

CRITICAL MUSIC HISTORIOGRAPHY: PROBING
CANONS, IDEOLOGIES AND INSTITUTIONS

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Critical Music Historiography: Probing Canons, Ideologies and Institutions

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Chapter 11

The Roots of a National Music Canon and the Taboo of Composing Folk Tunes: The Case of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac's Garlands

Srđan Atanasovski¹

The cycle of 15 garlands, or folk-song medleys composed by Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century forms the core of the Serbian art music canon. Thus, it is not surprising that vindicating Mokranjac's 'originality' has been one of the main objectives of Serbian musicological discourse. Arguing against what had been seen as a rude dismissal of Mokranjac's garlands in the writings of some of his contemporaries, who called them 'arrangements' instead of 'artworks', later musicologists insisted that Mokranjac invested an original and artistic contribution in composing the garlands, while capturing the true spirit of Serbian folk-song.

Paradoxically, while a lot of ink has been spilled over the matter, the possibility that some of the melodic material in the garlands was actually composed and not 'collected' by Mokranjac has rarely been mentioned, even in the cases where there is clear evidence of this. Instead, some ethnomusicologists have considered the tunes from the garlands as almost equivalent to ethnomusicological transcriptions, supporting the argument that Mokranjac sublimed the spirit of Serbian folk music in his compositions. Thus, two taboos have been formed in modern Serbian musicological discourse which effectively regulate scholarship on Mokranjac: the *explicit* taboo, under which it is unacceptable to refer to Mokranjac's garlands as an arrangement; and the *tacit* taboo, which keeps the issue of the author's 'composing the folk-tunes' unacknowledged. In order to challenge these taboos I will start with examining the reception of Mokranjac's garlands by his contemporaries as well as Mokranjac's compositional methods. Arguing that garlands were in fact initially *erroneously* perceived as arrangements (as a number of songs were in fact

¹ This chapter was written as part of the project Serbian Musical Identities within Local and Global Frameworks: Traditions, Changes, Challenges (no. 177004/2011–2014), funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Serbia. I wish to thank Thomas Hilder, Ivana Medić and the editors for their helpful comments and suggestions.

composed and not recorded), I wish to address broader issues of the idea of an ‘authentic folk-song’ in nationalism and national canon formation.

Canonizing Mokranjac

Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (born in Negotin in eastern Serbia in 1856 and died in Skopje in 1914 during the First World War) was the most prominent Serbian composer at the turn of the twentieth century. Mokranjac gained his musical education in the leading European centres of Munich, Rome and Leipzig, as he was awarded a scholarship firstly by Beogradsko pevačko društvo (the Belgrade Choir Society) and later by the state, which allowed him to gain insights into contemporary techniques of harmony and counterpoint. Besides being widely acclaimed as a composer of choral music, Mokranjac was one of the most important figures in Serbian musical life. In 1887 he was named chief conductor of the Belgrade Choir Society, the most distinguished Serbian choir society of the time and one that acted under the patronage of the royal family. Mokranjac held this post until his death. He was also one of the founders of the first string quartet in Belgrade (1889) and of the first music school in Serbia (Srpska muzička škola, 1899); and in 1906 he was elected corresponding member of Srpska kraljevska akademija (the Serbian Royal Academy).

Mokranjac held considerable social capital.² He was a member of the Freemason’s lodge which brought together the Belgrade liberal bourgeoisie elite, and he was in regular contact with some of the leading politicians and intellectuals of the day, such as the writer Branislav Nušić and the historian Stojan Novaković.³ Last but not least, Mokranjac was a teacher and a friend of many leading Serbian composers of the next generation, such as Miloje Milojević, Stevan Hristić and Kosta Manojlović, to mention a few.

The vast majority of Mokranjac’s compositional output was dedicated to choral music.⁴ Continuing the tradition of choir conductors, he wrote an array of occasional works⁵ and compositions meant to be performed exclusively by

² Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition ... which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital.’ ‘The forms of capital’, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 248.

³ Cf. Biljana Milanović, ‘Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac et les aspects de l’ethnicité et du nationalisme’, *Études balkaniques* 13 (2006): 161–3.

⁴ Notable exceptions are the ballad ‘Lem Edim’ for bass and piano (1894) and stage music for the play *Ivkova slava* (*Ivko’s feast*, 1901).

