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Questions of Yugoslavian Symphonism and Its Institutions: The Case of Belgrade Open Competition of 1934–1935¹

Taking an open competition for new symphonic composition organized in Belgrade in 1934–1935 as the focus of my enquiry, I wish to investigate complex questions of institutional networks, critical discourse on music and interpersonal relationships that shaped production and reception of symphonic music in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The competition was organized by *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić* with an ostensible aim of promoting modern art and supporting young artists' endeavours. I will argue that during the 1930s *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* engaged in promoting “primordial modernism” as the new model of art production, which was in accordance with the current state politics in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In order to do so, I will firstly define primordial modernism as the paradigm of artistic production in the interwar Yugoslavia, reflecting both on state cultural politics and on artistic and critical discourse. I will then show how this paradigm permeated the politics of *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić*, which was firmly latched onto various mechanisms of state support and which participated in promoting the dominant state ideology. I will show how the open competition for new symphonic work presented an opportunity both to strengthen the influence of *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* and to widen its reach in promulgating the new artistic paradigm of primordial modernism. Finally, I will discuss the outcome of the competition, scrutinizing the interpersonal relationships of the actors involved and illuminating the processes of organization and decision-making. Discerning the network of micro-power that was shaping symphonic scene in the interwar Yugoslavia, it will be possible to show why the original ideas of

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the open competition were very hard to implement in the Belgrade music scene.

Primordial Modernism in Interwar Yugoslav Music

The term “primordial modernism” was originally coined by Aleksandar Ignjatović to describe certain characteristics which were characteristic in oeuvres of a number of interwar Yugoslav architects.² Ignjatović’s insight can be very useful in illuminating certain features of interwar music production in Yugoslavia.³ Primordial modernism is not defined as an artistic or musical style in strict sense, as a firmly determined set of compositional procedures. Its definition relies on the set of values which were promoted by the Yugoslav state politics in the 1930s and which were praised in artistic production. Namely, primordial modernism comprises two seemingly divergent images of interwar Yugoslav society: the one which embodied a vision of Yugoslavia as a modern European nation which has firmly set foot on the path of progress, and the second, which spoke of Yugoslavia as a primordial nation whose people share deeply embedded and inherited common ‘racial’ traits which defy the diversity of historical and cultural legacies of particular ‘tribes’.

Although the government strived to present Yugoslavia forged by the Treaty of Versailles as a modern European nation, this image was fraught with many contradictions. The newly established Kingdom’s the economy was primarily based on agriculture and most of its population lived in rural areas and suffered with illiteracy. However, from the very beginning the identity of the Kingdom was based on the imagery of Yugoslavia as a modern, industrialized European state.⁴ As part of this imagery modernism in the arts was embraced, supposedly epitomizing the positivistic belief in progress and evolution.⁵ Indeed, Yugoslav society may have been incapable in exercising its European models on the socio-economic level, but in the

²Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904–1941* [Yugoslavism in architecture 1904–1941], Beograd 2007.

³Cf. Srđan Atanasovski, “Ideology of Yugoslav Nationalism and Primordial Modernism in Interwar Music”, in: *Musicology* 11 (2011), pp. 235–250.

⁴Cf. Branka Prpa-Jovanović, *Jugoslavija kao moderna država u viđenjima srpskih intelektualaca 1918–1929* [Yugoslavia as a modern state in the visions of Serbian intellectuals 1918–1929], Ph.D. dissertation, Univerzitet u Beogradu 1995, pp. 316–317.

⁵Cf. Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi*, see note 1, p. 231.

field of art and culture it seemed ready for a rapid transition and open to radical changes. Thus, it was considered inappropriate for art which was to represent the new Kingdom to be in an out-dated style of the nineteenth-century romanticism and academism, deemed as banal, lacking originality and trite: only through contemporary, cutting-edge compositional style the newly-born Yugoslav nation could be properly represented. One can note that Belgrade bourgeoisie, which considered itself to be the cultural and intellectual elite of the new state, was especially prone to modernistic shifts in art.⁶ Finally, many of the artists who were active in the interwar period had been educated in the major European cultural centres and they endeavoured to oppose dilettantism in their fields. For them, professing state-of-the-art modernism in their fields became part of their professional etiquette and pride.

