

UR. JERNEJ WEISS

VLOGA NACIONALNIH
OPERNIH GLEDALIŠČ
V 20. IN 21. STOLETJU

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL
OPERA HOUSES IN THE
20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

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*the role of national opera
houses in the 20th and 21st
centuries*

ur. Jernej Weiss



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Opera Productions of the Belgrade National Theatre at the Beginning of the 20th Century Between Political Rivalry and Contested Cultural Strategies¹

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One of the most intricate problems of the Serbian culture at the beginning of the 20th century referred to the attempts of establishing a separate Opera branch of the National Theatre in Belgrade. Polemics about whether the Theatre should cultivate spoken drama only, or both drama and opera as well, contributed to the arising of “opera question”, a complex issue affected by aesthetic, political, social and economic agents. The “opera question” resulted in discontinuities in improvements of a musical ensemble and opera performances of the time, being completely resolved only later, in the restructuring of the Belgrade National Theatre after the First World War by the separation of branches of Drama and Opera in 1920 and the formation of Ballet branch in 1923.²

- 1 This study is the result of work on the project *Identiteti srpske muzike od lokalnih do globalnih okvira: tradicija, promene, izazovi* [Identities of Serbian music from local to global frameworks: traditions, changes, challenges] (Nr. 177004) financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.
- 2 On the “opera question” I discussed in Biljana Milanović, “Politika u kontekstu ‘operskog pitanja’ u Narodnom pozorištu pred Prvi svetski rat” [“Politics in the Context of the ‘Opera Question’ at the National Theatre before the First World War”], *Muzikologija* 12 (2012): 37–61. For detailed history of the institution see Slobodan Turlakov, *Istorija opere i baleta Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu* [The History of the Opera and Ballet of the National Theatre in Belgrade], Vol. 1 (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2005). On early development of Serbian musical theatre before the establishment of the National theatre (1868) see Biljana Milanović, “Serbian Musical Theatre from the Mid–19th Century until World War II”, in *Serbian and Greek Art Music. A Patch to*

I will focus my attention on a set of behind-the-scene aspects of opera productions of the National Theatre at the beginning of the 20th century in order to define different, but mutually intertwined agents of the postponed reorganisation of this institution. My main aim is to show that 1) the political and cultural rivalry of leading intellectuals of this institution, and 2) the weak positions of musical representatives in the distribution of power at the National Theatre were crucial in different attempts of establishing a separate Opera branch in the Theatre. In order to understand both these reasons, it is necessary to illuminate some historical circumstances as well as peculiarities in the field of Serbian music, and then to analyse contesting programme policies and struggles for power inside the Theatre, which determined discontinuity of this practice, actually the two short periods of opera production (1906–1909; 1913–1914) before the Great War.

Historical observation

From the late 19th and early 20th century onwards, especially after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882, the Serbian state was affected by many changes. It was the time of the introduction of a multi-party political system, the adoption of liberal laws, the realisation of the first serious projects in the field of industrialisation, the multiplication of civil institutions, the reform of education, the establishment of the University, etc. At the same time, the complex political and socio-economic circumstances continuously hindered not only the whole of Serbia but also its capital, Belgrade. Social stratification within the country was not rapid enough, the merging of entrepreneurs with large capital was negligible, and forms of civil association did not have enough strength to restrict the power of the state to significantly affect an agrarian society. The state was the sole institution that could take significant steps regarding investment in great ventures in all fields, which determined the character of the intellectual and economic elite, mostly tied to the civil service.³

In such circumstances, music was on the fringe of the official cultural policy, with modest professional, organisational and material conditions

Western Music History, ed. Katy Romanou (Bristol–Chicago: Intellect Books & University of Chicago Press, 2009), 15–32.

- 3 Dubravka Stojanović, “Ulje na vodi: politika i društvo u modernoj istoriji Srbije” [“Oil on the Water: Politics and Society in Modern History of Serbia”], in: Ljubodrag Dimić, Miroslav Jovanović and Dubravka Stojanović, *Srbija 1804–2004: tri videnja ili poziv na dijalog* [*Serbia 1804–2004: Three Points of View or Dialogue Invitation*] (Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2009), 115–148.

structuring its physiognomy. It was mostly reflected in the slow process of musical institutionalisation. Choral societies and military orchestras, which had represented the central strength of creativity and concert performances of the 19th century, were still the primary musical agents at the beginning of the 20th century. However, multiple professional roles of musicians were the result of lack of music experts whose social positions were weaker in comparison to representatives of other arts. The increasing number of composers who studied abroad, mostly in the musical centres of central Europe, such as Prague, Vienna, Munich, and Leipzig, faced narrowed opportunities for concerts and other forms of self-presentation so that many of their works remained unperformed or as unprinted manuscripts. In addition to the fact that Serbian-born musicians began to prevail over the foreign ones, mostly Czech musical professionals, the local musical hierarchies and unequal access to the resources of creative presentation started to be formed. The circle of leading musical individuals originated from the Belgrade Choral Society (1853) and its Serbian Musical School (1899) or was connected with these institutions at a certain period. Together with Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac (1856–1914), the main figure of the mentioned institutions, who was considered the “father” of national music, they represented the core of the emerging musical elite. Among the most prominent individuals from Mokranjac’s circle were Stanislav Binički (1872–1942) and Petar Krstić (1877–1957) as well as the representatives of the younger generation, Petar Konjović (1883–1970), Miloje Milojević (1884–1946) and Stevan Hristić (1885–1958), who had leading roles in music before, and especially after the First World War. Their dominant positions in the field of musical education, in the existing and the newly-formed musical institutions, and in the domain of writing on music, enabled them to be the most influential figures in the regulation of the main aesthetic standards in the local musical context.⁴