⁵ Such as *Pozdrav kralju* (Salut to the king, 1893), *Dobrodošlica Nj. V. kraljici Nataliji* (Welcome to HRH Queen Natalija, 1895), *Stupi u sveti hram. Himna Petru I*

his own choir.⁶ Distinguished in this line stands the collection of 15 garlands, or song-wreaths (in Serbian: *rukoveti*), conceived as medleys of Serbian folk-songs.⁷ Garland songs are organized by geographical criteria, stylized as a coherent musical whole and arranged for a cappella choir.⁸ For the songs he included in the garlands, Mokranjac drew on pre-existing works by other composers, folk-song collections of predecessors such as Kornelije Stanković and Franjo Kuhač; incorporated songs that were popular in his urban surroundings; and, finally, collected songs in his own fieldworks.

The first six garlands are subtitled 'from my homeland' (*iz moje domovine*, 1883–92) and the Thirteenth 'from Serbia' (*iz Srbije*, 1907), referring to the extent of the Kingdom of Serbia as defined by its borders according to the 1878 Congress of Berlin. The Ninth garland is 'from Montenegro' (*iz Crne Gore*, 1896), a principality which was also recognized as a sovereign state at the Congress of Berlin; and the Fourteenth is 'from Bosnia' (*iz Bosne*, 1908), an Ottoman province occupied and later annexed by Austro-Hungary. The remaining six garlands refer to the territories which were part of the Ottoman Empire, mostly Kosovo and Macedonia, and which were considered 'Old Serbia' by Serbian intellectuals, who claimed that they were formerly core parts of the Serbian medieval state.⁹ Mokranjac subtitled these 'from Old Serbia and Macedonia' (*iz Stare Srbije i Makedonije*, Seventh garland, 1894); 'from Kosovo' (*sa Kosova*, Eighth and

Karadorđeviću, kralju Srbije (Enter the holy temple. Hymn to the Petar I Karadorđević, king of Serbia, 1903) etc.

⁶ These include arrangements of non-Serbian songs written for specific concert tours, such as Hungarian folk-songs (performed in Budapest, 1894), two Turkish songs (1898) etc.

⁷ During the long nineteenth century it was customary for Serbian composers to arrange folk-songs in more or less interconnected cycles for the purpose of choir singing: see Tatjana Marković, 'Oblik rukoveti u stvaralaštvu Mokranjčevih prethodnika i savremenika' (The song-wreath form in the creative production of Mokranjac's predecessors and contemporaries), in *Simpozijum Mokranjčevi dani 1994–1996* (Negotin: Mokranjčevi dani, 1997), 93–119. This compositional practice was heavily influenced by practices of Middle European and specifically German choir societies, and the genre of *Volkstümliches Lied* which 'stands in the middle between the folksong proper and the art song'. Benedict Widmann, *Die kunsthistorische Entwicklung des Männerchors in drei Vorlesungen dargestellt* (1884), cited in Balázs Mikusi, 'An "invented tradition" for an "imagined community": male choral singing in nineteenth-century Germany', *New Sound* 28 (2007): 130–44.

⁸ The exception is the Fourth garland (1890), composed for soloist, mixed choir, piano and castanets. Mokranjac also arranged some songs from the Eighth garland for voice and piano (1896).

⁹ For example, cf. Miloš S. Milojević, *Putopis dela Prave (Stare) Srbije*, Knj. 1 (Belgrade: Glavna srpska knjižara Jovana D. Lazarevića, 1871); Knj. 2 (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1872; Knj. 3 (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1877).

Twelfth, 1896 and 1906); ‘from Ohrid’ (*sa Ohrida*, Tenth, 1901); ‘from Old Serbia’ (*iz Stare Srbije*, Eleventh, 1905); and ‘from Macedonia’ (*iz Makedonije*, 1909).

The premiere of Mokranjac’s garlands by the Belgrade Choir Society was swiftly followed by the copying and wide distribution of the works through the network of choir societies. The process of sheet music exchange mainly relied on hand copies and lithograph prints produced by the societies themselves. During Mokranjac’s lifetime Glazbena matica in Ljubljana printed the Second, Seventh, Eighth and Tenth garlands (1903) and Savez srpskih pevačkih društava in Sombor printed the Eleventh garland in its 1912 edition of choir scores.

