music on the musical map of Europe by learning lessons from some earlier generations of composers in different countries. Milojević wrote about this in the clearest way:

Aesthetic principles are general and the ways they can be applied to become nationally recognisable have been shown to us by the Russians, Norwegians, Finns and Czechs, let me mention Rimsky-Korsakov, Grieg, Sibelius and Smetana. We have only to follow their path. (Milojević 1913: 395)

Indeed, all of them followed the paths towards national music guided by the examples of foreign composers who had successfully built their national schools. By doing so, they raised the aesthetic and technical level of Serbian music, with Mokranjac standing as a vital instigator of their earliest creative efforts.

It could be debated whether Mokranjac and his pupils formed a national school. As has already been said, Mokranjac was the highest authority of his time (from the end of the 19th century until WW1), and the greatest Serbian composer up until then. His teaching was at an elementary level because there were no conservatoires at the time in Serbia, so his pupils had to continue their studies abroad. Therefore, those composers cannot be called members of “Mokranjac’s composition school”, but maybe “Mokranjac’s followers” in a wider sense, since they accepted the national ideology of their first teacher, including some of his technical procedures, and developed them much further. Those composers were in their late twenties when he died, after which came the war and the new post-war tendencies in music. The pupils had different musical personalities of course, but shared a belief in the importance of creating a Serbian national school. It is doubtful whether the criteria for a “national school” were reached. In Serbian musicological literature, such a term is not in use. Indeed, if that notion – a Serbian national music school – would involve all Serbian composers of a certain period whose musical ideology was national / nationalistic and who thematised stories and myths from local history and culture, then that would suffice for them to be called thus. However, if a specific approach to composition was required, clearly recognisable and different from the others in that sphere, then one would have to admit that the approaches of Serbian composers were mostly derivative, indebted to different sources flowing from other countries, and that they did not succeed in producing innovative contributions that would respond to criteria of both national referentiality (allegiance) and musical/aesthetic value. Part of the problem was probably in the later (indeed a little belated) appearance of Serbian composers on the international art music scene. Stevan Mokranjac reached his maturity around 1890, and his works could be compared to similar works of Czech or Hungarian composers created two or three decades earlier. So what

he could offer his pupils was a discovery that valuable art music based on Serbian folklore was possible. At the same time, his achievements conveyed to them an awareness that modernisation was an urgent task for their generation of composers. However, the passage from musical nationalism to musical neo-nationalism (introduced by Taruskin as “fashioning ‘authentic’ modernity out of folk tradition”; Taruskin 2010: 161), that is from the romantic nationalism of Mokranjac to a modernist nationalism similar to that of Stravinsky, Janáček or Bartók, did not happen – probably because more time (and also more composers!) were needed for such a decisive leap (“more composers” refers to a critical mass of composers needed for a dynamic and fruitful musical life in a specific urban or wider environment. This is not the occasion to elaborate on that but, in my opinion, it is really of vital importance that the number of active composers is relatively high, which supposes good opportunities for their work, of course). Konjović, Hrstić, Milojević, Krstić and some others were gifted musicians, but their methods of musical thinking were still late romantic, although they appreciated the modernity of composers such as Stravinsky or Prokofiev. Konjović was, maybe, the closest to modernist thinking of them all, more precisely to that of the Janáčekian type.

2. The so-called “Prague school”

I now turn to the second type of composers’ schools or groupings that could be observed in Serbian music between the two world wars. The group of young Serbian composers studying in Prague at the end of the 1920s and through the next decade, in the Conservatoire classes of Josef Suk, Alois Hába and other prominent composers and teachers was rather loosely connected. However, it was so characteristic that they all studied in that Czech city with such a great musical tradition, and in the same period, that they are almost always regarded as a group. The inner circle consisted of the youngest ones, born around 1910 (Vojislav Vučković, Ljubica Marić, Dragutin Čolić, Milan Ristić), who were the most radical in their attempts to create along the lines laid by Paul Hindemith and Arnold Schoenberg. Composing athenatically and atonally, with the others, who were, for the most part, several years older and inclined towards compromises with regard to formal design and harmony (Stanojlo Rajičić, Mihovil Logar, Predrag Milošević). The radical ones were very much attracted to Alois Hába’s ideas, which he expressed during his courses on microtonal music at the Prague Conservatoire, and they enjoyed his warm and enthusiastic nature and his constant willingness to help their professional development. Suk and Hába were on very good terms and the older and more conservative Suk didn’t mind his students turning to Hába’s class for additional learning.