As many as three of the mentioned composers – Krstić, Binički and Hristić – acted as conductors at the National Theatre at the beginning of the 20th century. After the war, Binički was the first director of the Opera since 1920, and he was succeeded at that position by Hristić in 1924. The Czech-born musician Dragutin (František) Pokorný (1867–1956) was also a signif-

4 About the structuring of musical elite as the group as well as their role in distribution of power and canonisation of local music at the beginning of the 20th century see Biljana Milanović, *Muzičke prakse u Srbiji i formiranje nacionalnog kanona* [*Musical Practices in Serbia and the Formation the National Musical Canon*] (Beograd: Muzikološki institut SANU, 2018).

icant conductor in the pre-war years. He worked as an assistant and later the heir to a Slovenian-born composer Davorin Jenko who was a favourite and greatly respected conductor of the National Theatre in the Serbian capital of the 19th century [Table 1: approximately here].⁵ Their work involved solving some complex problems since the status of music in that institution was rather unenviable.

Since its founding in 1868, the National Theatre functioned as a drama theatre “for the aesthetics of which generations of intellectuals fought, mainly writers”, and music art was subordinated to it in drama repertoire. Its inferiority was based not only on the tendency of theatre administration to persist in profiling of a dramatic programme sphere but also on the attitudes about music as an inevitable entertaining add-on and a compromise to the audience.⁶ The repertoire policy did not include long-term plans to improve the musical branch of the Theatre. Drama also had an advantage regarding state subsidies. Investment in the music sector was minimal, so the basic staff and organisational problems were not solved in the long run in that segment of work.

The Military Orchestra was occasionally engaged in the Theatre, but in spite of the agreements and contracts between the Minister of War and the theatre administration, such combinations could not last. Due to heterogeneous obligations and duties of military musicians and frequent, sometimes sudden demands of the Court for performances of the ensemble, the Theatre cancelled rehearsals, and even performances, which were hastily replaced by those without the participation of music.⁷ There were several attempts to form and maintain a separate Theatre orchestra, but even in such cases the inclusion of some individuals from the military sphere was inevitable due to the lack of civil orchestra players. Unlike the wages of the members of the choir who were engaged when needed, the monthly pay of

5 During the long period of Jenko’s engagement (1870–1902) the military conductor Dragutin Čižek has also been appointed in the Theatre (1868–1899) as well as Oskar Malata (1895).

6 Nadežda Mosusova, “Srpska muzička scena (125 godina Narodnog pozorišta)” [The Serbian Musical Stage (The 125th Anniversary of the National Theatre)], in *Srpska muzička scena [The Serbian Music Stage]*, ed. Nadežda Mosusova (Belgrade: Muzikološki institut SANU, 1995), 9.

7 On these problems during Jenko’s and Čižek’s engagements in the Theatre see Veroslava Petrović, “Problemi upravnika Narodnog pozorišta Milorada Šapčanina oko angažovanja vojnog orkestra” [“The Problems of the National Theatre Manager Milorada Šapčanin in Engagement of the Military Orchestra”], in *125 godina Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu [125th Anniversary of the National Theatre in Belgrade]*, ed. Stanjlo Rajičić (Beograd: SANU, 1997) 525–536.

the orchestral musicians was a higher expenditure, and the orchestra was sometimes reduced to a modest structure of a chamber type. The choir ensemble, which consisted of individuals from choral societies and younger members of the Theatre,⁸ and even craftsmen, mostly barbers, shoemakers and tailors,⁹ was often no more numerous than the orchestra. For example, some payrolls from 1895 and 1897, preserved in archive documentation, illuminate modest ensembles of 15 members in both the orchestra and the choir [Illustrations 1 and 2, approximately here].¹⁰ Finally, in addition to music amateurs within the choir, soloists themselves were initially exclusively actors-singers, who were largely not musically educated.¹¹

The needs for reorganisation, professionalization and enlargement of the musical ensemble represented the prerequisite for eventual thinking about permanent opera, but they were also a necessary step if the aim was to establish an appropriate interpretative level of the existing music and drama repertoire – plays with singing (that were local sort of *Singspiel*) and operettas. However, despite modest technical conditions there were attempts to perform operettas as well as ‘light’ operas since 1882, and such kind of works were staged even later depending on both current performance possibilities and the programme policies of the Theatre Administrations.¹² Due to the unordered and unstable situation in musical sector of the

8 Roksanda Pejović, *Srpska muzika 19. veka. Izvođaštvo. Članci i kritike. Muzička pedagogija* [Serbian Musical culture of the 19th Century. Musical Performances. Articles and Critiques. Musical pedagogy] (Beograd: Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2001), 136, 139.

9 Petar Krstić, “Muzika i opereta u Narodnom Pozorištu” [“Music and Operetta in the Theatre”], *Srpski književni glasnik* [Serbian Literary Herald], XV, no. 4 (1905): 273–91.

10 Illustration 1 can also confirm that the most members of the orchestra players were Czech-born military musicians. However, it is interesting to stress that the name mentioned under the number 15 among the orchestra members refers to the Croatian writer Anton Gustav Matoš. During his stay in Belgrade he played violoncello and worked as a journalist. Since he was not a professional musician his wage was only 50 dinars while others had 90 or 80 dinars per month.