Envisioning Yugoslavia as one ‘integral’ nation, where Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were interpreted as three different ‘tribes’ which merely became estranged due to different historical and cultural circumstances, was the gist of the ideology of ‘integral Yugoslavism’. This ideology was advocated by the state structures and the ruling dynasty of Karađorđević, and which became an open state policy during the dictatorship of King Aleksandar I, beginning in 1929 and ending with his assassination in 1934. In the realm of politics, integral Yugoslavism was tied up with supporting a unitary, non-federal state organization and its champions were mainly the members of the Serbian political elite, who tried to counterweight the secessionist and confederalist ambitions of Croat and Slovene politicians. Integral Yugoslavism naturally relied on the discourse that is described as primordial theories of nation, claiming that members of every nation are bound together by certain ancestral biogenetic features by which they differentiated from members of other nations or races. Proponents of integral Yugoslavism bemoaned the alienation of the three Yugoslav tribes and were keen to show that Yugoslav people shared similar rural culture, remnants of their common ‘primordial’ or pre-historic legacy, which had not been distorted by alien cultural influences.⁷

⁶Cf. Peđa J. Marković, *Beograd i Evropa 1918–1941. Evropski uticaji na proces modernizacije Beograda* [Belgrade and Europe 1918–1941. European influences in the process of modernization of Belgrade], Beograd 1992, p. 169.

⁷For more details cf.: Jovo Bakić, *Ideologije jugoslovenstva između srpskog i hrvatskog nacionalizma 1918–1941: sociološko-istorijska studija* [Ideology between Serbian and

Primordial modernism was articulated in Yugoslav art by the end of 1920s and beginning of 1930s as a specific kind of modernist art production which, on the one hand, aspired to keep in line with the cutting-edge European modernism,⁸ and on the other, made use of ‘national’ elements derived from rural folk art. However, in accordance with their modernist stance, the usage of folk material had to be exercised in such a way that would reveal the deeper, ‘psychological’, primitive, prehistoric layers of folklore heritage.⁹ Artists tried to discover the basic foundations of the folklore art and to incorporate it into their modernistic idiom. This kind of attitude was clearly present in music art. Miloje Milojević (1884–1946), one of the leading Belgrade and Yugoslav composers and music writers of the day, penned an essay in which he tried to give advices concerning artistic approaches to folklore in which he stated that “we have to be more careful in finding and choosing what is ‘ours’”.¹⁰ Engaging in a debate on distinct historical ‘layers’ in musical folk material, and arguing that composers need to search for those which are as ancient as possible and which would truly embody the primordial spirit of the Yugoslav nation, Milojević reminds his readers that “it is important to illuminate that very deep source to its end, because deep down, at the bottom, lie the gemstones of our musical folklore”.¹¹ Milojević was active in arguing for advancing the studies of musical folklore and using them as a bedrock of “our musical-national style”, by means of transposing it through procedures of modern music art:

Croatian Nationalism 1918–1941: A Sociological-Historical Study], (Zrenjanin, *Gradska narodna biblioteka Žarko Zrenjanin*, 2004).

⁸Ignjatović believes that the breakthrough of modernism was enabled by dictatorship and considers interwar modernism in architecture as a “deviation of primordialistic art which proved to be very operative”; Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi*, see note 1, p. 233.

⁹Architect Branislav Kojić(1899–1987)provides an example of this sort of artistic direction, as he tried to base his constructions on the models he had found in vernacular rural architecture in Yugoslavia. He also authored the Art Pavilion of *Cvijeta Zuzorić society*; on the open competition held by the Ministry of Education, jury opted for Kojić's submission, adding that he succeeded in consistently treating the architectonic form in accordance with folk (vernacular) spirit (*Archive of Yugoslavia*, Belgrade, fund 66 folder 626–1034).

¹⁰Miloje Milojević, *Muzičke studije i članci* [Studies and articles on music], vol. 1, Beograd 1926, pp. 146–147.

¹¹Idem.

