

International Musicological Conference Modus-Modi-Modality, Nicosia 2017

Art Music in the Balkans

Perception and research on art music in the Balkans

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Title of the paper: Franjo Ksaver Kuhač and Eduard Hanslick: a Meeting of a West-Balkan Field Researcher and a Central-European Aesthetician – a 19th-Century Musicological ‘Clash of Civilisations’ or an Aesthetical Dialogue?

Summary

The outstanding Croatian (ethno)musicologist, historian of music and music collector Franjo Ksaver Kuhač (1834-1911), nicknamed a “father of Croatian musicology”, has played one of the major roles in Croatian and broader South-Slavic musical culture of the second half of the 19th century. Along with his numerous published articles and books on the then recent musico-historical events and personalities, as well as his internationally known polemics on the ‘true origins’ of composers such as Joseph Haydn and Giuseppe Tartini, Kuhač’s epoch-making achievement is considered to be his collection of South-Slavic folk tunes (*Južno-slovjenske narodne popievke*) in four volumes, published in 1878-1881. One of the leading Austrian and European musicologists, music aestheticians and critics Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) has been best known as the author of a small, but extraordinary influential book on aesthetics of music, *Vom musikalisch-Schönen* (On Beautiful in Music), first published in 1854. Both personalities, Kuhač and Hanslick, very probably met in person during Kuhač’s visit to Vienna in 1856-57, when he was supposed to be one of the listeners in Hanslick’s early seminars at the Vienna University. In addition, Hanslick published in 1879 in the Viennese newspapers *Neue freie Presse* an affirmative presentation and evaluation of the first volume of Kuhač’s collection of South-Slavic tunes.

However, taking into account a series of Kuhač’s later writings concerning the then contemporary German art music in general and his ideal projections regarding the future of Croatian and other South-Slavic national art musics, it seems legitimate to pose a question on whether this indirect relationship between a proponent of nationally ideologized art music (Kuhač) and a thinker nicknamed a creator of the so-called ‘absolute music’ (Hanslick) was a kind of hidden ‘clash of musico-aesthetic civilisations’ or, nevertheless, an immanent dialogue with elements of mutual understanding in most general musico-aesthetical issues?

Biographical note

Stanislav Tuksar, retired professor of the University of Zagreb, Croatia

Scholarships: Université de Paris IV Sorbonne (1974-76); Institut für Musikforschung Berlin (1986-1988)

Publications: 26 books, 220 articles in Croatia and abroad

International conferences: 125 worldwide

Lecturing: 22 academic institutions in USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and Europe

President of the Croatian Musicological Society (2001-2006; 2013-2018)

Editor-in-Chief of the *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*

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Fields of interest: aesthetics of music, Croatian music writers from 16th to 20th century, musical collections and archives in Croatia, earlier music terminology

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