11 Krstić, “Muzika i opereta u Narodnom Pozorištu”, 267–68. See also J. M., “Hronika. Umetnost. Popularni koncerti” [“Chronicle”. Art. Popular Concerts”], *Nova iskra*, 1 (1906): 28–30.

12 The first operetta was Jenko’s *Vračara* [Fortune-teller] that was premiered in 1882 and stayed on the repertoire with 48 performances until 8 November 1911. Victor Massé’s *Les noces de Jeannette* and Jacques Offenbach’s *Le mariage aux lanternes* were presented in 1884 and Franz von Suppé’s *Flotte Burschen* and Jacques Offenbach’s *Un mari à la porte* in 1885. The first opera was premiered in 1894 (Vilém Blodek, *V studni* [In the Well], 16 times until 10 March 1909). Other performances of operettas and light operas took place between 1895 and 1912 as follows: Florimond Ronger Hervé, *Mam’zelle Nitouche*, 1895, 62 times until 5 June 1910; Arthur Sullivan

Theatre the preparations for every stage work with music demanded enormous efforts, endeavour and long-lasting exercises.¹³

Contested programme strategies and marginal role of musicians in resolving the “opera question”

The engagement of the Belgrade Military Orchestra in the National Theatre at the very beginning of the 20th century seemed that the unenviable status of music started to be changed.¹⁴ This new Orchestra was founded under military jurisdiction and led by Stanislav Binički (1899), a military conductor at that time. Orchestra was trained better than other military ensembles and its role in the musical life of the capital was immense due to ambitious concert programme policies of Binički. The ensemble functioned under Pokorný’s direction within the Theatre, but Binički was also included as frequent guest conductor. Together with Pokorný and the Theatre Administration, he started to work on the improvement of interpretative aspects of musical repertoire. However, since the Belgrade Military Orchestra was abolished after the May Coup in 1903, problem of the orchestra has become a reality of Theatre again.¹⁵ The formation of separate ensemble of

Mikado, 1898, 32 until 22 April 1907; Carl Zeller *Die Vogelhändler*, 1899, 40 until 18 May 1904; Edmond Audran *Mascotte*, 1900, 28 until 12 July 1907; Jacques Offenbach *La belle Hélène*, 1900, 19 until 17 December 1906; John Sidney *Geisha*, 1901, 30 until 27 December 1903; Edmond Audran *Poupée*, 1902, 30 until 18 May 1908; Jacques Offenbach *Orphée aux enfers*, 1902, 10 until 23 February 1903; Jean Robert Planquette *Les cloches de Corneville*, 1902, 20 until 29 May 1907; Carl Millöcker *Der Bettelstudent*, 1903, 10 only in 22 June 1903; Johann Strauss II, *Die Fledermaus*, 1907, 9 until 3 April 1908; Louis-Aimé Maillart *Les dragons de Villars*, 1912, 16 until 23 March 1914. Cf. Turlakov, *Istorija opere i baleta Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu*, 22–25; see also Živojin Petrović, *Repertoar Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu 1868–1914* [*Repertoire of the National Theatre in Belgrade 1868–1914*] (Beograd: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, 1993), 131–170.

- 13 Complex modes of exercise with musically uneducated soloists in preparing the musical segments on the Theatre stage at the turn of the centuries were described by Petar Krstić very picturesquely. See Krstić, “Muzika i opereta u Narodnom Pozorištu”, 267–68.
- 14 By virtue of the Theatre Manager Branislav Nušić the Orchestra was engaged since August 1900. Borivoje S. Stojković, *Istorija srpskog pozorišta od srednjeg veka do modernog doba (drama i opera)* [*History of Serbian Theatre from the Middle Ages to Modern Times (Drama and Opera)*] vol. II (Beograd: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti SR Srbije, 2013), 516.
- 15 May Coup was a coup d’état in which royal couple, Serbian King Alexander Obrenović and Queen Draga, were assassinated on 28–29 May 1903. The act resulted in the extinction of the House of Obrenović and shift of the dynasty to the rival House of Karađorđević. The assassination was organized by a group of army officers.

twenty two members within the Theatre had soon to be reduced on eighteen players despite of a more visible professionalization and increasing the number of available musicians.¹⁶

These are unfavourable circumstances in which was premiered Binički's one-act opera *Na uranku* [*At Dawn*], the only one local operatic work staged at the National Theatre before the Great War [Illustration 3 approximately here]. The leading roles at the fourth performance as well as performances of Binički's opera in 1906 were interpreted by a soprano Sultana Cjukova Savić (1871–1935) and a bass Žarko Savić (1861–1934), the Serbian artists with international careers who were willing to stay in Belgrade permanently.¹⁷ Savić worked out a plan for organizing opera at the National Theatre, envisioning that by complementing the existing solo, orchestral and choir staff, he would be able to create the basis for its permanent work in a short time. However, since that project was not supported by the Theatre Administration, Savić, together with Cjukova, took up foreign engagements again, first in Berlin, then in Osijek, to return to Belgrade later on when he established his private Opera on the Boulevard in December 1909.¹⁸

Declining Savić's offer during the Theatre Administration of Dragomir Janković and the dramatist Milan Grol can be interpreted as one of the crucial moments in the postponement of the musical sector reorganisation. It was a symptom of very dynamic struggles for power inside the Theatre,

The Minister of War Jovan Atanacković abolished the Belgrade Military Orchestra already in 20 July 1903. One year later Binički organized the new ensemble (the Royal Guard Music), but it was the wind band that would become symphonic formation in 1907 (the Royal Guard Orchestra). See Slobodan Turlakov, *Knjiga o Betoveni* [*Book on Beethoven*] (Beograd: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije and Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka, 1998); Slobodan Turlakov, *Letopis muzičkog života u Beogradu 1840–1941* [*Chronicle of the Musical Life in Belgrade 1840–1941*] (Beograd: Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, 1994), 64.