Because national style in art derives from an idiom of primitive, folk art, and is developed from these idioms. National musical style is: the raising of primitive artistic elements, which result from the intuition of ‘simple souls’, people, the folk, to the heights of an intricate and culturally elaborate art of a formed style, which has merit even when looked upon from the highest artistic point of view.¹²

Another important music writer and composer who shared this attitude was Antun Dobronić (1878–1955), an important example of a Croatian composer who opted for integral Yugoslavism during the interwar period. He thought that Yugoslav composers should form “a particular musical expression of our race”, basing it on ‘deep’, ‘psychological’ layers of the folklore art and at the same time applying modern artistic procedures: “the psychological content of our musical folklore is actually the only true source of our genuine national, not only primary, folk, but also higher, artistic musical culture”.¹³

***Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić* and its musical activities**

Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić was founded in Belgrade in 1922 on initiative of Branislav Nušić (1864–1938), prominent Serbian writer who was head of the *Department of Art* at the *Ministry of Education*, and it was active until the onset of the German occupation, in 1941.¹⁴ The mission of the society was to encourage interest in art and to “create the conditions for its progress and development in our people”.¹⁵ The task of the society was to draw public attention to the local artistic production and

¹²Milojević, *Muzičke studije*, see note 9, pp. 137–147. Cf. Aleksandar Vasić, “Problem nacionalnog stila u napisima Miloja Milojevića” [The issue of national style in the writings of Miloje Milojević], in: *Muzikologija* 7 (2007), pp. 231–244.

¹³Antun Dobronić, “Križa i problem morala u našem muzičkom životu (II)” [Crises and the problem of morality in our music life], in: *Zvuk* 3 (1935), p. 118. Cf. Roksanda Pejović, “Antun Dobronić i njegovi napisi publikovani u Beogradu” [Antun Dobronić and his writings published in Belgrade], in: *Međimurje* 13/14 (1988), pp. 165–171.

¹⁴For details on *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* see Radina Vučetić, *Evropa na Kalemegdanu. “Cvijeta Zuzorić” i kulturni život Beograda 1918–1941* [Europe on the Kalemegdan. The “Cvijeta Zuzorić” Society and the Cultural Life of Belgrade 1918–1941], Beograd 2003.

¹⁵*Historical Archive of the City of Belgrade*, fund *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić*, folder 3a.

especially invite Belgrade middle and upper class to support high art.¹⁶ The idea was that *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* should be run by the women of prominent Belgrade politicians, which would bring considerable social capital and enable sponsorship of the modern art by the Belgrade financial elite, including the royal family itself. However, this arrangement also resulted in strong and unambiguous influence of the state cultural politics throughout the whole period of existence of the society, which seem to have been especially pronounced in its musical activities.¹⁷ For example, the society regularly organized events promoting shared Yugoslav and pan-Slavic identity and fostering cultural ties within the country, as well as events which were in accordance with the kingdom's foreign policy, such as the ones promoting culture of France and Czechoslovakia, etc.

Observing its musical production, the history of the society can be divided into three periods: the first, initial, covers the period from the founding of the society to the launching of the *National Conservatory* in 1925, the second encompasses the activities of the *National Conservatory* up to 1932, and the third period includes the open competitions for new Yugoslav music compositions, organized between 1934 and 1941. The first period is characterized by irregular musical activity, and frequent cooperation with the literary and visual arts section of the society. Music programs were thus often held as part of artistic soirées, matinées, or exhibitions. The pronounced openness and proclivity of the society towards modernism in art was clearly established in these initial activities. One of the flagship events in this period was the artistic soirées entitled *1002nd Night* and fashioned after surrealist avant-garde soirées held in Paris, whereas the main music piece on the programme, ballet *Sobareva metla* (*Le balai du valet*) by Miloje Milojević, was closely modelled on Erik Satie's *Parade*.¹⁸

¹⁶Cf. Marković, *Beograd i Evropa*, see note 5, p. 179.

¹⁷Cf. Srđan Atanasovski, "Muzička delatnost Udruženja prijatelja umetnosti *Cvijeta Zuzorić* u kontekstu kulturne politike Kraljevine Jugoslavije" [Music activity of the *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić* in the context of the cultural politics of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia], in: *Likovi i lica muzike* [Figures and visages of music], ed. by Ivana Perković-Radak and Tijana Popović-Mladenović, Beograd 2010, pp. 207–224.