By the time of Mokranjac’s death his garlands had achieved great popularity and formed the cornerstone of the Serbian choir societies’ repertoires. In the interwar period the popularity of the garlands was unremittingly on the rise: in 1922 and 1923 a cycle of ‘four great concerts’ was organized in Belgrade where the whole collection of garlands was performed together with other compositions, including sacred choral works, accompanied by lectures about Mokranjac.¹⁰ Mokranjac’s garlands served as a major reference and folk-song repository for the next generation of Serbian composers. Importantly, Petar Konjović used several musical references to the garlands in what was named the first Serbian Symphony, as well as in his Second String Quartet.¹¹ Mokranjac’s reputation was further solidified in socialist Yugoslavia, as official cultural politics strived to subsume the existing artistic canons.¹²

Mokranjac’s garlands were seen as the artistic conduit of the folk – people’s spirit – and already in the early 1950s numerous editions of the garlands were issued (mainly printed by the state-owned company Prosveta) and widely distributed, second only to ideologically charged patriotic songs.¹³ Finally, in the independent Serbian state which has arisen after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Mokranjac’s status as the most important of the national composers remains unchallenged, which is heavily reflected in the current repertoire of

¹⁰ Stevan Mokranjac, *U spomen Stevanu Mokranjcu (1855–1914). Četiri velika koncerta (1922–1923)* (Belgrade: Štamparija i knjigoveznica Ace Maksimovića, 1922), 1.

¹¹ Cf. Katarina Tomašević, ‘Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac and the inventing of tradition: a case study of the song “Cvekje Cafnalo”’, *Musicological Annual* 46 (2010): 37–57.

¹² Having presented them through the prism of ‘Marxist aesthetics’, the masterpieces of the arts were seen as testimonies of former class struggle endured by the Yugoslav nations on their path to the proclaimed ‘society of equals’; see Siniša Malešević, *Ideology, Legitimacy and the New State: Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia* (London: Routledge, 2002), 141–7.

¹³ On the relation of cultural politics in socialist Yugoslavia towards the issues of folk music cf. Ljerka V. Rasmussen, *Newly Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 15ff. On the shifting meaning of Mokranjac canon and on wider Balkan perspectives see also Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 332–8.

politics and general national and Serbian music institution curricula, as well as in tributes to Mokranjac found in young Serbian composers' oeuvres.¹⁴

Mokranjac's Garlands and the Spectre of Originality

Although replete with laudatory essays, the early reception of Mokranjac's garlands in the written discourse on music, up to the Second World War, was ambivalent and permeated with dissenting voices. In 1918 Konjović published an essay on Mokranjac, where he stated that the garlands are 'simple demotic, folk-songs, vocal arrangements for multiple voices linked together by some congeniality, not only areal, but also internal, deep'. But he also argued that through their excellence they transcend this narrow scope and become true 'artistic compositions' which 'stand firmly on the artistic field'.¹⁵ We can note that, whilst Konjović praised Mokranjac for his artistry, he did not hesitate to point out that the garlands were not unique compositions, but folk-song arrangements. Similarly, Vojislav Vučković, in his essay on Mokranjac published in 1940, admits that Mokranjac 'often, and more than needed, restricted himself to authentic folklore melodies'; but insisted that the garlands were not simple medleys, but were a complex form which 'artistically sublimates' the folklore material.¹⁶

While Konjović and Vučković saw in the garlands the bedrock of further efforts at creating a national Serbian art music, other music writers of the period noted that founding a Serbian tradition of artistic music would require 'original compositions' rather than arrangements. Although he generally commended Mokranjac as a strong 'artistic personality' for whom he has 'infinite esteem', Miloje Milojević stated that in composing garlands Mokranjac remained in the domain of a 'harmonizer' and did not excel as a 'composer-creator'. As the main quality of the garlands Milojević recognized the artful harmonization and skilful choral arrangement.¹⁷ Even more detrimental to Mokranjac's reputation was the comparison to his close contemporary, Josif Marinković, who Milojević favoured for his 'originally created' works, composing 'swayed melodies from his own

¹⁴ See Vesna Mikić, "'Naš" Mokranjac. Tranzicijske kulturne prakse i delo Stevana Mokranjca' ('Our' Mokranjac : Transitional Cultural Practices and the Work by Stevan Mokranjac), *Mokranjac* 14 (2012): 2–12.

¹⁵ The article was printed in the journal *Savremenik* in 1918; cited from a reprint in Petar Konjović, *Knjiga o muzici srpskoj i slavenskoj* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1947), 85–6.