Ljubica Marić, the young female student of composition in Suk's class, was quickly recognised by Hába as very talented, and he consequently helped her get a work of hers (*Wind Quintet*) performed at the ISCM festival in Amsterdam (1933). When she returned to Serbia/ then Yugoslavia after her studies, they stayed in contact as they wished her to secure an opportunity to teach microtonal music in Zagreb (an attempt in which they ultimately failed). In an article, Hába published in the Serbian / Yugoslav music journal *Zvuk*, in 1933 (Hába 1933: 81–85), he first expressed his satisfaction that his ideas regarding microtonal music had had a very good reception. Not only among the youngest composers from Yugoslavia, but also among mid-career composers such as Josip Slavenski and Miloje Milojević, and went on to stress the importance of the “joint efforts” of Czech and Yugoslav (Serbian and Slovenian) younger generations on that issue.

Be it said in passing, he also mentioned Jeronimos Kačinskas, a Lithuanian composer who graduated quarter-tone composition in his class in 1930 and then began to teach both half-tone and quarter-tone composition in Klaipėda.

In the same article Hába, who was constantly trying to persuade audiences and readers about the importance of his own strivings as a composer, made some interesting remarks relevant to the theme of this paper, namely the composition schools. After having remarked that there was lots of criticism regarding his “quarter-tone music and free style without thematic recapitulations and variations seeming as if it didn't solve a significant problem in the development of modern music, and as if it was not able to impress either performers or audiences” (Ibid. 83). Hába made a strategic move towards positioning his school in a wider historical context by drawing attention to the importance of composition schools of the past and their leaders. He then mentioned the English polyphonic school of the 15th century that produced composers of the Netherland school, and went on to underline the teacher-pupil relationships between Dunstable, Du Fay, Okeghem, Josquin des Pres, Willaert and so on. Hába's view on 20th century music was that in the first quarter of the century:

... the most decisive influences were generated by the composition schools of Novák (Prague), Schoenberg and Schreker (Vienna, Berlin), Busoni (Berlin), Roussel (Paris) and Bartók (Budapest). [On the other hand] Karol Szymanowski (Warsaw) and Igor Stravinsky didn't have an opportunity to create a “school”, although they gave much incitement to the young generation for further work. (Ibid. 83–84)

The rest of the article is devoted to the promotion of his own “school” as being radically different from all the earlier ones and providing a basis for the further development of musical art. Among the Czech musicologists Jiří Vysloužil

was one of the first to question the existence of Hába's school of composition. He was followed by Lubomír Spurný, who holds the opinion that:

Hába's school seems heterogeneous, internally as well as externally, which may be a reason for doubts about its true existence. The term “Hába composition school”, therefore, seems to be a result of historical and aesthetic interpretation. The term “Hába composition class”, which testifies to the institutional foundation of the group, sounds much more neutral, and perhaps more appropriate. (Spurný 2010: 141)

In Serbian musicological literature, Serbian students who studied composition in Hába's class, but also in those of Josef Suk, Rudolf Karel, Karel Bohuslav Jiráček and others, are named either the “Prague group”, the “Prague school” or the “Prague generation”: there is no generally accepted naming because they all have particular deficiencies. For instance, the problem with “Prague school” is that there was no one “Prague school”, as the Czech teachers of those young Serbs were very different as composers. However, that naming is still in use because it designates all the modern ideas and techniques brought by those young people from their years of study in Prague. In the several years that followed, prior to the outbreak of WW2, the members of that group/school/generation had to confront a rather cold reception of their modernist works when they returned to Belgrade, which was still not ready for such novelties. Some of them almost stopped composing (Lj. Marić, D. Čolić), others took a step back to tradition. Being politically left-wing, more precisely a member of the (illegal) Communist Party, Vučković even began to apply the prescriptions coming from the USSR of “democratic art” accessible to “ordinary people”. So he simplified his musical technique introducing also elements of folkore, thus renouncing his earlier avant-garde ideals. It should be added that these young composers never really thought of themselves as making a group with common goals – that was the name they were given a posteriori by musicologists.