¹⁸Cf. Biljana Milanović, "Sobareva metla: bliskost s evropskom avangardom" [*Le balai du valet*: closeness with the european avant-garde], in: *Kompozitorsko stvaralaštvo Miloja Milojevića* [The Works of the Composer Miloje Milojević], ed. by Melita Milin and Vlastimir Peričić, Beograd 1998, pp. 262–277; Jelena Arnautović, "Korak ispred vremena: dijalog Miloja Milojevića sa francuskim neoklasicizmom u baletu *Sobareva metla*" [Step ahead of time: the dialogue of Miloja Milojevića with French neoclassi-

The society initiated the *National Conservatory* in 1925, which was in fact a regular series of concerts meant to enrich the music life of the capital. The concerts usually took place twice per month, and they were of variable content and quality, often with educational purposes. As the quality started deteriorating (especially after 1929) and the Belgrade music life became richer, the management felt that this was not the real purpose of the society and with the season of 1932 closed *National Conservatory*. As a better way to foster modern music production of young composers, the music management of the society decided to organize open competitions for new Yugoslav compositions on a yearly basis in specific genres which were outlined in the propositions. In the period between 1934 and 1941 they conducted five open competitions, awarding money prizes to best submitted compositions and holding the concerts of laureates. The inaugural competition in 1934–1935 was open for new symphonic pieces, in 1936 and 1940 they invited composers to submit chamber music, in 1938 they held an opera competition, and, finally, in 1941 best new Yugoslav art songs were praised. In this period of *Cvijeta Zuzorić society's* musical activities the paradigm of primordial modernism is most vivid – almost all of the awarded pieces satisfied both the demands of modernism and of ‘psychological’ employment of folk material.¹⁹

The Context of Yugoslavian Symphonism and Its Institutions

When the society *Cvijeta Zuzorić* decided to start its open competitions with a quest for new Yugoslav symphonic pieces in 1934–1935, the institutions of Yugoslavian symphonism were still in the formative stage. The oldest orchestras in the city, the *Orchestra of the Royal Guard* and the *Orchestra of the Belgrade Opera*, featured repertoire which was narrowly suited to their respective purposes: the former playing mostly military and other occasional works, and the latter accompanying opera performances, dominantly of nineteenth-century Italian provenance. Two fairly modest ensembles which assumed educational and enlightening role in Bel-

cism in ballet *Le balai du valet*], in: *Tradicija kao inspiracija* [Tradition as inspiration], ed. by Sonja Marinković and Sanda Dodik, Banja Luka 2010, pp. 72–86.

¹⁹As exemplary cases one can cite Antun Dobronić's *Yugoslav Ballad* for cello and piano (where composer openly emulates the manner of performance on the traditional instrument gusle in the part of the violoncello) and Zvonimir Bradić's (1904–1997) Piano Trio (employing highly chromaticized harmonies, pentatonic and fragmented folk melodic), which were awarded in 1936.

grade music life – the *Orchestra of the Music Society Stanković* and *Collegium musicum* (founded in 1925, consisting of music teachers, students and amateurs) – also did not venture outside conventional classic and romantic repertoire. The greatest hopes were installed in the newly founded *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra*, established in 1923. However, due to circumstances the membership of the philharmonic orchestra did not significantly differ from other Belgrade orchestras. It initially consisted of musicians already playing in opera orchestra, Belgrade music teachers and a few amateurs. Stevan Hristić (1885–1958), one of the leading Serbian composers and conductors of these days, assumed the role of the founder, remaining on the position of chief conductor until 1934. Controversially, Hristić was concurrently active as an opera conductor and the director of *National Theatre's Opera* in Belgrade, in the period between 1924 and 1935. Due to the circumstances, Hristić seems to have regarded his role more as an enlightener than a promoter of modern art, and his own oeuvre also remained firmly on the grounds of *fin-de-siècle* post-romanticism.²⁰ Overall, post-romanticism constituted a sort of ‘glass ceiling’ for the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra*, at least up to the mid-1930s, as its repertoire seldom ventured outside this limit. The outline of this repertoire was laid down already at the inauguration concert, which featured works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Richard Wagner.²¹ Even in this repertoire the philharmonic