¹⁶ Vojislav Vučković, *Muzički relizam Stevana Mokranjca* (Belgrade: Slavenska muzika, 1940), 14. Vučković was a composer and prominent Marxist, and the main point of his essay was that Mokranjac was as a 'music realist', comparing his oeuvre with Mussorgsky's. The idea of Mokranjac as a realist, and thus a precursor of social realism, would later have a strong influence in the period of socialist Yugoslavia.

¹⁷ Miloje Milojević, 'Umetnička ličnost Stevana St. Mokranjca', in *Muzičke studije i članci. Prva knjiga* (Belgrade: Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1926), 82–118.

soul', surpassing all his rivals.¹⁸ The most scathing criticism of the garlands was penned by Božidar Joksimović in his unpublished manuscript 'Istorija muzike' (History of Music, 1926), where he accused Mokranjac of leading Serbian music into dilettantism deprived of original artistic creations.¹⁹

Post-war Serbian musicology adopted a strong agenda of vindicating Mokranjac's garlands from the charges of lack of originality. Music critics seemed appalled and provoked by the harsh vocabulary used by their predecessors, especially Milojević,²⁰ and their project of defending Mokranjac entailed not only emphasizing all the technical dexterity, musical ingenuity and minute qualities of the garlands, but also a kind of 'language hygiene'; indeed, to refer to Mokranjac's garlands as 'arrangements' became a taboo, an unforgivable offence in musicological scholarship. Claiming in his 1971 essay that Mokranjac 'discovered the synthesis of contemporary and folk music language, on a high professional artistic level', Nikola Hercigonja advised that one must not 'claim that the principles and procedures applied in garlands are folklore arrangements'.²¹ Instead, garlands were referred to as 'vocal rhapsodies'²² which are based on folk *motives* or 'primary material',²³ and the composer's contribution was regularly compared to that of the Russian 'Moguchaya Kuchka' (Mighty Five), Antonín Dvořák, Edvard Grieg or Béla Bartók.

Through copious analysis, the project of vindicating Mokranjac adopted the strategy of proving his compositional excellence in several parallel fields:

¹⁸ Miloje Milojević, 'Josif Marinković', in *Muzičke studije i članci. Druga knjiga* (Belgrade: Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1933), 45–6.

¹⁹ Archive of the Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), collection Legacy of Božidar Joksimović, BJ I/10. For the early reception of Mokranjac's garlands cf. Roksanda Pejović, 'Neka mišljenja starih kritičara o Mokranjcu', *ProMusica* special edition (September 1981): 38–41; and Tijana Popović-Mladenović, 'Mit o originalnosti i recepcija stvaralaštva Stevana Stojanovića Mokranjca u kontekstu pisane reči o muzici' (The myth of originality and the reception of the work of Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac in the context of music writings), in *Mokranjcu na dar. Prošeta – čudnih čuda kažu – 150 godina*, ed. Ivana Perković Radak (Belgrade: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2006), 241–63.

²⁰ Milojević's essay on Mokranjac proved the most controversial, not least because of its own ambiguity. Blending his deep respect for Mokranjac's oeuvre with seemingly harsh labelling of the garlands as 'harmonizations', the author constantly shifts his overall opinion on Mokranjac, and his choice of words is equally emphatic and strong in both directions. The predicament was even greater as Milojević is respected as a prominent writer on music, and the first Serbian musicologist (obtaining his doctorate in Prague in 1925).

²¹ Nikola Hercigonja, 'Marginalije o velikom pionirunašeg muzičkog stvaralaštva', in *Zbornik radova o Stevanu Mokranjcu*, ed. Mihailo Vukdragović (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1971), 181.

²² Mihailo Vukdragović, 'Stevan St. Mokranjac', *Zvuk* 7–8 (1956): 288–91.

²³ Cf. Nadežda Mosusova, 'Mesto Stevana Mokranjca među nacionalnih školama evropske muzike', in *Zbornik radova o Stevanu Mokranjcu*, 121.

harmony, choral writing, ‘dramaturgy’ (including the treatment of the text) and form. However, the early indictments of the garlands still haunted Serbian musicological discourse, and even authors who have recently tried to shelve the whole debate have felt impelled to state their disagreement with them.²⁴

