

The Life and Work of Rudolf Bruči

The Life and Work of Rudolf Bruči:

*The Composer in the Rift between
Aesthetics and Ideologies*

Edited by

Ivana Medić and Ivan Moody

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Front cover: A photograph of Rudolf Bruči from the private collection owned by the composer's family. Photographed by Rudolf Bruči Jr. (the composer's son) in November 1965, in the coastal village of Medveja on the Adriatic Sea. Published by permission of the Rudolf Bruči Foundation

Dedicated to the memory of Rudolf (1917-2002)
and Olga Bruči (1923-2008)

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PREFACE

In 2017 we marked the centenary of the birth of Rudolf Bruči. Yet this Yugoslav composer is little known outside professional circles, although his compositional oeuvre was an artistic and cultural landmark of the environment from which it emerged. The change of ideology that followed the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did no favours to Bruči's multifaceted legacy. Rudolf Bruči built his music into the foundations of a society that no longer exists. In the new circumstances it is necessary to re-initiate its life in concert halls and on stage, as well as in scientific discussion. This collective monograph is intended to enrich the modest literature on Rudolf Bruči, especially in the English language, and to ensure the lasting presence of his compositional output in contemporary artistic and scholarly life.

The importance of marking the centenary of the birth of Bruči in 2017 was recognized by Matica srpska, the oldest Serbian cultural and scientific institution, and the Academy of Arts of the University of Novi Sad. On the initiative of Nemanja Sovtić, these institutions organized a scientific conference dedicated to Bruči's life and work, with nineteen scholars presenting their papers and offering a diverse, yet far from comprehensive, insight into the life and work of Rudolf Bruči. The Academy of Arts of the University of Novi Sad and Matica srpska, and the Provincial Secretariat for Higher Education and Scientific Research provided necessary organisational and logistical support for the conference and its proceedings published in the Serbian language.

The present volume also does not aim at comprehensiveness. Authors are distinguished musicologists of different generations, but also "guests" from other disciplines, whose views on Bruči further decentralize the pluralist discourse of this collection. The authors from abroad made sure that Rudolf Bruči did not remain merely "a local topic", thus contributing to this collection in both material and symbolic ways. Individual papers reveal a variety of methodological approaches. After the introductory biographical notes by Bogdan Đaković, Borislav Čičovački examines Bruči's oeuvre in the context of Serbian and European music of the second half of the twentieth century. Ivana Medić discusses Rudolf Bruči's symphonic works between socialist aestheticism and moderated modernism, taking into account both the technical and the ideological level of Bruči's

musical discourse, as well as the discourses that influenced the formation of the “world of art” in a self-managing socialist society. What follows is a series of chapters on genres, compositional techniques and some of Bruči’s landmark works. Melita Milin considers Bruči’s cantatas, Ivan Moody covers the composer’s concertante works, and Bogdan Đaković writes about Bruči’s most famous work – the opera *Gilgamesh*. Milan Milojković systematically classifies elements of improvisation, aleatoricism and extended techniques in Bruči’s compositions *Imaginations* and *Birds*, while Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman and Nemanja Sovtić deal with creative practices and the historical position of Rudolf Bruči in the context of the composer’s ideological and aesthetic principles. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman writes about avant-garde attributions of Bruči’s *Imagination II* (from *Pustolina* [The Desert] by Vladan Radovanović), taking into account the avant-garde tendencies of European music after World War II. Nemanja Sovtić considers Rudolf Bruči’s unrealized creative intentions in the light of the composer’s creative choices and conceptual orientations. Svenka Savić and Vera Obradović Ljubinković look at the female characters in Rudolf Bruči’s ballets as representations of the traditional, patriarchal understanding of female destiny.

In the final part of the book, Ira Prodanov and Danijela Kličković, through the memories of Rudolf Bruči’s students, present his pedagogical activity and survey selected compositions by Bruči’s students, in which the influence of their composition teacher is most obvious. Recalling the conversations that he had with Bruči whilst studying in his composition class, Stevan Kovacs Tickmayer offers a personal view of the Polish avant-garde of the 1960s. Croatian archivist Petar Pečur provides a comprehensive list of sound carriers with recordings of Rudolf Bruči’s compositions. Svenka Savić’s second contribution is an extensive study of Olga Bruči, the composer’s wife and opera artist, unjustly neglected in the history of the opera of the Serbian National Theatre.

This book is published in collaboration with the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the Rudolf Bruči Foundation in Novi Sad, established by his family and managed by the composer’s son Rudolf Bruči Jr, grandson Marko Bruči and granddaughter Ana Maria Bruči. The funds necessary for the publication of this collection dedicated to Rudolf Bruči – the first of its kind in English language – were provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and the Rudolf Bruči Foundation. We are very grateful to all these institutions and individuals for their support.

We would like to thank our reviewers Zdravko Blažeković, Katarina Tomašević, Ljubica Ilić and Dušan Mihalek, who read the manuscript at various stages of its gestation and provided insightful comments, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers who approved the manuscript for publication. All authors and representatives of the Rudolf Bruči Foundation are also immensely grateful to Nemanja Sovtić for his help in obtaining Rudolf Bruči's scores and manuscripts and for preparing lists of works, chronologies of works and recordings, and for his continuous efforts towards the promotion and critical (re)evaluation of Bruči's oeuvre.