16 Krstić P. J. (= Petar Krstić), "Umetnički pregled. – Pozorišni orkestar i muzika između činova," *Srpski književni glasnik* XV, no.3 (1905): 227–29.

17 Both Savić and Cjukova Savić studied in Vienna and then developed their rich careers. Cjukova Savić was engaged in opera houses of Hamburg and Mainz, while Savić tied his work for many big opera stages including those in Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart, Riga, Hamburg etc. Borivoje S. Stojković, *Istorija srpskog pozorišta od srednjeg veka do modernog doba (drama i opera)* [*History of Serbian Theatre from the Middle Ages to Modern Times (Drama and Opera)*], 531–34; the book chapter "Opera na Bulevaru Žarka Savića" in Slobodan Turlakov, *Iz muzičke prošlosti Beograda* [*From Belgrade's Musical Past*] (Beograd, published by the author, 2002), 119–80.

18 On Savić's private Opera on the Boulevard, which worked only for thirteen months, but without any government subsidies, see *Ibid.*

where confrontations between not only programme but also political party fractions embodied in the leaders of that institution.

Namely, although Theatre administrations which were appointed by the Minister of Education always had a political background, their frequent changes in the decade before World War I particularly heightened the conflict between the parties of old radicals and the independent radicals – the conflict which was also evident in the sphere of parliamentary politics.¹⁹ The main opponents to those parties in the Theatre were grouped around writers and dramaturges Rista Odavić (1870–1932) and Milan Grol (1876–1952), the dominant persons among the leading Theatre staff who affected the variable presence and physiognomy of music in the Theatre [Table 2 approximately here]. Their contest was marked by the need to oppose the programme policy of the opponent political side, but also resulted by different ideas in imagining of artistic role of the National Theatre. In that context, music and especially opera production became highly instrumentalised.²⁰

Group around Odavić as well as Petrović and Nušić had in mind the Belgrade audience demands, believing that inclusion of operetta in the programme policy would both enact commercial success and bring the opera life at the National Theatre. Thus, the progressivist administration of Petrović and Nušić initiated, and the independent radical administration of Marković and Odavić realised the programme idea of the parallel development of both drama and opera, and for the first time, the programmes of the National Theatre included the works of the standard opera repertoire, conducted by Pokorný. *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* and *The Bartered Bride* were performed, with a premiere of opera *Ksenija* by Slovenian composer Viktor Parma and the restaged opera of *Binički* [Table 3 approximately here]. Striving to establish continuity in developing the genre was favoured by increasing annual subsidies, which raised the quality of performance conditions: the choir was improved, several professional soloists were engaged, and the orchestra was enlarged to become the largest instrumental body in the capital.²¹

19 On the political parties in Serbia at the beginning of the century see Olga Popović Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji od 1903 do 1914 godine* [Parliamentarism in Serbia from 1903 until 1914] (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 1998).

20 On political struggles and programme policy collisions of mentioned opponents in the context of the Theatre see Milanović, “Politika u kontekstu ‘operskog pitanja’ u Narodnom pozorištu pred Prvi svetski rat,” 40–43 and 43–48.

21 *Ibid.*, 40–41.

Milan Grol had more elitist and exclusivist attitudes. The problem he was trying to solve was actually in the field of cultivating the dramatic repertoire itself, that is, in the theatre crisis that had lasted for many years, starting from the end of the 19th century onwards, and which was marked by the poor interest of the audience in drama and tragedy, especially for the national and historical works of domestic writers. In addition to plays with music and comedy pieces, citizens loved melodrama, operetta, and vaudeville, which did not fit into Grol's ideas about the educational role of theatre based on the best traditions of classical and modern European, primarily French and German drama. A similar elitist attitude about high aesthetic values was advocated by Dragomir Janković, Milan Predić, Bogdan Popović and other intellectuals who gathered around the *Srpski književni glasnik* [*Serbian Literary Herald*] at the beginning of the century. As the leading representatives of the administration or members of the literary and artistic committee of the National Theatre they advocated for the removal of 'light' repertoire, and enhanced performance of intellectually demanding dramatic works. In that context, Grol was one of the first advocates of the criticism directed against operetta, criticising other Theatre administrations for making concessions to the insufficiently developed taste of the audience.²²

Since 1906, however, Grol showed much greater exclusivism, taking a hostile attitude towards opera that was introduced by their political and Theatre opponents:

[...] because of the weakness either of the performing staff or the staging, because of divisions in the audience that is small in itself, and because of so comprehensive and manifold programme required from the only national and state theatre in the capital, the repertoire of the National Theatre today represents a chaotic, disorderly mass of plays relied wildly on the audience, plays brought to the stage without any order or relevance [...] An opera in today's

22 See Milan Grol, "Umetnički pregled. – Pitanje o opereti u Narodnom pozorištu" ["Art review. – The opera question in the National Theatre"], *Srpski književni glasnik*, XI, no.4 (1904): 302–310; Idem, "Narodno pozorište" ["National Theatre"], I–III, *Srpski književni glasnik* XXI, no. 10 (1908): 752–58, XXI no. 11 (1908): 839–43; XXI, no. 12 (1908): 915–920; Dragomir Janković, "Pozorišni pregled. – Povećanje subvencije – repertoar – igra" ["Theatre review. – Increase in subsidy – repertoire – play"], *Srpski književni glasnik*, XIX, no. 2 (1907): 146–155; Rista Odavić, "Feljton. – Muzika u Narodnom pozorištu" ["Feuilleton. – Music in the National Theatre"], *Politika*, 23. January 1914, 1–3.