Harbouring the Precious Core of Serbian Folk-Song

While strongly insisting on the garlands’ *originality* as artworks, music critics and musicologists simultaneously and adamantly argued for the *authenticity* of the folk-songs they contained. Thus, in 1956 Petar Bingulac emphasized that Mokranjac ‘did not touch the melody – because it is folklore’.²⁵ Although other analyses proved that Mokranjac in some cases did change the melody, it was claimed that this was done only for the purpose of perfecting it, bringing forward the essence of the ‘folk’ or discarding parts seen as ‘corrupted’ or ‘inauthentic’. Ethnomusicologists have concurred on the topic, even assigning Mokranjac’s garlands the same level of verisimilitude as ethnomusicological transcriptions. This was first done by Vladimir Đorđević, Mokranjac’s contemporary and himself a collector of folk-songs, who praised the garlands highly as a kind of ethnomusicological project. In his preface to an edition of folk-songs from ‘Southern Serbia’ Đorđević warned the reader about the low quality and reliability of previously collected folk-song material, praising Mokranjac as the deftest of collectors, whose work was ‘in every regard, flawless’.²⁶ This attitude persists in Serbian ethnomusicology, and it is paradigmatically present in Dragoslav Dević’s introduction to a volume of Mokranjac’s (actual) ethnomusicological transcriptions, published in 1996:

We know that *Garlands* are based on about 80 odd folk-songs originating from various parts of the country, of which this edition covers 32 songs. We think that Mokranjac’s records should also include the other songs from the *Garlands*, but we did not publish them in this book because they are partly altered by their composer’s treatment.²⁷

²⁴ Cf. Popović-Mladenović, ‘Mit o originalnosti’. It is indicative that contemporary Serbian musicology has adopted the manner of writing out the ‘names’ of the garlands in italics, as titles, and not as generic references, preferring to restrain from translation (e.g. *Prva rukovet* – ‘First garland’).

²⁵ Petar Bingulac, ‘Stevan Mokranjac i njegove rukoveti’, *Godišnjak Muzeja grada Beograda* 3 (1956), 426.

²⁶ Vladimir R. Đorđević, *Srpske narodne melodije* (Skoplje: Skopsko naučno društvo, 1928), xiv.

²⁷ Dragoslav Dević, foreword to Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, *Ethnomusicological Work*, ed. Dević, trans. A.S. Petrović (Belgrade/Knjaževac: Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids/Nota, 1996), xvii.

While Mokranjac's garlands are often perceived as a kind of anthology of Serbian folk-song, the folk origin of the melodies can only be determined for half of the songs.²⁸ And here we find the second taboo – to state that Mokranjac actually *composed* some of the songs is no less a crime than to state that the garlands are arrangements. The authenticity of the garland songs is actually an important argument for praising Mokranjac as the composer who captured the true essence of the Serbian folk-song. Aligning with the views of Vučković and Konjović, Mokranjac was a master of selecting the best and representing what is typical in folk art.²⁹

'Forging' Authenticity: Issues of Contemporary Reception and Compositional Choices

I will now break both taboos by showing, firstly, that Mokranjac's garlands were intended to be perceived as *arrangements* by the contemporary audience and, secondly, that Mokranjac *did compose* at least some tunes included in the garlands. On the basis of the contemporary reception of the garlands, and Mokranjac's organization of them geographically, it is possible to conclude that their purpose was to present the folk-songs from various regions inhabited by Serbs in the form of a skilful arrangement. In the early concert programmes the garlands were generally referred to as medleys of songs; the geographical origins of the musical material were mentioned in the titles of the works, with the description *rukovet* (garland) rarely included. Even in the concert announcement of the Beogradsko pevačko društvo's Russian tour, led by Mokranjac himself, the Eighth garland was referred to as 'Serbian folk-songs from Kosovo'.³⁰ Writing in his travelogue from another tour, Spiro Kalik, Mokranjac's associate, described the Third garland as 'the artful array of Serbian folk-songs'.³¹

Importantly, melodies from Mokranjac's garlands were further promoted as 'authentic folk-songs' in different arrangements for voice and piano, intended for music-making at home. This can be illustrated by two editions printed at the beginning of the twentieth century in Belgrade, compiled by Isidor Bajić and Raja Pavlović. Bajić titles his edition 'Serbian folk-songs and folk-songs from Mokranjac's garlands', setting the latter part of the title in small print (see Figure 11.1). In this edition Bajić appropriated seven songs from the Fifth and Seventh

²⁸ Sonja Marinković, 'Život i rad Stevana Mokranjca u svetlu aktuelnih muzikoloških istraživanja' (Mokranjac's life and work in light of contemporary musicological research), in *Mokranjcu na dar*, 25.