²⁰Among Hristić's main achievements are oratorio *Vaskrsenje* (Resurrection, premiered in 1912), influenced by impressionism and contemporary Italian sacral vocal-instrumental music, and ballet *Ohridska legenda* (Legend of Ohrid, began in 1928, premiered in 1947), which fell under strong influence of Russian fairy-tale operas and ballets. Cf. Katarina Tomašević, *Na raskršću Istoka i Zapada. O dijalogu tradicionalnog i modernog u srpskoj muzici (1918–1941)* [At the crossroads of the East and the West: On dialogue between the traditional and the modern in Serbian music], Beograd and Novi Sad 2009, pp. 35–46; Nadežda Mosusova, “Izvori inspiracije ‘Ohridske legende’ Stevana Hristića” [Sources of inspiration for “Ohridska legenda” by Stevan Hristić], in: *Muzikološki zbornik* 25 (1989), pp. 67–79.

²¹What is now regarded as the first concert of *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* was in fact a concert played by members of opera orchestra and the teachers of *Belgrade Music School* on 28th of April 1923. The formal founding of the philharmonic orchestra, entailing the election of the management and the members of the orchestra, took place few months later, on 13th of June 1923. Roksanđa Pejović, “Pedeset godina Beogradske filharmonije” [Fifty years of the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra*], in: *Beogradska filharmonija 1923–1973* [*Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra 1923–1973*], Beograd 1977, p. 31.

orchestra was not always firm-footed; in his music review in 1928, Branko Dragutinović (1903–1971) noted that on the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* concert which was given to commemorate the jubilee of Czechoslovakia two most monumental tone poems were omitted from the performance of Bedřich Smetana's *Má vlast* (My homeland), while the orchestra lacked rhythmic confidence and artistic deftness.²² These results were conditioned by a number of factors, such as the management, the position of the players and the material conditions of the orchestra. Hristić firmly regulated both the administrative and the artistic issues within the orchestra, dictating the repertoire and conducting himself most of the concerts. Players were in precarious material positions, having meagre wages, and they often had to play in several cities' orchestras in order to make enough money for living. Their schedule was dense, and on some occasions *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* performed with none or just one rehearsal. Finally, the orchestra had no premises of its own and the instruments were often almost unusable.²³

As the 1920s were at their close, it is not surprising that the new generation of Belgrade music critics, who expected the Yugoslav capital to follow the suit of foremost European music centres, was frustrated by the stylistic glass ceiling of the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra*, especially having in mind that the *Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra* was often giving more adventurous concerts. Thus, in the following season of 1929–30, the anonymous critic reflected on the first concert of *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* (which was for the first time broadcasted through newly founded *Radio Belgrade*), featuring some of the already performed works by Franz Schubert, Wagner and Smetana, and asked the organizer to “conform its programme to the needs of today, and to educate the audience of symphonic concerts in the present spirit”.²⁴ The ensuing concert compromised exclusively the works of Yugoslav composers, and the performance of Josip Štolcer-Slavenski (1896–1955) *Balkanofonija* (Balkanophony, 1927; at the time already performed by *Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra*) was one of the

²²Branko Dragutinović, “Iz muzičkog života” [From the musical life], in: *Muzika* 1 (1928), pp. 298.

²³Pejović, “Pedeset godina Beogradske filharmonije”, see note 20, p. 32.

²⁴“Muzički život” [Music life], in: *Glasnik muzičkog društva “Stanković”* 2 (1929), p. 171.

foremost forays of the orchestra into modernism. Nevertheless, the bulk of the programme adhered to the old-fashioned national romanticism.²⁵