3. “Rajičić's school”

The third type of composition schools that could be found in Serbia (still within Yugoslavia at the time) has been associated with the personality and output of Stanojlo Rajičić. In the post-war decades, Rajičić, who had been a member of the “Prague school” before the war, became an outstanding professor of composition at the Belgrade Music Academy. In the meantime, he abandoned atonality and forged a style that could best be categorised as “moderate modernism”. He worked hard to improve his technical skills, being aware of his weaknesses in that domain. His reputation as a professor whose pupils received

superior technical knowledge was such that even young men from other republics of the country came to learn composition in his class (Petar Bergamo, for instance). However, he soon began to be observed as too conservative, so that students who were more modernist-oriented preferring to apply for the class of another composer, Milenko Živković, who was reputed to be more liberal. It should be stressed that Rajičić, although not being a member of the Party, was an influential figure in Belgrade/Serbian musical life, which was, in a large measure, a result of him being a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, elected when he was relatively young, only 40. He was always ready to help the careers of his best pupils and entertain good relations with them and among them, so that over the course of time a group / circle of composers of different generations was created¹ that was linked with bonds of loyalty and friendship and, as usually happens, they supported each other in building their careers. That was not necessarily something that was to be criticised, because those composers were indeed among the most gifted composers active in Serbia at the time. However, there were also other talented composers who had studied in other composition classes at the Academy, but were sometimes marginalised in local musical life² and who never became professors at the Belgrade Music Academy. At the beginning (1950s, early 1960s) the dividing line was between conservatism / academicism (Rajičić's school) and modernism (Živković's school), but this began to change in the early sixties, when contact with international avant-garde music was heightened and the strive to join these tendencies was spreading quite quickly. The effects of this development were that almost all but the oldest generations, including Rajičić, embarked on a voyage to the avant-garde, which they carried out in different, more or less successful ways. This development brought a gradual loosening of the ties between Rajičić and the majority of his former students, then mature composers with respectable careers. One of his most beloved students (Vlastimir Peričić) had stopped composing in the early 1960s as he was offended by remarks coming from the modernist group of composers that his works were hopelessly conservative. Two among the others died prematurely (Petar Ozgijan and Vasilije Mokranjac); one left Belgrade for private reasons, never to return (Petar Bergamo); another one went to live abroad (Ivan Jevtić).

All these events weakened Rajičić's composition class as a kind of creative unit. During the 1970s the group had to face an important challenge when a group of students of composition, most of whom were from the class of Vasilije Mokranjac, himself Rajičić's former student, rebelled against their professors. Here we will turn our attention to those events and discuss the 4th type of composition school mentioned at the beginning of this article.

4. An informal composition school

The 1970s were a period full of turmoil in Serbian university music-life and on a broader level. Stanojlo Rajičić was still teaching composition at that time and was an undisputed authority, although some of his students who also taught at the Music Academy/ Faculty of Music in Belgrade were becoming even more respected and admired than him due to their more adventurous and imaginative musical achievements, comparable with those in the leading European music centres. Rajičić was already in fact regarded as too conservative and academic in the 1960s. When a group of students of composition, all from the class of Vasilije Mokranjac, one of Rajičić's favourite ex-students, began to rebel against the conservatism of the study programme for composition at the Academy, insisting that it should include contemporary avant-garde and experimental music, a scandal broke out that lasted for some time. The students were critical and defiant in ways never before seen in the country. They were spoken about in the media and relatively large audiences attended their concerts organised in the Students' Cultural Centre, which had been an important venue for promoting avant-garde and experimental art since the time it was founded several years earlier, in 1971. It was that particular institution that opened up new horizons to these young composers because, since its founding, the Centre had begun to organise events and festivals of avant-garde art, including performance art and multimedia, bringing to Belgrade internationally renowned artists in those fields. One member of the young group, Miroslav Savić, became a music producer of the Centre even before he had finished his studies (1975) and retained this post for a considerable time (until 1995). It is interesting that in 1982 a comedy film was even made whose plot made reference to the events (a talented young student of composition becomes disappointed with the professors at the Academy who are rigorously conservative and authoritarian and quits his studies, but his father obliges him to fight back).³ The then senior professor Stanojlo Rajičić was so offended by the attacks from the group of students and by the lack of support from his fellow professors, that he retired earlier than he had planned (1977).