CHAPTER 1

RUDOLF BRUČI – BIOGRAPHY

BOGDAN ĐAKOVIĆ

Rudolf Bruči was born in 1917 in Zagreb, into a working-class family (father Mirko and mother Danica, née Posarić). He spent his childhood in the town of Križevci, known for its active musical life and parties known as “križevački štatuti”. Nobody in Bruči’s family had a musical education, but, according to the composer’s recollections, they loved to sing. In his youth Bruči gained musical experience from the city’s organist, Vjekoslav Hranilović, as well as the lawyer and composer Alfred Schwarz. The local musical instrument salesman Đuro Borščak gave him a mandolin, and soon Bruči found himself in the tamburitza orchestra with which he performed at the unions’ events. In addition to grammar school, he enrolled at the “Lisinski” high school in Zagreb to study the violin. Bruči also studied bassoon and saxophone, and played in the students’ orchestra. He was taught music theory by excellent pedagogues, professors Zlatko Grgošević and Marko Tajčević, whom he would later meet again at the Belgrade Music Academy. Bruči then turned to the viola; he would play this instrument in various ensembles and orchestras until the end of his studies. He was also active in the field of jazz music, wrote arrangements for popular “schlagers” of that time, and improvised a great deal... This constant, persistent, firm contact with live music influenced the whole of his development as a musician and composer, contributing to the joyful, optimistic style of his music. Many years later his professor Petar Bingulac would argue that “thanks to that, Bruči became one of the fortunate ‘music men’ in the fruitful and lively sense of the word, just like Brahms, Hindemith, Schoenberg and others.”¹

¹ Petar Bingulac, liner notes in the programme for the premiere of Rudolf Bruči’s ballet *The Demon of Gold*, performed by the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, in the 1965/66 season.

In those years (1937/38), Bruči also wrote his first musical stage work, the operetta *First Love*, certainly as a result of his involvement with light music, but also, on the other hand, stemming from his subconscious artistic need to create music for the stage. That this was not a lonely excursion into the genre of musical stage works (despite the dubious “quality” of its libretto and dramatic plot) is confirmed by the fact that Bruči wrote another opera in a lighter genre while he was staying in Varaždin. While leading a wind orchestra and conducting operetta performances, he composed the opera *The Wheel of Fortune* (1939–1940) to a text by Dušan Križanec. With this work, the composer produced merry music full of modern rhythms and thus foreshadowed the characteristic features of his creative work in the future. Everything that Bruči would learn about music during his student years would contribute, in addition to exceptional achievements in other genres, to his remarkable return to the musical scene with artistic maturity, to which, as we can see, he aspired even in his earliest creative days. The developed musical life of Zagreb would finally provide the young Bruči with the opportunity to become acquainted with real art music. At that time, the Zagreb Philharmonic was at a very high level, as was the opera itself, with excellent conductors such as Krešimir Baranović, Lovro Matačić, Oskar Josefović, Milan Sachs and others. As a regular opera-goer, Bruči had the opportunity to hear famous soloists such as Vilma Noćinić, Zinka Kunc, Josip Gostić, Mario Šimenc and others. In addition, there was also the Zagreb String Quartet, whose members at the time were Dragutin Arany, Milan Graf, Ladislav Miranov and Umberto Fabri, while famous international violinists who visited Zagreb included Bronisław Huberman, Váša Příhoda, Joseph Szigeti and others. These were people and events that greatly influenced the development of the young composer. Until the war, Bruči himself played in a string quartet (Prukner–Bruči–Sikošek–Šimunić), but the outbreak of the revolution interrupted his violin studies.

During the occupation, from 1943, he was involved with the National Liberation Army, while he became a member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1945. After the end of World War II, Bruči came to Belgrade as a soldier, and since he wanted to continue his music studies, he joined the orchestra of the Central House of the Yugoslav People's Army, established in 1946. After realizing that it was too late for him to become a true violin virtuoso, he passed the entrance exam at the Belgrade Academy of Music in the composition department. Among the many works that he brought to that exam was the cantata *Jama* (Hole), based on Ivan Goran Kovačić's eponymous poem, which the composer later destroyed. At the Academy he was surrounded by the luminaries of Serbian/Yugoslav music (Petar Konjović, Josip Slavenski, Stanojlo Rajičić, Milenko Živković,

Marko Tajčević), and above all he loved his professor of composition, Petar Bingulac.² According to Bruči, together with music analysis and very strict requirements for mandatory tasks, Professor Bingulac allowed free creative development, encouraged exploration and the free flow of imagination. In one of the more cordial letters the student Bruči addressed to Professor Bingulac, we find the following words: “I told my friends about your class, how gradually but vigorously, in each harmonic task, you tried to evoke a sense of beauty in me, of melody, of interesting harmony and logical voice leading, as well as working on free composition and trying to express myself musically as I felt. Maybe that was not always good, but it was crucial to my artistic development. You made me infatuated with Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, Strauss, Franck, Stravinsky, but you did not allow me to become a slave to their magnificent music, and for that I am grateful.”³

Composer, conductor and professor Krešimir Baranović taught the young student the secrets of orchestration. Bruči fondly remembered those lessons as moments of extraordinarily beautiful collaboration between teacher and student, and also admitted that he quickly mastered the secrets of the craft of orchestration: “You know the principles, there’s no need for me to teach you anymore,” Baranović said at the time. This great musician and conductor helped Bruči as an unknown composer, thus practically proving that he recognised a great orchestral composer in him, when he premiered his *Sinfonietta* with the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra in 1950.