*National Theatre! For what need, for what reason, on what basis, with what kind of prospects, how seriously? [...] the present administration has even revived operetta, brought foreign singers, and now it introduces opera! The chaos is now complete.*²³

The programme strategy that Grol tried to put forward from that moment on excluded the possibility of opera production in the National Theatre. Underneath was the fear of the further process of decline in the number of people comprising drama audience, that is, the danger of them turning to the genres of operetta, but also opera, which the citizens of Belgrade were happy to go to during occasional visits of foreign companies and sporadic opera performances in the National Theatre itself. However, Grol's turning point in relation to opera programme contributed to the expansion of political parties' fights in the Theatre, and the opera issue was also the basic polygon of their struggle for theatre power.

That was what prompted sudden changes that resulted in alternate introduction and termination of opera in the programme agendas of the rival administrations. By changing the administration, that is, Grol's arrival for the manager of the Theatre in mid-1909, opera was thrown out of the programme conception, which meant cancelling the work of the predecessors and drastically reducing the musical ensemble. A short-term administration of Milorad Gavrilović followed the same principles, which was also Grol's intention after his third arrival to the high position of the Theatre Administration at the beginning of 1911. However, huge pressure from the press and attacks on the Theatre Administration, especially after a series of successful opera performances staged by the Croatian National Theatre during their visit to Belgrade, made Grol change his programme course. He began unsuccessfully, offering a little Mozart opera *Bastien und Bastienne*, after which a conductor Krstić left the Theatre, leaving Binički to prepare a repertoire of standard operas that the audience expected. Together with Hristić, Binički staged *Il Trovatore*, *Djamileh*, *Tosca*, *Der Freischutz*, *Werther* and *Mignon*.²⁴

It is important to point out that the political struggle for power in the Theatre was characterised by a strong party intolerance, which included

23 Milan Grol, "Pozorišni pregled. – Opera u Narodnom pozorištu" ["Theatre review. – Opera in the National Theatre"], *Srpski književni glasnik* XVII, no. 11 (1906): 860–61.

24 Milanović, "Politika u kontekstu 'operskog pitanja' u Narodnom pozorištu pred Prvi svetski rat"; Turlakov, *Istorija opere i baleta Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu*, 24–32, 41–57. See also the Table 3.

tendentious theatre criticism and polemics, as well as firing artists and the organisation of demonstrations during performances. Thus, the actor Milorad Gavrilović was forcefully retired during Marković and Odavić's time, the reason of which was his opposition to the introduction of opera. Then, the administration of Predić and Grol brought him back to his position, after which he was also a manager.²⁵ In 1908, the opponents of operetta and opera organised demonstrations during the performances of Binički's and Blodek's operas, and the next year, with the coming of that fraction to power, a conductor Pokorný and many members of the musical ensemble were dismissed.²⁶ In numerous texts and budget analyses, theatre opponents sought to point out the unprofitability of the opposing side. Also, while Grol tried to get recognition for introducing opera during his second term, Odavić dealt with Grol's inconsistencies, favoured the achievements of his work at the expense of the opponent's results.²⁷ The rivalry between Theatre administrations implied a lack of dialogue, which resembled the behaviour of the politicians of the time, where a political opponent with a different opinion was perceived as an enemy, not as an associate in solving common problems.

The mere fact that intellectuals who were not musicians dealt with issues related to opera showed that struggle for professional positions in the newly formed and scarce elite was still to come. Their grouping in the Theatre context was driven into such a direction. Their attitude to opera was shaped on the point somewhere between professional affinities and interests, as well as the influence that people from the Theatre had on them.

Common ideas of Grol and elite musicians were unquestionably expressed through their almost unison discourses in rejecting operetta as fashionable and destructive genre related to their search for high artistic and aesthetic standards. Unlike the strategies Grol used to solve the problem of opera, he addressed to notable musicians and asked for their opinion on operetta productions in the Theatre. On the occasion of the joint meeting of 1905, all musicians gave support to throw operetta out of the programme

25 Gavrilović, *Grada Arhiva Srbije o Narodnom pozorištu u Beogradu 1835-1914* [Sources on the National Theatre at the Archives of Serbia, 1835-1914] (Beograd: Arhiv Srbije, 1971), 722.