Out of some 7–8 members of the group that called themselves "The New Generation", active since 1975, their number was reduced to 4 when, in 1980, they founded the group "Opus 4" that lasted less than 4 years⁴. There is probably some truth in the words of a member of the group (Miodrag Lazarov) that the weakening of the "revolutionary" orientation of the Students' Cultural Centre as an institution was partly to blame for the disintegration of the group. But, maybe they didn't want to admit that their belief in the potentials of performance art and multimedia for which they had most affinity, proved to be not so well

grounded. There were many comments on the radical projects they performed, such as two by Savić: *24 hours/chord* and *Heated Circulating Sound of the Piano*. A 24-hour repetition of one chord in a given tempo in the first one and in the second “playing” the piano while lying on the piano lid, with one’s head and arms above the keyboard, with a tendency toward a maximally spread position of the arms, at a temperature of 54 degrees Celsius! Savić had the opportunity to attend a course of conducting in Darmstadt in 1976 and afterwards, in the period of 1977-79, together with the other members of the group, he attended the courses of electroacoustic music and conceptual art, given by Vladan Radovanović. An original and very committed avant-garde composer and multimedia artist, who was head of the Electronic Studio at Radio Belgrade 3, and, consequently, for some time they managed to significantly broaden the knowledge of composition they got at the Music Academy. Radovanović’s informal school gave them enough food for thought and creation for the next several years and more. However, as has been already mentioned, they stopped the activities of the avant-garde group “Opus 4” after only 4 years and continued their work separately and with much less enthusiasm. One among them (Vladimir Tošić) was the only one to make an academic career at the same Music Academy in Belgrade, his works since his youth having remained grounded in minimalism. Miroslav Savić and Milimir Drašković continued to work though rather discontinuously in multimedia, whereas Lazarov, who left the country for Canada, where he has been living since 1991, turned his attention towards “new simplicity”.

The “Opus 4” group was a kind of composition school characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s in the world. The group didn’t have a single leading idea, a single model or teacher, and what they certainly shared was their revolt against conservatism, academism, moderate modernisms, and the like. It is a pity that, at the time, it was not so easy to leave the country and try to make a career abroad, because those young men certainly needed a dynamic exchange with colleagues sharing similar ideas.

5. “The Magnificent Seven”

The success of postmodernism was probably one of the reasons why the group ceased to exist and it is quite symbolic that after only 3-4 years, a new generation of young composers, almost all born during the 1960s, gathered together and founded a group called, somewhat ironically (and provocatively), “The Magnificent 7”.⁵ They were all students or former students of the class of Vlastimir Trajković, who had been in Vasilije Mokranjac’s class. Trajković was still rather young then, around 40, and took a quite different path when compared to the avant-gardists. Tonality was still

important for him, he was influenced by Messiaen’s music and tried to find alternatives to the avant-garde. He was very open to the interest of his students in popular music and approved of them introducing it into their works. The “Magnificent 7” were very ambitious and impatient to gain recognition for their works, but on the whole they were well received by the Serbian critics and audiences. The beginning of the Yugoslav wars in 1991 put an end to their common artistic aims. Four of the members emigrated to different western countries (Ognjen Bogdanović, Igor Gostuški, Ana Mihajlović, Nataša Bogojević), two of those who stayed turned almost completely away from composition and dedicated themselves to the orthodox chant tradition (Vladimir Jovanović and Srdjan Jaćimović), whereas one member, the most successful one, gradually forged an international career (Isidora Žebeljan).

In the title of this article I have used the words “stronger together” because it seems to me that however different among themselves, all the members of the composition schools presented here wished, more or less consciously, to draw attention to their own individual outputs. But tactically first putting forward their common goals and shared ideologies: either it was musical nationalism or cosmopolitanism, stronger links with tradition or modernist strivings. Contemplating Serbian music of the 20th century, one could observe that in a given period there was always at least one dominant school or group on the scene and that a tension existed between them and other groups or individuals. Members of schools / groups were certainly aware of how talents were distributed among themselves, so there always existed a more or less hidden hierarchy, and in some cases a leader. The latter certainly applied to Stevan Mokranjac’s (1) and Stanojlo Rajičić’s school (3), and it is easy to understand why that was so: Mokranjac was about 30 years older than his pupils, who were also his followers so that it was normal that he would be regarded as their indisputable teacher, at least during their youth. In the case of Rajičić, the links between the teacher and his pupils was closer with the first generations, gradually weakening with the next, younger generations who wanted more independence. The members of other groups were more or less of the same age, and without leaders, at least as seen from the outside. For instance, among the members of the “Prague school” (2) Vojislav Vučković was an authority on aesthetics and Marxist ideology, but Ljubica Marić was generally thought to be a more gifted composer. At any rate, that group/school ceased to exist as such after those young composers returned to Belgrade with their diplomas and realised that opportunities for the continuation of their modernist projects were very limited. The members of the group “Opus 4” (4) didn’t have a leader either. They probably split up as a result of different views on their common aesthetics, more precisely there must have been a conflict