During Bruči’s student days in Belgrade, another one of his orchestral compositions was performed, *Rondo giocoso* (1948, orchestra of the House of the Yugoslav National Army under the direction of Davorin Županić), which very strikingly speaks of the ability of the still-undergraduate com-

² Petar Bingulac (1897–1990), composer and music writer, professor of music, was born in Vukovar. After graduating from the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Sremski Karlovci (1919), he studied at the Faculty of Law, the College of Political Sciences in Paris, and in 1924 also at the Schola Cantorum, where his composition teacher was Vincent d’Indy. From 1925 to 1945 he was in the diplomatic service in Belgrade, Milan, Prague and Sofia; between 1945 and 1965 he taught at the Stanković Music School in Belgrade and was a professor at the Music Academy. He also ran the Javor Singing Society in Vukovar. An original, broadly educated music writer, he was both theorist and practitioner, musician and aesthete. As a commentator for Radio Belgrade, he distinguished himself by a series of shows entitled “20th-Century Music”, in which he analysed many works by contemporary composers of the older and younger generations.

³ Rudolf Bruči, a letter to Petar Bingulac, February 6, 1960.

poser to express himself successfully by means of a large symphony orchestra. His graduation piece, the Concerto for violin and orchestra (1952)⁴ received the highest marks; thus, Rudolf Bruči completed his studies at the Belgrade Music Academy.

Unhappy with himself, but also with the general state of musical life in Yugoslavia of that time, he went to Vienna (1953–1954), where he had two great artistic experiences which stayed with him for his entire life: firstly, working with the pedagogues Alfred Uhl⁵ (composition) and Johann Nepomuk David (fugal techniques) at the Academy of Music and Theatre, and, secondly, by being in direct contact with the world's greatest music and best performances (Bruči himself played the viola at the Vienna Opera). The Vienna Opera itself seems to have attracted him the most, and he had the opportunity to listen there to the whole of Wagner's oeuvre, many of Mozart's operas, and the works of Verdi and Puccini...⁶ Bruči was especially fond of the operas *Salome* and *Elektra* and he became enamoured of Richard Strauss's music, which would furthermore provide a significant aesthetic foothold for his overall commitment to expressionism. We may conclude that the great musical centre that is Vienna left a deep mark on him, and that, thanks to this relatively short stay, an uncompromising attitude towards music, the way it is created, and also performed and marketed, formed itself in Bruči the musician. All that he would do as a multifaceted artist in Yugoslavia in the coming years would be a form of his fight for a musical environment that should rely on established values, global and European standards.

From the time of his arrival in Novi Sad (1950), Rudolf Bruči worked relentlessly on raising the level of musical culture, regardless of the position

⁴ According to musicologist Dušan Mihalek, this score is unfortunately lost, though it is known that it was in the possession of violinist Branko Pajević for many years. Dušan Mihalek, a letter to Bogdan Đaković, December 5, 1991.

⁵ Alfred Uhl, Austrian composer and teacher, born in 1909 in Vienna. A student of Franz Schmidt, he studied in Vienna and graduated in 1932. He spent the next six years travelling around Europe (Zurich, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam). In 1938 he returned to Vienna and taught from 1945 at the Academy of Music and Theatre. He won the Austrian National Award (1960) and the Vienna Music Award (1961), and in 1970 he was elected President of the Association of Austrian Composers. His extraordinary musicality allowed him to create accessible yet original works. Interestingly, Uhl also wrote an oratorio on the theme of the Sumerian king Gilgamesh.

⁶ Bruči vividly remembered recording Wagner's *Die Walküre* with Wilhelm Furtwängler, a great and truly exciting experience. A few days after the end of the recording sessions, he saw in huge letters on the front page of the *Wiener Kurier*: "Furtwängler ist nicht mehr..." (Furtwängler is no more). Rudolf Bruči, a letter to Bogdan Đaković, November 1, 1991.

that he occupied at any given moment. First, he started working at the Novi Sad Opera as accompanist, then choral conductor and violinist in the orchestra, until becoming the director of this institution (he performed this duty twice: initially from 1 February 1962 to 15 January 1964, and then a second time, from 20 November 1978 to the end of the 1982 season). As Bruči himself said, he “went through all the stages from apprentice to master”;⁷ therefore, we can rightly claim that his creation of significant ballets, and especially operas, was a logical consequence of his long-standing creative affinity for the musical stage, but also the circumstances in which he worked and matured as an artist.

In the first period of Bruči’s tenure as Director of the Novi Sad Opera and Ballet, he pursued an already established repertoire policy: proven works from the world repertoire (*La Traviata*, *Prince Igor*...) and some Yugoslav work (for example, Marian Kozina’s *Equinocio*). Much more freedom with respect to his programmatic choices was given to Bruči in the second period of his management of this institution, and especially while he also served as Director of the Vojvodina Music Centre (1980).⁷ At that time, Bruči, as musical entrepreneur, finally tried to put all his ideas into action and by forming this institution he covered the most important musical activities in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. Bruči also demonstrated a keen sensitivity for an historic moment in Yugoslav culture – the relocation of the Serbian National Theatre to a new building (1981) – by writing the cantata *Vojvodina* for the grand opening, and also by selecting works that would be premiered there. By advocating the cornerstones of Yugoslav music-theatrical art, Jakov Gotovac’s opera *Ero from the other World* and the ballet by Stevan Hristić, *The Legend of Ohrid*, Bruči reaffirmed his commitment to the constant nurturing and excellence of native Yugoslavian artistic forces. Taking into account the presentation of more contemporary Yugoslav performances (for example, Boris Papandopulo’s ballet *Teuta*),