²⁹ Vučković, *Muzički relizam*, 8-15; Petar Konjović, *Stevan St. Mokranjac* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1956), 42-5.

³⁰ Reprinted in *Zbornik radova*.

³¹ Spira Kalik, *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje s Beogradskim pevačkim društvom. putničke beleške* (Belgrade: Tanaskovića, 1894), 49.

garlands, but throughout the edition made no additional comment about whether particular melodies used were derived from Mokranjac's garlands.³² Raja Pavlović signed his edition of 'Serbian folk-songs', volume 2 for piano, as 'collector' (curiously, the edition featured his own picture on the title page, see Figure 11.2), but he included piano arrangements of three songs from Mokranjac's Seventh and Eighth garlands ('Džanum na sred selo', 'Poseja dedo' and 'Skoč' kolo'), making no reference whatsoever to the source of the musical material.³³ In both cases editors left the tunes almost intact, together with most of the expression marks, and it is certain that Mokranjac was their only source.³⁴

The importance of the authenticity and even documentary style of Mokranjac's work was especially pronounced in the case of the six garlands from 'Old Serbia', as Mokranjac's bourgeois audience in Serbia and Austro-Hungary was not well acquainted with the musical folklore of these areas under Ottoman rule. With the exception of three songs from the Fifth garland in Bajić's edition, all the songs appropriated by Bajić and Pavlović originated from Mokranjac's Seventh and Eighth garlands. These garlands suited the popular discourse of travelogues from 'Old Serbia', which encompassed not only literary works but also demographic and ethnographic reviews, photojournalism, works of visual art etc.³⁵

For the purpose of composing these garlands, Mokranjac travelled to Kosovo in 1896, and he later collected songs in Macedonia. Whereas in the case of the garlands from Serbia ('My homeland') Mokranjac left few preparatory transcriptions, most of the songs and texts included in the garlands from 'Old Serbia' can be found in his notebooks.³⁶ It is thus particularly intriguing to pose a question as to whether Mokranjac actually composed some of the songs included in these six garlands himself, contrary to the belief of his contemporaries. Comparing

³² Bajić also included the song 'Što to mice kroz šibljice', which is eponymous with the opening song of the Fifth garland but features a considerably different tune. Isidor Bajić, *Srpske narodne pesme i narodne pesme iz Mokranjčevih rukoveti* (Belgrade: Dvorska knjižara Mite Stajića, s.a.).

³³ Raja Pavlović, *Srpske narodne pesme* (Vienna: Josef Eberle, s.a.).

³⁴ Bajić is somewhat freer in the case of the songs from the Fifth garland (in 'Povela je Jela' he made significant metric changes). It is important to note that even in the cases where Mokranjac used his own ethnomusicological transcription to write a song for the garland, he often made conspicuous changes in the tune, and in the cases where other sources of the tunes exist they are never identical. For example, 'Maro, Resavkinjo', which is present in the Second garland, is dramatically different from the version in the edition for piano and voice by Josif Svoboda (Svoboda, *Sbirka srbských národních i oblíbených Písni a Tancův*, vol. 2, Prague: Urbánek, s.a., 10). For Mokranjac's changes to the tunes cf. Dragoslav Dević, 'Neke narodne melodije u Rukovetima Stevana Mokranjca', in *Zbornik radova*, 39–67 and Srđan Atanasovski, 'Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac and Producing the Image of Serbian Folk-Song: Garlands from "Old Serbia" as a Form of Musical Travelogue', *Musicological Annual* 48 (2012): 75–90.

³⁵ For more details cf. Atanasovski, 'Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac'.

³⁶ These are edited and published in Mokranjac, *Ethnomusicological Work*.