over a certain *differentia specifica* that would characterise their works, because those four young men displayed really wide – maybe too wide – aesthetic goals, their basis being Cagean. The “Magnificent 7” (5) was a group of young people who shared a belief in postmodernism as a way out of the crisis of modernism and were especially drawn to mixing high and low genres. The group organised just one concert of works of all their members (27 May 1988 in Students’ Cultural Centre) giving it an ironic title: “History will begin here!” It seems that all of the members did not accept the idea of common actions. Individual composers from the group had their works performed on different occasions, when it was always mentioned that they were members of that group. As has already been stated, the political situation in Serbia/Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s was such that some members of the group left the country, whereas some others radically changed their attitudes towards composition, resulting in the group putting an end to its existence.

I have already suggested that not all of the five mentioned groups of composers could be regarded as “composition schools”. Strictly speaking, none of them would completely fulfil all requirements if we propose the following three: 1) that those schools be groups of composers who follow the same style, 2) share the same teachers, and 3) have the same aims. Regarding the first requirement, it would indeed be possible to accept that the styles that characterise those schools were largely the same (late-romantic in the first one, modernist/pre-WW2 avant-garde in the second, moderate-modernist in the third, Cagean avant-garde in the fourth and postmodernist in the fifth). As to the second requirement, only in the case of the “Prague” and Rajičić’s school, could we speak of the teachers as leaders or models, and only then with a certain degree of hesitancy. Stevan Mokranjac was the teacher of the majority of the group, but only at an elementary level because all the pupils later went on to study elsewhere. So, one could say that Mokranjac was more a composer admired, but also criticised by his pupils, who were in fact more his followers – those who wished to continue and modernise something he had started – than they were his pupils in the usual sense. As for Stanojlo Rajičić, he was a true teacher indeed, but not enough of a model, as his pupils didn’t stay long under his compositional shadow and began to explore novel techniques. Composers of the “Prague school” had several teachers, although Hába’s influence was the greatest. The members of “Opus 4” and “The Magnificent Seven” came from the composition classes of two composers (Mokranjac and Trajković) but their main teachers were John Cage, Philip Glass and conceptual/multimedia artists (“Opus 4”) and different foreign postmodernist authors (“The Magnificent 7”). Regarding the third requirement (the same aim), it could be said that it was essentially fulfilled in all the presented schools.

Conclusions

According to Renato Poggioli, the notion of an artistic school presupposes a teacher and a method, criteria of tradition and a principle of authority (Pođoli 1975: 59). For Poggioli, who refers primarily to literature and the visual arts, a school is mainly classical and static and he opposes the notion of “movement” which is almost always linked to modernist art, which is essentially dynamic and romantic (Ibid.). As for “schools”, Poggioli states that they don’t aim to discuss things as their only goal is teaching, and that schools only produce new variants of traditional poetics and rhetoric (Ibid. 63). In musicology, at least four schools don’t fit the description – let’s just think of the Second Viennese School, Hába’s school, the Darmstadt school and the Polish school! Maybe one could also add here the American school of Minimalist Music. In musicology, we also tend to equate schools and groups of composers with having specific characteristics and goals, which I myself have done in this article when speaking of Serbian music. Among the five schools/groups I have written about, two (Nos 2 and 4) could be considered to possess some of the features that Poggioli singled out as being characteristic of avant-garde movements: activism, antagonism, nihilism and agonism (Ibid. 64–78, 95–110). Having mentioned that, I wish to emphasise that I don’t claim that the Serbian schools/groups belonged to the international avant-garde, because due to unfavourable socio-political circumstances, the international avant-garde was always a step ahead of them. One could, however, call them followers of avant-garde movements, and some of them were really very successful in composing along those lines.

I would conclude this article by proposing that in musicological writings a clearer distinction be made between the terms “composition school” and “composition movement”; also to think about the term “group of composers”, which could refer to a small movement within some wider one. The musical 20th century was indeed rich with all those categories and subcategories, many of which are not well enough known outside the countries where they were active, and I see this paper as a suitable place to learn more about each other’s research in that domain.