⁷ “The Vojvodina Music Centre was formed as the umbrella organization of joint work within the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad. It includes: the Vojvodina Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera, Ballet, Mixed Choir, Chamber Orchestra of the Vojvodina Philharmonic, Chamber Choir, Contemporary Music Ensemble, Women’s Vocal Octet, Vocal and Instrumental Soloists and Concert Office. The Vojvodina Music Centre was established with the aim of carrying out tasks in the development and enrichment of the musical culture of the peoples and nationalities of Vojvodina, more successful communication and exchange of cultural values both within inter-ethnic cooperation and within global trends; stimulation of the performing and compositional creativity of Vojvodina and Yugoslavia and long-term and systematic action in the educational process of creating a musical audience.” Anonymous, “The Musical Focal Point,” *Dnevnik*, March 26, 1981.

besides the traditional operatic repertoire (*Il Trovatore*, *I Pagliacci*, *Gianni Schicchi*, etc.) and the less-frequently performed ballets (*The Three-Cornered Hat* by Manuel de Falla, *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein, *Caesar* by Ottorino Respighi, etc.), Bruči wanted to give the cultural atmosphere of Novi Sad the spirit of a European music centre with a strong reliance on local creative forces.

On the other hand, aware of the danger of the production of newly created works which the audiences would find harder to accept, Bruči formulated his ideas very concretely and precisely:

In the music of our time, when contemporary operatic composition could not, for various reasons, in terms of capacity or quality, reach the level and richness of operatic composition in the 19th century, today when even the phrase “opera is dead” has been thrown around (and which we do not accept), obviously there is a need for a different approach to the operatic genre. It proves to be an obvious necessity for the opera house to exert maximum effort when commissioning a piece and arranging with a composer for the work to be at such a level in terms of music, drama and staging that it can be permanently included in the repertoire. I would like to draw attention to the fact that what is new in this attitude is that the composer is no longer solely and exclusively responsible for the success of the modern opera; instead, it depends on the whole team that should work with him from the very beginning: librettist, director, set designer, dramatist and others.⁸

With this longer quotation I wanted to bring Bruči’s “credo” closer to the reader with regard to the creation of new operatic works, to show Bruči’s maturity as an opera organiser, as well as an opera composer; in other words, to point out all that he had in mind long before writing the opera *Gilgamesh*.

On the other hand, Bruči spent 19 years as Headmaster of the “Isidor Bajić” High School of Music (1955–1974), doing a job certainly less attractive than a similar one in opera, but also difficult and with a great deal of responsibility for the still underdeveloped musical environment of the time. But there were results: the founding of the Youth Philharmonic,⁹ the first appearance of girls who played wind instruments, the winning of numerous awards at music competitions; overall, his work paid off and made “Isidor

⁸ Rudolf Bruči, “Basic Guidelines for Creating a New National Opera,” unpublished manuscript, Novi Sad, n.d.

⁹ At Bruči’s initiative as the director of the “Isidor Bajić” Music School, the Youth Philharmonic was founded (1956); it achieved significant success not only in Vojvodina but also elsewhere. In addition to Bruči, professors Matija Pajor, Vladimir Zuvanov, Hranislav Đurić, Ilija Vrsajkov and others participated in the work of this ensemble.

Bajić” rank among the best high schools of music in our country. The logical consequence of the successful work of this school was the founding of the Novi Sad Academy of Arts; the greatest merit for its actual physical beginning can be attributed again to Rudolf Bruči.¹⁰ Finally, from 1974, the composer himself served as professor of composition and orchestration at this institution, and from 1974 to 1978 he was its Dean.

In mid-1983, the idea of the Music Centre came to a complete end, reaffirming the community's unwillingness to achieve all those truly valuable ideas and endeavours that a postgraduate Bruči could enjoy in Vienna in the mid-1950s, and which unfortunately he never quite managed to accomplish in Yugoslavia. With the arrival of Ljubiša Ristić as director of the Serbian National Theatre (1989), Bruči again had a chance as Artistic Director of the Vojvodina Philharmonic, and his tenure represented one of the highest quality seasons of the Philharmonic.¹¹

In addition to these most important duties, during his forty-year stay in Novi Sad Bruči took up many other social activities. He was a member of the Vojvodina Cultural Council, president of the Association of Serbian Composers, president of the Composers' Association of Vojvodina, president of the Union of Associations of Yugoslav Composers (SOKOJ), member of the Educational Council of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, president of the committee for the musical life of the Cultural Institute of the Municipality of Novi Sad, jury member for the selection of the Anthem of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, member of the editorial board of the Yugoslav Composers' Tribune, president of the “Svetozar Marković” Cultural-Artistic Society, etc.

But, despite all that, Bruči was always firmly and determinedly seeking and finding the time for his great, lifelong love and passion – for composing. Very often he would stay up late at night in his director's room (with the obligatory piano) at the “Isidor Bajić” Music School and finish some of his

¹⁰ In addition to Bruči, the founders of this institution for higher education in arts were: Milivoj Nikolajević, professor of the art department; Božo Drašković, Head of Drama department; Dr Geza Juhas, Vice Dean for Finance; Prof. Božidar Kovaček, Vice Dean for Education; and others. The first prominent professors included Evgeny Timakin, Marina Yashvili, Leonid Brunberg, Dejan Mihajlović, Branimir Sakač, Vladimir Kranjčević, Mladen Jagušt and others.