The Case of Belgrade Open Competition of 1934–1935

When the music management of the *Cvijeta Zuzorić society*, in June 1934, published the open call for new symphonic pieces which were to be judged anonymously by the jury (as the composers' names were replaced with codes during the jurying), one of the propositions which would be attractive to young composers, beside the money award, was the possibility of having their brand new composition premiered in Belgrade. However, *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* was far from having its own orchestra and for procuring this performance it had to address Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra. Not surprisingly, the society decided to invite Stevan Hristić to preside the jury; amongst other jurors, the name of Rikard Švarc (1897–1942?), the teacher at the *Belgrade Music School*, was recorded.²⁶ The decision of the jury, announced in February 1935, can be most aptly described as compromise, both a stylistic and a generational one. Initially, five orchestral works were awarded with a prize. Two of them conformed to the postromantic model favoured by Hristić and his generation of composers – Petar Stojanović's (1877–1957) symphonic poem *Sava* and Ladislav Grinski's (1904–1941) *Fourth Slavic Rhapsody* – while the other three works satisfied the expectations of the younger generations for establishing a modern Yugoslav symphonic style – Slavko Osterc's (1895–1941) *Passacaglia and Chorale*, Milenko Živković's (1901–1964) *Symphonic prologue* and Mihovil Logar's (1902–1998) symphonic poem *Vesna*.

²⁵ The works of Petar Krstić (1877–1957), Emil Adamič (1877–1936), Stevan Hristić and Krešimir Baranović (1894–1975) were featured on the programme: see “Muzički život” [Music life], in: *Glasnik muzičkog društva “Stanković”* 3 (1930), p. 19. Josip Stolcer-Slavenski established his name as the foremost modern Yugoslav composer during the 1920s. Slavenski oeuvre can also be analysed through the paradigm of primordial modernism, as his contemporaries praised his “skilful perusal of raw, previously unknown folklore material”. See R. Švarc, “Josip Slavenski i njegova klavirska dela” [Josip Slavenski and his piano works], in: *Zvuk* 5 (1933), pp. 167–171; Atanasovski, “Ideology of Yugoslav Nationalism”, see note 2, pp. 243–244. Cf. Mirjana Živković (ed.), *Josip Slavenski i njegovo doba* [Josip Slavenski and his era], Beograd 2006.

²⁶ Hristić was already a part of *Cvijeta Zuzorić's* music management in 1923 and 1924. If not noted otherwise, the data on the open competition is given accordingly to the archive material, containing official records, concert programme and press clipping; *Historical Archive of the City of Belgrade*, fund *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić*, folder 785.

Following the public announcement of the results, a controversy ensued, sparked by Svetomir Nastasijević (1902–1979), one of the composers who submitted a piece, but whose work apparently did not merit the society's prize. At the beginning of April 1935, Nastasijević publicly denounced the jurying, firstly publishing parts of his correspondence with the society's management in the journal *Život i rad* (where he was employed as a music critic), and then entering polemic in the newspaper *Pravda*, where he provoked responses from other persons involved. The question arose whether Živković's *Symphonic prologue* satisfied the requirements of the competition in sense that it had to be a previously unperformed and unpublished piece, as well as submitted anonymously. Živković claimed that it was a substantially revised version of his piece *Epikon* (Epicon), already performed in Czechoslovakia and broadcasted by Prague Radio which could be heard in Yugoslavia as well. Although for this broadcast the work was indeed advertised as *Symphonic prologue*, Živković claimed that, being generally opposed to programme-music designations, he switched the title in last moment, and that, notwithstanding the same title, the piece submitted to Cvijeta Zuzorić's competition was considerably different. However, as Nastasijević pointed out, Stevan Hristić had had insight into the score of *Epikon/Symphonic prologue* and it was unlikely that, despite the revision, he could not have guessed the identity of the author, which would compromise the anonymity of the submission itself. Finally, the jury decided to withdraw Živković's prize, but to keep his *Symphonic prologue* on the programme of the concert of laureates, a fact which further exacerbated Nastasijević's irk. The anonymity and fair jurying was further challenged by Nastasijević's claim that he had overheard Logar and Živković discussing the awards ten days before the results were made public, already with an insight who are the authors that will be honoured with the prize. Nastasijević argued that two young composers were on friendly terms with the members of the jury and that they enjoyed a privileged position in the competition. Although the accused ones adamantly denied the charges, this affair casted a shadow onto the purported anonymity of the jurying, and even posed a question whether this process could have been held completely anonymous in a small music filed such as one in Belgrade, as all the persons involved mutually collaborated in various institution, including

Belgrade Opera and Music School, and were often on friendly terms with each other.²⁷