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- 1 Vasilije Mokranjac, Vlastimir Peričić, Petar Bergamo, Petar Ozgijan, Berislav Popović, Zoran Hristić, Srdan Hofman, Ivan Jevtić, Zoran Erić.
- 2 Dušan Radić, Vladan Radovanović
- 3 Miloš Radivojević, director of the film *Živeti kao sav normalan svet*, 1982. It should be added that another, though very different, scandal that marked those same late 1970s (the Azanjac affair) also possibly inspired the authors of the film.

- ⁴ Their names are: Miodrag Lazarov (b. 1949), Vladimir Tošić (b. 1949), Milimir Drašković (1952–2014), Miroslav Savić (b. 1954).
- ⁵ The members of the group were: Vladimir Jovanović (1956–2016), Srđan Jaćimović (1960–2006), Ognjen Bogdanović (b. 1965), Nataša Bogojević (b. 1966), Igor Gostuški (b. 1966), Isidora Žebeljan (b. 1967), and Ana Mihajlović (b. 1968).

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Santrauka

XIX ir dar labiau XX a. kompozitoriams būdingas stiprus noras tapatinti save su progresyvosios krypties muzika bei prisidėti prie jos plėtros, siekiant įgyvendinti „modernizmo projektą“. Todėl dauguma jautė poreikį burtis į tas pačias estetines pažiūras turinčių muzikų grupes, kad galėtų veiksmingiau ir vieningiau siekti platesnio savo tikslų ir kūrybinės veiklos rezultatų pripažinimo. Kai kurios iš šių

grupių pasivadino „mokyklomis“ (pavyzdžiui, Naujoji vokiečių mokykla, Vienos naujoji mokykla, Darmštato mokykla, įvairios nacionalinės mokyklos), kitos – intriguojančiais pavadinimais, tokiais kaip „Galingasis sambūris“, „Šešetas“ ar „Jaunoji Prancūzija“. Tam tikra prasme tokios kompozitorių grupės buvo panašios į kompozicijos klases, kurias sudarė koks nors žymaus kompozitoriaus ir (arba) pedagogo (Aloiso Hábos, Nadios Boulanger, Olivier Messiaeno) studentai, nors pastarosios būdavo stilistiškai margesnės.

Siekiant daugiau aiškumo, į XX a. serbų muziką buvo pažvelgta iš skirtingų mokyklų ar kompozitorių grupių perspektyvos. Išskirtos kelios grupės, kurių narius sieja skirtingi ryšiai.

1. Nacionalinė serbų mokykla, pasiekusi aukščiausią lygį Stevano Mokranjaco (1856–1914) kūryboje.

2. XX a. pirmajame dešimtmetyje gimę serbų kompozitoriai, pasukę visiškai priešinga kryptimi, kai studijų Prahoje metais tapo Aloiso Hábos bei keletu kitų šiuolaikinių čekų kompozitorių studentais ir sekėjais.

3. Vienas iš didžiausių autoritetų, Belgrado muzikos akademijos profesorius, anksčiau Prahos mokyklai priklausęs Stanojlo Rajičičius, išugdęs keletą žymiausių XX a. II pusės serbų kompozitorių.

4. Jauniausios kartos serbų kompozitoriai, studijavę 8-ajame dešimtmetyje ir sukilę prieš tuo metu dar dėsčiusio Rajičičiaus autoritetą (7-ajame dešimtmetyje šio kūryba jau buvo laikoma konservatyvia ir akademiška). Puikus avangardo kompozitorius, niekada nedėstęs Muzikos akademijoje, bet vadovavęs Belgrado radijo Elektroninės muzikos studijai (1971) Vladanas Radovanovičius savo elektroninės muzikos ir kitais darbais pritraukė dar keletą bendraminčių, todėl tai galima laikyti neformalia kompozicine mokykla.

5. 9-ojo dešimtmečio viduryje keletas labai jaunų kompozitorių įkūrė į postmodernizmą orientuotą grupę „Nuostabūs septynetas“.

Reikėtų paminėti, kad tai nėra išsamus visų pagrindinių, svarstomu laikotarpiu aktyviai kūrusių serbų kompozitorių sąrašas, nes keletu pačių ryškiausių (tokių kaip Petaras Konjovičius ir Stevanas Hrističius) negalima priskirti nė vienai iš šių grupių. Bet kokiu atveju, išstudijavus tiek pagrindines, tiek periferines Europos kompozicines mokyklas ir kompozicijos klases, būtų įnešta daugiau aiškumo į muzikos istorijos dinamiką.