¹¹ The Orchestra of the Vojvodina Philharmonic, conceived as a professional ensemble modelled on similar European ensembles, performed a number of significant concerts in the 1989/90 season, thanks primarily to the involvement of excellent guest conductors, nurturing the tradition of performing one contemporary work by a Yugoslav composer (Jugoslav Bošnjak, Erno Kiralj, Slavko Šuklar, Miroslav Štatić, Stevan Divjaković, Nineta Avramović etc.). As to conductors, mention should be made of Carlos Piantini, Lukas Foss, Pavle Dešpalj, Oskar Danon and others.

great vocal-instrumental compositions. He would devote every moment of his free time to his compositions and, as he often said, in the midst of numerous organizational tasks, composing came to him as a relaxation, as a hobby... In this light, Bruči's creative oeuvre of over 90 completed works can be seen to be substantial. What is more important than the sheer number of compositions is the fact that their value has outgrown the local or Yugoslav frameworks, and that as such has repeatedly proved itself in both the European and global contexts.¹² This, among other things, is best evidenced by major international accolades: the Grand Prix at the International Musical Contest of Queen Elizabeth of Belgium for the work *Sinfonia lesta* in 1965; his selection as a member ("membre adhérent") of the French Society of Authors and Composers of Dramatic Works (Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques) in 1976. For his merits in the field of music, Bruči was also honoured with the "Ordre national du Mérite" awarded to him by the President of France. One particular form of public recognition worldwide was the release by the renowned German-English record label Philips of an LP containing Bruči's works. In 1967, Bruči ranked ninth among his contemporaries at the International Rostrum of Composers in the International Selection (just behind Gyorgy Ligeti and ahead of Iannis Xenakis), and in 1968 he received the "Peace and Friendship" award in Prague. Bruči also received a number of high Yugoslav accolades and recognitions, from among which I shall single out the October Award of the City of Novi Sad for 1961, the First Prize at the competition of Yugoslav Radio Television for the work *Metamorphoses B-A-C-H* from 1973, as well as the Seventh of July Award of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

Rudolf Bruči's music won over not only narrow circles of experts but also a mass audience, gathered at various festive academies and concerts, at which his works took centre stage. The ensemble of the House of the Yugoslav National Army from Belgrade quite regularly performed some of Bruči's major vocal-instrumental works on its numerous tours across Europe, especially his famous cantata *Man is an Endless Vision*. Although

¹² The success of Bruči's *Sinfonia lesta*, which was awarded the Grand Prix in the Belgian Queen Elizabeth Competition is one of the highest results achieved by Yugoslav composers, since the first breakthrough of Josip Slavenski in Donaueschingen in 1924 with his First String Quartet, through his notable compositions until World War II (performed at the Festival of International Contemporary Music Society SIMC), followed by the Brass Quintet by Ljubica Marić (1933 in Amsterdam), Two Songs for soprano and wind trio by Vojislav Vučković (1938 in London), Milan Ristić's *Four Souls* (1939 in Warsaw), and, after the liberation, Dušan Radić's *List, 13 Sketches for 13 Performers* (1956 in Stockholm) and Aleksandar Obradović's *Epitaph X* (1965 in Berlin).

these compositions were often used for propagating current political messages of a Yugoslavia “inspired” by construction and socialism, the indisputable artistic quality of Bruči’s works was the element that delighted listeners in Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, Bulgaria, Eastern Germany and other countries. Many foreign ensembles included in their repertoire Bruči’s symphonic, vocal-instrumental or musical-stage works. I list here merely some highlights: D’Rhin opera in Strasbourg performed the ballet *Le Pouvoir des Scorpions* with the music of *Maskal* in 1973/74, while the renowned Roman Dance Studio Ballet included in its repertoire Bruči’s *A Night on the Railway*, alongside ballets with music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Richard Wagner and Igor Stravinsky. Finally, the participation of the ensemble of the Novi Sad Opera and Ballet at the First International Baghdad Music Festival in 1987 with the opera *Gilgamesh*, conceived as a grandiose performance in honour of closing of the festival, was the crowning point of Bruči’s lifetime work and a significant affirmation not only of this oeuvre, but also, more broadly, of Yugoslav performers.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RUDOLF BRUČI'S CREATIVE WORK

BORISLAV ČIČOVAČKI

It is very interesting and intriguing to observe that the creative output of Rudolf Bruči, the most important composer who lived in Vojvodina in the second half of the 20th century, has remained largely unknown, underperformed, understudied and, therefore, neglected, just like the works of many other Serbian composers. This happened despite his importance – his recognition, even during his lifetime, acquired a convincing international dimension, one of the most remarkable in Serbian music in general. It is truly astonishing that one of the most internationally successful achievements of Serbian music, Bruči's *Sinfonia lesta*, awarded in 1965 the Grand Prix of the Queen Elizabeth International Competition in Brussels,¹ was not publicly performed in Serbia until March 2017. Also, until very recently, Bruči's creative output was entirely outside the realm of musical studies and reviews,² which is why it has remained on the margins. Such an attitude towards national artistic achievements and successes is, unfortunately, common in Serbian culturology and speaks, among other things, of the strong political and ideological influences that determined (and regrettably still determine) relations in the hierarchy of artists, established on the basis of ideological-national (in)correctness. It is absurd that, in an atmosphere of global internationalism in art and science, where, at least in principle, national-ideological determinants are disregarded as factors for evaluating artistic creation, here we still ruminate and discuss who is, whether and how

¹ Vlastimir Peričić, *Muzički stvaraoči u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1969), 69.