26 Turlakov, *Istorija opere i baleta Narodnog pozorišta u Beogradu*, 41-43.

27 Milanović, "Politika u kontekstu 'operskog pitanja' u Narodnom pozorištu pred Prvi svetski rat," 46-47.

conception.²⁸ In written discourses Milojević was a sharp spokesman, for whom “platitudes and superficiality, stupidity and triviality, rudeness and worthlessness” were the basic criteria of this genre,²⁹ while Krstić expanded his operetta critique to *Tanzmusik*, which was performed during intermission in the drama plays at the Theatre.³⁰

Both Krstić and Milojević considered that cherishing music needed gradual steps, through which the Theatre ensemble and its audience would grow up and become mature for an opera repertoire. Having worked with Grol since 1904, Krstić proposed a musical programme, which included plays with singing of national and other, especially Slavic composers as well as “little classical pieces: such as Weber’s, Mozart’s, and Pergolesi’s works”.³¹ In principle, this was the propagation of the status quo and during the later term of Milan Grol Krstić would not mention any opera (at least not publicly). On the other side, Milojević thought about proposing the comic opera of the 18th century, in which he found “the beginning of a pure opera development”, a source for cultivating musical taste, and thus the way of educating the Belgrade audience.³² Similar to Stevan Hristić, Milojević did not support the first opera productions, done during Odavić’s Administration. Both of them criticised inadequate professional and artistic level of these performances and so did not give any support to the beginning of new and long-awaited musical practice.³³

In 1908, regarding the musical repertoire during Odavić’s Administration, the Association of Serbian Musicians led by Mokranjac convened a

28 Among musicians were Josif Marinković, Stevan Mokranjac, Dušan Janković, Stanislav Binički, Božidar Joksimović, Cvetko Manojlović and Petar Krstić. See Krstić, “Muzika i opereta u Narodnom Pozorištu,” 273–74.

29 Milojević M. D., “Umetnički pregled. – Povodom jednog gostovanja”, *Srpski književni glasnik* XXVII, no. 7 (1911): 542–47.

30 Krstić, “Muzika i opereta u Narodnom Pozorištu”.

31 Krstić P. J. (=Petar Krstić), “Umetnički pregled. – Komadi s pevanjem u K. S. Narodnom Pozorištu” [“Artistic review. – Play with singing in National Theatre”], *Srpski književni glasnik* [Serbian Literary Herald] XV, no. 11 (1905): 866.

32 Milojević M. D. (= Miloje Milojević), “Umetnički pregled. – Povodom jednog gostovanja” [Artistic review. – On occasion of one guest-performance], *Srpski književni glasnik* XXVII, no. 7, (1911): 542–47.

33 Hristić S. (Stevan Hristić), “Umetnički pregled. – Koncerat u Narodnom pozorištu” [“Art review. – Concert in the National Theatre”], *Srpski književni glasnik*, XXII, no. 8 (1909): 621–25; Miloje Milojević, “Umetnički pregled. Gostovanje operne trupe Kraljevsko Zemaljskog Hrvatskog Kazališta u Zagrebu” [“The Guest Performance of the Opera Company of the Croatian Royal National Theatre from Zagreb”], *Srpski književni glasnik* 27/2 (1911): 141–42.

conference of musicians, drama writers and “all those Serbian writers who worked on theatrical art, either as authors or theatre critics (...) for the mutual agreement and agreement on the development of drama and artistic music in Serbian National Theatre”.³⁴ However, despite the initiation of discussion on some issues, that conference was poorly visited. The same Association also launched an action to connect its organisation with the National Theatre, the administration of which was told that a musician should also be a member of the literary and artistic committee of the Theatre.³⁵ Letters were sent on several occasions, and the Theatre was proposed to select one of the three candidates of the Association itself – Mokranjac, Binički and Božidar Joksimović. It is characteristic that the Administration of Odavić did not respond to these requests, but that the next, eight-month Administration of Grol chose exactly Mokranjac for one of the members of the Board. Although there is no information as to whether Mokranjac himself could have influenced the decision to abolish opera, it is clear that the circle of his younger associates was close to Grol’s positions.

Unlike the data that are not sufficient enough to point out to more detailed conclusions about the mutual relationship between musicians and the main Theatre opponents, a small list of performed operas shows that this genre, in the eve of the Great War, got its place in the Theatre. Although Pokorný’s efforts were marginalised in relation to Binički’s contribution, who, in fact, accomplished the first opera season in the National Theatre with a total of 6 operas and 60 performances, the fact is that those two short periods in staging of operas had some aspects in common. They took place under modest budget conditions and with a minimum of professional staff.³⁶ While Pokorný chose the Italian and Slavic repertoire, Binički presented the selected works of Italian, French and German opera. Moreover, in cooperation with foreign soloists, Czech, Slovenian and Croatian opera singers were favoured, and the opera scene got involved in the tendencies of

34 Conference invitation by the Association of Serbian Musicians led by Mokranjac, on 21 December 1908. Istorijiski arhiv Beograda [Historical Archives of Belgrade], Fond: Južnoslovenski pevački savez [South-Slav Choral Union], Box: Udruženje srpskih muzičara [Association of Serbian Musicians], IAB – 1090/28.

35 Letter of the Association of Serbian Musicians to the Theatre Administration, 24 November 1908. Istorijiski arhiv Beograda [Historical Archives of Belgrade], Fond: Južnoslovenski pevački savez [South-Slav Choral Union], Box: Udruženje srpskih muzičara [Association of Serbian Musicians], IAB – 1090/28.

36 Comparative analysis showed that the budget conditions were similar. See Milošević, “Politika u kontekstu ‘operskog pitanja’ u Narodnom pozorištu pred Prvi svetski rat,” 41–43.

interconnecting South Slavic and Slavic theatres, which was followed by all Theatre administrations since the beginning of the 20th century.³⁷ Binički consistently tried to provide opera staff, with the idea of forming a civil orchestra, a permanent choir and an opera-drama school. Most of those aspirations, along with plans for further expansion of the repertoire, were cut off by the war, and their realisation took place during the first years of peace, setting the basic professional foundations of the Belgrade Opera.

Table 1: Conductors at the National Theatre at the early 20th century.