The concert of laureates, where the awarded pieces were given a premiere by the Belgrade philharmonic orchestra, was organized by *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* on 16th of April 1935 under the title “Yugoslav music festival” (Jugoslovenski muzički festival). Petar Stojanović and Milenko Živković conducted their compositions, while Stevan Hristić presided over the rest of the programme. This event reverberated throughout Belgrade cultural landscape, attracted enviable attention by the press and produced the much-desired social impact raising questions such as the importance of symphonic music production and the attitude towards modernism. The concert was seen by the Belgrade public as an opportunity to foster production of modern Yugoslav symphonic music, which was regarded as dangerously undeveloped. The piece which was unanimously the most praised one was Slavko Osterc’s *Passacaglia and Chorale*. The compositional style of this Slovene Ljubljana-based composer is often regarded as both expressionist and neoclassical, and he was recognized as the leading figure of modernism in Yugoslav music, inspired by Arnold Schoenberg and Alois Hába.²⁸ *Passacaglia and Chorale* is an overall deftly orchestrated work of strikingly chromatic melodic material, with prominent use of brass instruments section. The work was praised in the press for its firm logical and consequential structure (leading to the final climax in the chorale), contemporary musical style, bold renunciation of diatonic system and adoption of Hindemithian harmonic solutions. The controversial Milenko Živković’s *Symphonic prologue* was judged as densely orchestrated, Stravinsky-inspired piece that was rife with passionate outbursts but lacked a formal rigour. Mihovil

²⁷The information on the symphonic piece submitted by Svetomir Nastasijević is lost. The composer’s name was never within the laureates of *Cvijeta Zuzorić’s* competitions, although it is not known if he submitted any further works. Nastasijević was often decried by other music critics as lacking deftness and through music education, and his own style rarely ventured outside romanticism and academism of the nineteenth century. He was generally absent from the music repertoire of *Cvijeta Zuzorić*, except one evening concert dedicated solely to his works in which organization the general management of the society (being on friendly terms with Nastasijević family) overrode the music section management, that apparently did not see Svetomir Nastasijević’s oeuvre as epitomizing the modernist values the society stood for.

²⁸Cf. Ivan Klemenčič, “Slavko Osterc med neoklasicizmom in ekspresionizmom” [Slavko Osterc between neoclassicism and expressionism], in: *Muzikološki zbornik* 31 (1995), pp. 11–23.

Logar's symphonic poem *Vesna*, dedicated to old Slavic deity symbolizing spring, attracted attention with innovative rhythm, but was similarly reprimanded for the 'pubertal gasping' and incoherent alternation of lyric episodes and 'anxious' sections.

As already noted, Petar Stojanović's and Ladislav Grinski's awarded works were firmly rooted in late nineteenth-century music style. Stojanović's symphonic poem *Sava* was clearly modelled on Bedřich Smetana's *Vltava*: it follows the river Sava, the longest in Yugoslavian kingdom, stretching from Slovenian Alps on the west to Belgrade on the east, where it flows into the Danube. It interpolates the leitmotif of the river with various folk-inspired episodes, concluding with the jovial finale portraying the capital and featuring the national anthem. Thus, firmly attached to the Yugoslav national program, the composition was subtitled at its premiere as "the river of the unified Yugoslavs". Both Stojanović's and Grinski's works (the latter now being lost) were heavily decried in the press by Dragutin Čolić (1907–1987), representative of the younger generation of Belgrade music critics, as "two completely insignificant works which could at best case be performed on brass music concerts before the start of some football match".

Of all the (initially) awarded works only Milenko Živković's *Symphonic prologue* was clear representative of the primordial modernism that *Cvijeta Zuzorić society* was trying to promote. On the modernist side it featured accentuated chords based on superimposed perfect fifths, as well as polytonality. Portraying the 'primitive' layers of the folk music, and being influenced by Igor Stravinsky, Živković employed intense rhythmical structures and thematic material of narrow ambitus, sometimes restrained at just major second. Finally, shaping the thematic material, Živković used pentatonic for the first subject, but straightforward folk song "*Se zalubiv edno mome*" of Macedonian provenance (which would then be considered as synonymous for 'Southern Serbian') for the second.²⁹ To some extent, Mihovil Logar's symphonic poem (or a symphonic scherzo with piano *obbligato*) *Vesna* can also be observed through lens of primordial modernism: described as a vision of Slav mythology, it was also likely inspired by Stravinsky's portrait of 'pagan', ritual music. Still judged as juvenile work, it featured dexterous orchestration and what was regarded