² Exceptions include: Dušan Mihalek, "Simfonije Rudolfa Bručija", *Zbornik Matice srpske za scenske umetnosti i muziku*, No. 2 (1987): 121-169; Nemanja Sovtić, *Nesvrstani humanizam Rudolfa Bručija. Kompozitor i društvo samoupravnog socijalizma* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2017).

much, “our” artist. Thus, it does not hurt to recall that every artist who, living and creating in the geographical area of a country, has promoted and enriched the culture and art of that country, and is a part of the national artistic heritage. Therefore, Rudolf Bruči, regardless of the fact that he was not born in Serbia, was not a Serb by origin, and did not live in the Serbian capital, was still a Serbian composer.

The necessity of such a classification was one of the consequences of the breakup of Yugoslavia. After this collapse, as usually happens after every redistribution of the territory, newly established states inherited (willy-nilly) parts of a once common cultural heritage. Thus, Petar II Petrović Njegoš became a Montenegrin writer, and Meša Selimović Serbian; these are just some examples in which the division of the formerly joint heritage was carried out superficially and crudely.³ The problem arises with those artists who declared themselves as Yugoslavs, such as Danilo Kiš. If the cultural heritage of the state that ceased to exist, in this case Yugoslavia, is viewed exclusively as Yugoslav heritage – that is, as (alienated) heritage that does not belong to any of the newly constituted states (because none of them consider ‘Yugoslav’ culture theirs anymore) – it is thus condemned to oblivion, because no institution of any newly created state will take care of it. That is why the outputs of such artists should be adopted (which is what happens in many cases) and preserved by some of the newly established states as part of their cultural heritage, so that it does not disappear either physically or spiritually.⁴

³ Quite instructive is information found on Croatian Wikipedia pages dedicated, for example, to the composers Josip Slavenski and Marko Tajčević, but also to the writer Vladan Desnica. The information that stands out is the qualification that these artists are both Croatian and Serbian. In Serbian Wikipedia pages one does not find such nuances: artists are exclusively either Serbian or Croatian.

⁴ In Serbia, it is considered that Ivo Andrić is a Serbian writer, since he lived longest in Serbia (Belgrade); as to the artistic legacy of Josip Slavenski, it is still not quite certain to which country it belongs, although Slavenski also spent the longest part of his life in Belgrade. Marko Tajčević, however, is unequivocally regarded as a Serbian composer, although he lived longer in Zagreb than in Belgrade, and although he was not of Serbian origin, but Aromanian, and wrote his most important works in Zagreb. In this case, Tajčević's Orthodox Christian faith determined his affiliation with Serbian cultural heritage. Another interesting example is that Davorin Jenko, the author of a choral song, which is (the present) Serbian anthem – he was born in Austria-Hungary as a Slovenian, and he spent the longest and most productive part of his life in Serbia, and was the first Serbian composer who was elected a member of the Serbian Learned Society (and, later, the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences). On the basis of all this, Jenko should have been regarded both as a Serbian and a Slovenian composer.

Seen from the standpoint of Serbian music performance practice and musicology in Belgrade during the second half of the 20th century – the number and frequency of performances, printed scores, recordings and musicological texts – a clear timeframe becomes obvious as to the point until which Rudolf Bruči was considered a Serbian composer, and when he ceased to be so considered.⁵ That year is certainly 1974, when the last Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was adopted, with which Vojvodina gained the status of an autonomous province, whose political representatives, on an equal footing with the representatives of other republics and independently of Serbia, took part in all important state and political decisions. Not only was it the case that artists from Vojvodina, on the one hand, felt and experienced this change as a decentralisation in relation to Belgrade, but, on the other hand, Serbian cultural institutions stopped considering artists from Vojvodina as part of their cultural environment. If artists originating from Vojvodina lived and worked in Belgrade (such as Vasko Popa, Dušan Makavejev or Slobodan Atanacković), the Serbian cultural establishment considered them their own; but if they lived or worked in Vojvodina, they were regarded exclusively as artists from Vojvodina, and therefore foreign, alien.⁶ In addition to Bruči's distinctly Yugoslav commitment (that is, from today's perspective, his national indeterminacy), as well as the international success of Bruči's music, hitherto not experienced in Serbian art music, one may assume that nationalist-political reasons played a decisive role in the fact that, within the strictures of the prevailing music and musicology clique in Belgrade of that time, a wall of complete lack of interest, and thus ignorance, with respect to Bruči's creative output was erected (and this also applied to outputs of other composers from Vojvodina). Since Bruči was, regrettably, not the only composer who was thus excluded from Serbian musical reality (and therefore its heritage), and there were indeed many of them, far more than one could confess at this time without shame, it would be of immense importance for Serbian music, culture, even for national honour itself, to organize a scientific meeting dedicated to all Serbian composers whose achievements were disregarded and

⁵ *Katalog dela članova Udruženja kompozitora Srbije* (Belgrade: Association of Serbian Composers, 1953); *Katalog Udruženja kompozitora Srbije* (Belgrade: Association of Serbian Composers, 1971); *Katalog Udruženja kompozitora Srbije* (Belgrade: Association of Serbian Composers, 1983).