Figure 11.1
Title page of Isidor
Bajić's edition of
'Serbian folk-songs'

the musical garlands to the transcriptions from his fieldwork, it is possible to find three clear cases where Mokranjac completely disregarded the melody he recorded and seemingly decided to compose the melody himself, using only the text of the songs. These examples are the last song in the Seventh garland, 'Varaj, Danke, gizdava devojko' (Beguile, Danka, beautiful maid); the first song in the Tenth garland, 'Biljana platno beleše' (Biljana whitened her linen); and the third song in the Eleventh garland, 'Oj, Lenko, Lenko, Stavrova kjerko' (Lenka, Lenka, Stavro's daughter). In Mokranjac's fieldwork transcriptions the melodies of the first and the last song are very much alike, being modest tunes with small ambitus, while the second is an urban Macedonian folk-song popular already in Mokranjac's time which he probably noted down in Belgrade and later used in his music for the stage play *Ivkova slava*.³⁷

However, in contrast to Mokranjac's fieldwork transcriptions, all three of the songs in the garlands feature vivacious, quick-paced and sweeping melodies which mostly follow the contours of the tonic six-four chord, making it feasible to conclude that these songs are indeed thoroughly composed (cf. Examples

³⁷ Cf. Đorđe Perić, "'Biljana", pesma sa Ohrida, u folklornim zapisima Mokranjčevim. Od pesme i legende do – Ohridske legende', *Razvitak* 32, 3/4 (1992): 66–74.



Figure 11.2
Title page of Raja
Pavlović's edition of
'Serbian folk-songs'

11.1–11.3). Moreover, they play an important role in the overall structure of the corresponding garlands: 'Varaj, Danke' builds a climactic closure to the Seventh garland; 'Biljana platno beleše' provides an enthusiastic opening for the Tenth garland; and 'Oj, Lenko' serves as a much-needed contrasting section in the Eleventh garland.

Example 11.1 Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, 'Varaj, Danke, gizdava devojko', Seventh garland (soprano part, m. 158–61)

Allegro giocoso

pp Va - raj, Da - ke, gi - zda - va de - voj - ko

Example 11.2 Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, 'Biljana platno beleše', Tenth garland (soprano part, m. 1–5)

Allegretto grazioso

mf Bi - lja - na pla - tno be - le še

Example 11.3 Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac, 'Oj, Lenko, Lenko, Stavrova kjerko', Eleventh garland (tenor part, m. 97–100)

Allegro

*P*Oj, Len- ko, Len- ko, Sta-vro-va kjer- ko, oj, Len- ko, Len- ko, Sta-vro- va_kjer-ko

Vindicating *Biljana's* 'Authenticity'

Being unknown to the wider public, 'Varaj, Danke' and 'Oj, Lenko' did not provoke any controversy, and Bajić even included the former in his edition of 'folk-songs'. However, the case of 'Biljana platno beleše' became contentious since the original song grew in popularity just as Mokranjac's Tenth garland became one of his most praised and most performed accomplishments.³⁸ The two songs bore the same text but had radically different melodies in respect to both contour and character, and the situation begged for an explanation. Commentators mostly argued along two lines: the first is that Mokranjac's song actually *is* authentic and recorded in the field; and the second is that the popular song became corrupted and that, in his version, Mokranjac tried to salvage the true folk spirit of the song by recomposing it. The exegesis offered by Vladimir Đorđević in his 1928 collection of folk-songs from 'southern Serbia' is striking and illustrates how Mokranjac's songs from the garlands were venerated as examples of true folklore tradition. Although in his own fieldwork Đorđević noted a variant of the popular 'Biljana platno beleše', he vehemently argued the case of authenticity of Mokranjac's tune. Commenting on his fieldwork record, Đorđević states:

This melody, in all likelihood, is not a folk tune, but I record it as it has become extensively adopted and has suppressed the folk one. For the sake of completeness, I bring the folk tune, which Mokranjac recorded and used in his Tenth Garland. I, however, cite the text which I had noted.³⁹

³⁸ Already Milojević singled out the Tenth garland ('Umetnička ličnost', 102), followed by other connoisseurs.

³⁹ Đorđević, *Srpske narodne melodije*, 84.

In the continuation, Đorđević gives the reader the tune of Mokranjac's 'Biljana patno beleše' in 16 measures, copied from the leading voice in the garland. Đorđević transcribes Mokranjac in all detail, including the song's key and articulation, which makes it obvious that he had no other source to claim this song as part of folklore tradition.