CONDUCTOR	TIME PERIOD
Davorin Jenko	1870–1902
Dragutin František Pokorný	1897–1903
Petar Krstić	1903–1905/6
Stanislav Binički	1909–1914
Stevan Hristić	1912–1914

Table 2: National Theatre Administrations (managers and dramatists), 1900–1914.

NATIONAL THEATRE ADMINISTRATIONS (1) Manager; (2) Dramatist)	TIME PERIOD
Branislav Nušić (1) Janko Veselinović (2)	14 July 1900 – 17 January 1902
Jovan Đ. Dokić (1) Rista Odavić (2)	19 January 1902 – 15 May 1903
Dragomir Janković (1) Milan Grol (2)	15 May 1903 – 30 July 1906
Dr Nikola Petrović (1) Branislav Nušić (2)	30 July 1906 – 29 November 1906
Mihajlo Marković (1) Branislav Nušić (first 5 months) (2) Rista Odavić (from 14 April 1907) (2)	29 November 1906 – 17 July 1909
Milan Grol (1) Milan Predić (2)	17 July 1909 – 31 March 1910
Milorad Gavrilović (1) Dragutin Kostić (2)	31 March 1910 – 31 December 1911
Milan Grol (1) Milan Predić (2)	1 January 1911 – 28 July 1914

37 Engagement of new soloists was as follows: in 1906 Ema Majetinska (studied in Budapest), 1907 Sofija Sedmakova (studied in Vienna), 1908/9 Ernesto Cammarota and Bogdan Vulaković (from Zagreb), Draga Spasić (studied in Vienna); 1913/14 Rudolf Fejfar (from Ljubljana); Maria Kotnauterova (from Prague); Mira Korošec as a guest (from Zagreb); Jelena Lovšinka as a guest (from Osijek).

Table 3: Opera premieres in National Theatre: season 1903/1904 – 1913/14.

Theatre Season	Composer: work	Conductor	Premiere and Last performance	Total number of performances
1903/4 1904/5 1905/6 1908/9	Stanislav Binički: <i>Na uranku [At Down]</i>	Stanislav Binički	2 January 1904 2 November 1908	9
1906/7 1908/9	Pietro Mascagni: <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i>	Dragutin František Pokorný	23 November 1906 4 September 1908	14
1907/8 1908/9	Viktor Parma: <i>Ksenija</i>	Dragutin František Pokorný	22 May 1908 16 April 1909	6
1908/9	Ruggero Leoncavallo: <i>Pagliacci</i>	Dragutin František Pokorný	26 August 1908 12 February 1909	8
1908/9	Bedřich Smetana: <i>Prodaná nevěsta [The Bartered Bride]</i>	Dragutin František Pokorný	10 February 1909 15 February 1909	5
1911/12	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: <i>Bastien und Bastienne</i>	Petar Krstić	14 December 1911 20 December 1911	3
1912/13 1913/14	Giuseppe Verdi: <i>Il Trovatore</i>	Stanislav Binički	24 April 1913 8 June 1914	23
1913/14	Georges Bizet: <i>Djamileh</i>	Stevan Hristić	19 September 1913 21 January 1914	7
1913/14	Giacomo Puccini: <i>Tosca</i>	Stanislav Binički	10 January 1914 14 June 1914	9
1913/14	Carl Maria von Weber: <i>Der Freischütz</i>	Stanislav Binički	26 February 1914 13 April 1914	8
1913/14	Jules Massenet: <i>Werther</i>	Stevan Hristić	30 April 1914 4 June 2014	7
1913/14	Ambroise Thomas: <i>Mignon</i>	Stanislav Binički	21 May 1914 5 June 1914	6

Платилни списак

музичканата крва срп. позор за месец
септембар

Бр	Име и презиме	Плати		Потпис својеручним
		Ден	а	
1	Фрањко Краман	90	-	Франко Краман
2	Фридрих Шимек	90	-	Фридрих Шимек
3	Фрањко Мартичек	90	-	Франко Мартичек
4	Венцл Бенда	90	-	Венцл Бенда
5	Петар Прокшић	90	-	Петар Прокшић
6	Јован Захорик	90	-	Јован Захорик
7	Венцл Кофел	80	-	Венцл Кофел
8	Илијар Захорик	80	-	Илијар Захорик
9	Јован Сивачеки	80	-	Јован Сивачеки
10	" Котлеуки	80	-	Јован Котлеуки
11	Фердинанд Хоршиц	80	-	Фердинанд Хоршиц
12	Јосиф Дурић	80	-	Јосиф Дурић
13	Антон Крањек	80	-	Антон Крањек
14	Теодор Хелер	80	-	Теодор Хелер
15	Јустин Матић	50	-	А. Т. Матић

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сва димарка издати је за музичку у месецу септем.
Бр 1895 године.

Бр 1043

За се неоплаћен
Управник,
Јосиф Крањек

Illustration 1: Payrolls of members of the National Theatre Orchestra for September 1895. Arhiv Muzeja pozorišne umetnosti Srbije [Archive of the Museum of Theater Art of Serbia], Inv. no. 10.017-2.