⁶ Such an artificial political division did not bypass Dušan Radić, one of the most important Serbian composers, precisely because it was considered that, since he was working at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, he did not belong to the cultural milieu of Serbia, i.e., Belgrade.

ignored. Only then would we truly know and appreciate Serbian musical output in the 20th century.

Even under circumstances that still exhibit a profound and impartial attitude towards Serbian musical heritage, if Bruči's oeuvre had not, albeit only in the fleeting memory of his contemporaries, left the impression of a certain uniqueness, we would not even be speaking about him today. Thus, on this singular occasion, which may not be repeated in the next 100 years, it is necessary to consider those stylistic features that make Bruči's music really special in comparison with the works of his contemporaries from Serbia (and Yugoslavia), but also in relation to the European scene of that time.

As is the case with all composers who developed and achieved remarkable expression, on account of which music history labelled them as significant, Bruči's specific expression was present in his works almost from the composer's professional beginnings. If we exclude works of his pre-student phase, which we could call the zero phase, we can then distinguish several periods in his work, each marked by a specific stylistic procedure or a specific combination of different compositional directions.

During the first years after World War II, following the Soviet model, national romanticism was considered the only desirable determinant of musical style. Professors of composition at the Music Academy in Belgrade (with the exception of Slavenski and Milenko Živković) nurtured and approved of this style;⁷ thus Bruči's first professional works were products of the legacy of musical romanticism.⁸ Additionally, in the composition syllabus in Belgrade, and the school systems of that time, special attention was paid to the construction of symphonic and concertante works based on solid formal frameworks of the classical type, from which a specific form of neoclassicism in Serbian music later developed. Such an orientation left a great mark on Bruči's output, whose basic characteristic is a clear presence of (neo)classical formal principles. However, given the fact that, in a way similar to Slavenski,⁹ Bruči's most important and strongest inspiration came

⁷ Borislav Čičovački, *Transformaties van volksmuziek van de Westelijke Balkan en de Servische Octoëchos (Byzantijnse kerkmuziek) in het oeuvre van Ljubica Marić*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Amsterdam: Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2017).

⁸ According to: Bogdan Đaković, "Rudolf Bruči (30. 3. 1917. - 30. 10. 2002)," *Muzikologija-Musicology*, No. 4 (2004): 273-277.

⁹ As a composer, Slavenski, in addition to Bartók, had a great influence on Bruči. Not only is this influence noticeable in the titles of some of Bruči's compositions (First String Quartet "In Memoriam Josip Slavenski"), but also in the musical themes he used: in several of his compositions (First String Quartet, Second Concerto for

from the folk music tradition (from Međimurje, Istria, the Southern Balkans and Macedonia), which is also one of the most important characteristics of his oeuvre, it is noticeable that already in Bruči's first professional works he achieved a combination of these elements. In this sense, the most remarkable and most significant composition of this first phase is *Rondo giocoso* for symphony orchestra, written in 1947. At that time, real neoclassicism did not yet exist in Serbian music – composers wrote music using romantic patterns.¹⁰ Bruči's *Rondo giocoso* stands out from the typical compositional practice of that time. First of all, the formal backbone of the composition is distinctively neoclassical, which makes it one of the first such examples in Serbian music of that time, while the content does not reflect romantic principles. The melody of the main theme, though striking and with elements of the grotesque, appears subdued and does not possess romantic tunefulness, nor does it undergo any harmonic upgrade; instead, in this composition only the individual, short motifs/excerpts are varied, and throughout the piece one finds dense chords based on the intervals of seconds. If we add to this the accentuated melodic association of the main theme on the folk musical tradition of the Southern Balkans, which is supported by a mixed metre and *aksak* rhythms, typical of Bruči's fast movements, all in the lush and, in the context of Serbian music of that time, unconventional orchestration, in

Trombone and Orchestra, the *Suite from Međimurje* in versions for violin or clarinet and piano) Bruči uses melodies from Slavenski's cycle *My Mother's Songs* (*Međimorje, How Green and Beautiful Are You, and Some for Turnip, Some for Flax*). Nevertheless, the most important influence that Slavenski had on Bruči, in terms of his approach to folk music tradition, was a constant encouragement to find new, different ways of applying elements of this tradition within contemporary musical language, whatever compositional techniques contemporary music was using. Thus, for example, one of the musical elements most frequently present in Bruči's opus is the rhythmic hitting of the *goč* (large drum). As a kind of homage to Slavenski, most probably adopted from the fourth movement of his *Four Balkan Dances*, it appears in various of Bruči's works, even the modernist ones, always in a different musical setting, always unexpectedly and discreetly: the *Third Symphony* (fourth movement), the *Wind Quintet*, the ballet *Katarina Izmailova*, the *Fifth String Quartet* (second movement) etc. Moreover, the pentatonic scale, as one of the basic characteristics of Slavenski's melodies (according to Mirjana Živković), occurs regularly in Bruči's oeuvre. In addition to the aforementioned compositions, Bruči also uses pentatonic scales in the opera *Gilgamesh* and the *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra* (the end of the second movement).