Writing in the 1950s, Petar Konjović stands out as a strong advocate of the second line of explanation. He praised Mokranjac's compositional method, claiming that the author actually tried to save the 'authentic' features of the melody, which had almost perished:

Sensing that the popular melody of this beautiful text has clearly suffered at the hands of Macedonian migrant workers and who knows who else, changed for the worse [*in peius*] towards melodic degeneration, but at the same time grasping inside it a healthy and authentic core, Mokranjac, in an entirely original way, 'distils' the 'authentic' melody and, by means of this procedure, restores its organic life: the 'core' of the melody and the authentic text are now united into an organic whole, like a body and spirit.⁴⁰

Calling the popular song foreign, Levantine, non-Slavic and even a little banal, Konjović actually argues that Mokranjac's tune is a counterpoint to the original. He gives a musical example where he juxtaposes the two melodies and claims that this is the 'procedure' by which Mokranjac 'pulled out this nativeness' in a fit of 'witty inspiration'. Other musicologists have concurred with Konjović in a general assumption that Mokranjac's song somehow hides and harbours the popular tune, specifically pointing out the motives in the accompanying voices.⁴¹

Against the Grain, or What the End of Taboos Could Bring

The question remains – why did Serbian musicology build the taboos in the first place? Regarding the first taboo, the answer seems simple: it would be unthinkable that the *magnum opus* of a national music school founder consists of nothing more than mere arrangements and one must argue against this interpretation, even at odds with historical evidence. The case of the second taboo, or the question as to why the tacit claim of authenticity often remains apposite for Mokranjac's reputation, proves

⁴⁰ Petar Konjović, *Miloje Milojević. Kompozitor i muzički pisac* (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka, 1954), 54.

⁴¹ Cf. Tatjana Marković, *Transfiguracije srpskog romantizma. muzika u kontekstu studija kulture* [*Transfigurations of Serbian Romanticism: Music in the Context of Cultural Studies*] (Belgrade: Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, 2005), 216. I do not claim that this line of analysis is flawed in itself, as it would be no surprise if Mokranjac did derive his inspiration from the pre-existing melody, but I do wish to emphasize the role of these rhetorical strategies in musicological discourse on Mokranjac's 'authenticity'.

to be more complex and delicate to answer. In a curious way, Mokranjac is at the same time perceived as an ‘original composer’ and as a ‘collector’ of folk-songs who should have remained faithful to the primary material.⁴² The garlands can be seen as works produced outside of an artistic music paradigm, which were only later appropriated, serving a dual purpose as paragons of both artistic originality and of primordial folk spirit.

The discourse on Mokranjac adheres to the Herder-inspired construct of an ‘authentic folk-song’ as a true embodiment of the nation, the national spirit and character, which was widespread throughout Europe⁴³ – and to meddle with a folk-song would thus be equal to tainting the national spirit. But this discussion is also highly politically charged. At the turn of the century, the network of choral societies was one of the foremost precursors of the Serbian (and Yugoslav) unification accomplished in the First World War, and the image of the shared folk culture they strived to establish was partly produced through folk-song choral arrangements, the garlands being a staple of the repertoire.⁴⁴ The status of an arrangement of ‘authentic’, ‘collected’ material gave a strong national and political cachet to these compositions and helped them reach outstanding popularity. To speak about ‘inauthenticity’ of Mokranjac’s folk-songs would thus have destabilized the whole project of creating an image of a shared national culture with its roots deeply embedded in its folklore.

As to the last paradox, to break the taboo of Mokranjac’s scholarship and to speak of him composing the melodies can also mean enlightening another facet of his technical dexterity. It seems beyond dispute that in the process of creating the image of the Serbian folk-song Mokranjac modified the melodic material and composed the tunes himself. Mokranjac maybe did not select from the musical folklore what was ‘best and most representative’, but rather what he needed in order to compose a cycle of choral works which would prove successful with his bourgeois public – a project that he most certainly accomplished.

⁴² It should come as no surprise that Mokranjac, like other prominent ‘editors’ of European folk art in the long nineteenth century who were keen to market their products as authentic, was in fact doctoring the collected material. The controversy over ‘editing’ folk art for the market is discussed in length in the famous case of Ossian; cf. James Porter, “‘Bring Me the Head of James Macpherson’: The Execution of Ossian and the Wellsprings of Folkloristic Discourse”, *Journal of American Folklore* 114 (2001): 396–435.

⁴³ The main sources of inspiration were Herder’s works *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (1778–79) and *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–91), where he argued that every nation has its own ‘internal character’, which is infallibly contained in its folk art. Cf. William A. Wilson, ‘Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism’, *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (1973): 819–35. Specifically, for the folk-song construct and a case study in its institutionalization, cf. John Francmanis, ‘National Music to National Redeemer: The Consolidation of a “Folksong” Construct in Edwardian England’, *Popular Music* 21 (2002): 1–25.

⁴⁴ For a wider European perspective cf. Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 56–62.