²⁹Enriko Josif, *Milenko Živković*, Beograd 2009, pp. 30–42.

as modern rhythms “of the today’s time”.³⁰

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Circumstances of the *Cvijeta Zuzorić*’s open competition of 1934–1935 clearly show the complexity of obstacles which prevented the rise of modernism in Yugoslav symphonic music in general, as well as the articulation of primordial modernism in particular. Both the traditional and the newly founded institutions of symphonic music in Belgrade were deeply conservative. This attitude was not prescribed as a sort of cultural politic, but it permeated the system of symphonic music production as a silent doxa. Staging concerts of symphonic music was almost utterly impossible outside existing institutions, and the cooperation with them often resulted in heavy compromises, as the result of unavoidable cooperation with the key conservative-orientated figures, such as Stevan Hristić, but also due to the performers’ and the listeners’ attitude. Both the performers and the public of the symphonic music were mostly brought up on standard operatic repertoire, and their ability to perform and wish to listen to modern music was often modest and limited. However, ultimately, it has to be stressed that the insufficient dexterity of the composers who were keen to venture into symphonic modernism following the precepts of primordial modernism (and the ideology of integral Yugoslavism) was also part of the problem.

It seemed that the late 1930s were to bring change into the symphonic repertoire in Belgrade, bringing modernism into the foreground. After Hristić stepped down as the head of *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* in 1934, being replaced by Lovro Matačić (1899–1985), one of the key signals in this direction was the performance of *Pacific 231* by Arthur Honegger in 1938.³¹ However, this was not reflected in the orchestra’s choice of Yugoslav authors. Paradigmatically, the ‘national repertoire’ performed on the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* tour in 1937, visiting neighbouring Romania and Bulgaria, clearly showed the conspicuous conservatism of this institu-

³⁰Roksanda Pejović, “Mihovil Logar (1902–1998) u srpskom muzičkom stvaralaštvu – skica za portret” [Mihovil Logar (1902–1998) in the Serbian Musical Work – Sketch for a Portrait], in: *Allegretto giocoso – stvaralački opus Mihovila Logara* [Allegretto giocoso – the Compositional Work of Mihovil Logar], ed. by Roksanda Pejović, Beograd 2008, p. 76; cf. Jelena Milojković-Đurić, “Učešće Mihovila Logara u radu društva *Cvijeta Zuzorić*” [Mihovil Logar’s participation in the activities of the *Cvijeta Zuzorić* society], in: *Idem*, pp. 39–43.

³¹Tomašević, *Na raskršću Istoka i Zapada*, see note 19, pp. 96–97.

tion in that regard.³² The Belgrade music writers thus remained highly critical of Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, condemning its reluctance to dedicate itself to contemporary modern Yugoslav symphonic production. Concurrently, the *Society of Friends of Art Cvijeta Zuzorić* continued with its open competitions, fostering the production of modern Yugoslav music in other genres. While the opera competition held in 1938 faced very similar obstacles (leaving the awarded Logar's opera unperformed),³³ in chamber music the society finally found fertile ground where it could promote the primordial modernism and the ideology of integral Yugoslavism with much less institutional and practical obstacles, although with much less public attention it strove for.

³²The repertoire consisted of works by Miloje Milojević, Stanislav Binički (1872–1942), Petar Krstić, Stevan Hristić, Krešimir Baranović, Josip Slavenski and Petar Stojanović; Tomašević, *Na raskršću Istoka i Zapada*, see note 19, p. 97.

³³Cf. Srđan Atanasovski, “Staging Yugoslav Primordial Modernism: *Cvijeta Zuzorić* Open Opera Competition and Logar's *Sablazan u dolini Šentflorjanskoj*”, in: *Music and /for/ the Stage*, ed. by Primož Kuret, Ljubljana 2014, pp. 134–142.