¹⁰ Neoclassicism in Serbian music after World War II only emerged after the abandonment of the romantic approach to musical content, at the end of the 1950s, when dodecaphony, as a compromise with quasi-modernistic procedures, became the basis for composing musical themes (in the works of Milan Ristić, Dušan Kostić, Dragutin Čolić, Aleksandar Obradović, Vasilije Mokranjac).

which an important role is given to the percussion (as another distinguishing trait of Bruči's work), then this work can be regarded as quite particular in relation to the entire stylistic orientation of Serbian music. Specifically, this is one of the first and certainly most memorable mergers of (neo)classical form and melodic-rhythmic characteristics of Balkan traditions in Serbian music (together with works by Ljubica Marić and Enriko Josif).¹¹ Similar examples from the international music scene, such as the final neoclassical works by Stravinsky (*Scherzo à la Russe* and *Circus Polka* from 1944), point to Bruči's stylistic connection with one of the more prominent compositional orientations in music after World War II.

Bruči's first compositional phase lasted until his study seminar with Alfred Uhl in Vienna (1954-55);¹² afterwards, upon his return to Yugoslavia, the orchestral suite *Maskal* from 1955 begins his second creative phase, which can roughly be determined as neoclassical. During this phase, Bruči used classical and baroque forms and devices – sonata forms, fugues, pas-sacaglias, imitation, baroque cyclical forms – as the structural backbone of his works, to an even greater extent than before. Nevertheless, the suite *Maskal* stands out from Bruči's entire output in that it represents the prototype of his (later) symphonic cycles. This work was built with a strict (neoclassical) formal design, with Bruči's typical melodic reduction and powerful, pregnant rhythms. As to the structure of the themes of the fast movements, it seems that their rhythms are much more important than the melodic flow, which is generally simple, restrained and focused on the rhythm. These movements are dominated by a motoric, persistent repetitiveness of a uniform rhythmic block, together with virtuosic sequential passages in the strings, which create the impression of head-spinning drama. Aside from these persistent rhythms, which create a pagan impression, allusions to the folk music tradition are very discreet, including, for example, moments for two oboes, which evoke the sound of the Istrian folk instrument the sopile, with their melody. The themes of slow movements are distinguished primarily by large intervallic leaps and harmonies arising from independent melodic lines (free polyphony), which gives the impression of an atonal

¹¹ Ljubica Marić, in the search for her own musical expression, used the same combination only in her Sonata for Violin and Piano in 1948, and Enriko Josif demonstrated such an interest in Sonata Brevis for piano, written in 1949.

¹² There are some discrepancies in the literature with respect to the years that Bruči spent in Vienna: Peričić and *Leksikon jugoslavenske glazbe* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža", 1984) give the years 1954-5, while Đaković and Sovtić opt for 1953-4 (Peričić, *Muzički stvaraoaci u Srbiji*, 67; *Leksikon jugoslavenske glazbe*, Vol. 1, 112; Đaković, "Rudolf Bruči (30. 3. 1917. - 30. 10. 2002.)," 273; Sovtić, *Nesvrstani humanizam Rudolfa Bručija*, 279-280).

sound complex, aided by the slow-moving rhythms, and in particular the orchestration, which is based on the free melodic lines of the winds and celeste, unlike the rapid movements dominated by percussion.¹³ Although this composition was created in the midst of the formation of the neoclassical foundations of the future Serbian compositional academicism, Bruči's *Maskal* distinguished itself from other symphonic works of that time by its pronounced anti-romanticism, by its tendency to use atonal or even dodecaphonic procedures (which would precisely become one of the basic principles of Serbian neoclassical music academicism just a few years later, in works by Milan Ristić, Dragutin Čolić and Dušan Kostić); furthermore, it is distinguished by fresh, unconventional orchestration (in the context of Serbian music of that time), both in the sense of employing rarely used instruments (celesta, bongos), and with respect to the combination of instrumental colours. On this basis, we can consider Bruči's suite *Maskal* as one of the most innovative orchestral compositions in Serbian music of that time, if not the most innovative. Compared to the works of global music literature of that time, this composition is partially related to music by Stravinsky that signify a transition in his work, between neoclassicism and the dodecaphonic period, and also to some orchestral works of Hindemith from the same period.¹⁴

From the same creative phase, another composition can be singled out, the Concerto No. 2 for Trombone and Orchestra, written in 1961. This example is among Bruči's most interesting treatments of neoclassical forms and neoclassicism in general. While the first movement possesses a subdued quality in the thematic material, and even a certain formal rigidity, which can be related to Hindemith's neoclassical procedures, the third movement is one of the most beautiful examples of Bruči's unconventional, joyful musical play, a kind of charming homage to Stravinsky, in which elements of Balkan folk dances, popular music and jazz are easily integrated.¹⁵ What,

¹³ Considering the stylistic procedure used by the composer Alfred Uhl, which presents a combination of neoclassical forms with a melodic and harmonic language close to atonality and dodecaphony, which in turn was based on Stravinsky's stylistic orientation of that time, one could say that a stimulus for Bruči's stylistic direction came from Uhl, and indirectly from Stravinsky.

¹⁴ For example, Stravinsky's Septet from 1953, and the first version of his ballet *Agon* from the same year, as well as Hindemith's orchestral composition *Die Harmonie der Welt* from 1951.

¹⁵ In this movement, which might remind one of some of Dušan Radić's clear-cut works from the 1950s, this very influence is evident: Radić's works from his unconventional first compositional phase, primarily his original combination of folk music