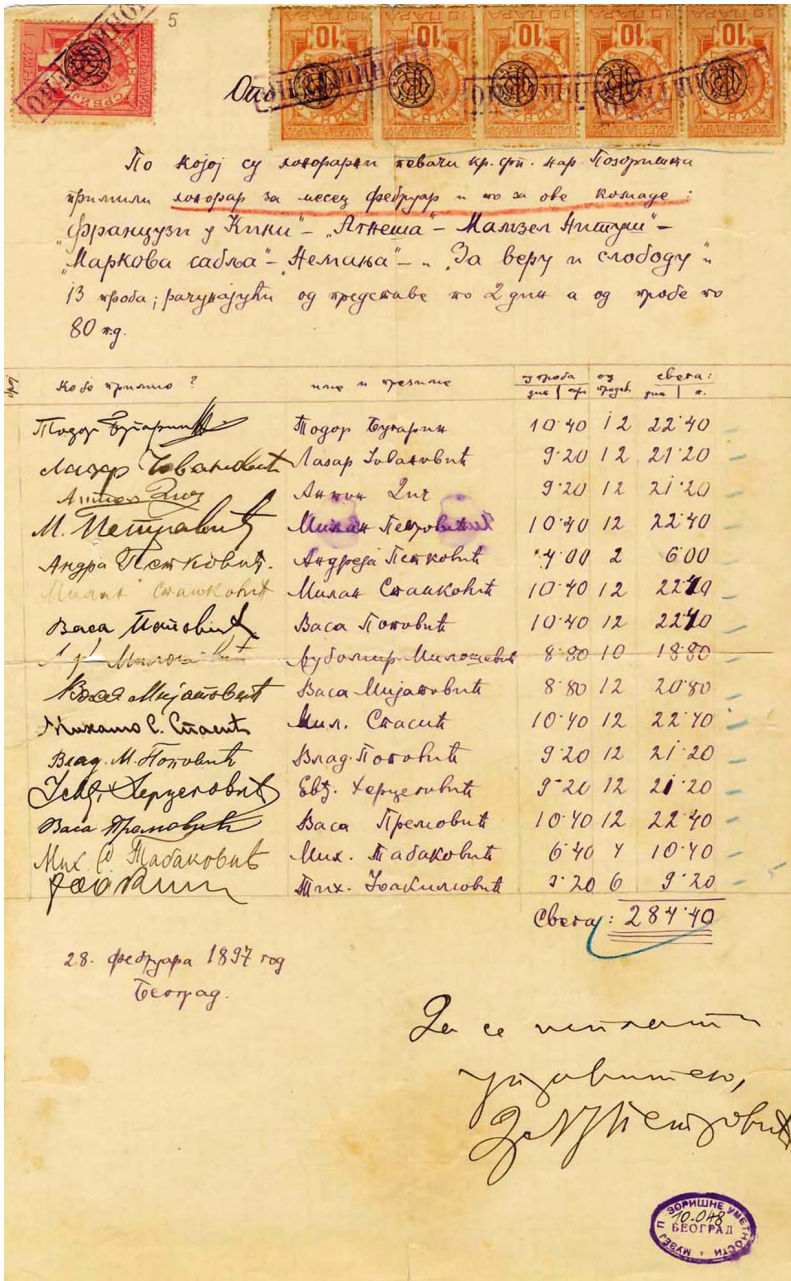



Illustration 2: Payrolls of members of the National Theatre Choir for February 1897. Muzej pozorišne umetnosti Srbije, Zbirka arhivskih dokumenata. Inv. no. 10.048.

СРПСКО КРАЈЕВСКО  **НАРОДНО ПОЗОРИШТЕ**

ПРЕДСТАВА 83. У ПРЕТПЛАТИ 59.

У Београду, у четвртак, 15. априла 1904.

(3-ћи ПУТ)

НА УРАНКУ

Опера у једном чину, написао Бранислав Ђ. Нушић. Музика од Станислава Биничког. — Редитељ
г. И. Станојевић. — Капелник г. Бинички.

Лица:

Раде г. Павловић Ава, његова мати г-ђа Марковића Музеви (глас споља). Сељаци и сељанке. Догађа се пре сто година у једноме српском селу под Турцима.	Станка г-ђа Д. Ђ. рђенић Реџе, њаја сеоски г. Милутиновић
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ПРВИ ПУТ

НА СЛАВИ

Комедија у три чина, написао Симо Матавуџ. — Редитељ г. Тодоровић.

Лица:

Триџун Рогоћ, чиновник Тодоровић Перса, његова жена г-ђа Јовановића Шора, реџије, млад човек, њи- хов рођак и унука Поповић Мита Анастасијевић, Триџунов друг по служби г. И. Станојевић Риста Опалић, начелник г. Гавриловић	Јованка, његова жена г-ђа Јурковића Ангелина, њихова кћи г-ђа Ђорђевића Мирко Матковић, лекар, Опали- ћев нећак г. Рудовић Таса, капељаријски пољубатељ г. Божовић Мара, служкиња код Рогоћа г-ђа Павловића
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Мушке и женске званке код Опалића. — Догађа се у Београду, на Никољ-дан и на војутарје тога празника

ОРКЕСТАР
Капелник г. **БИНИЧКИ.**

1. Увертира за оперу *На уранку*, од Биничког. — 2. Срб-јанка, санталија од Слободе. — 3. Фрула, потпури од Чешка. — 4. *Никова слава*: а) *Поскочи*, штрпци. б) *Удовачка песма*, од Мјркића.

Субота, 17. априла: Егмонт, трагедија у пет чинова, од Гетеа, превео М. Р. Поповић. Му-
зука од Бетовена.
Нед-ља, 18. априла: Дневна представа: Ревијор, комедија у пет чинова, од И. Василевича-
Гогоља, превео Ж. Јовичић. — Вечерња представа: Вештица, драма у пет чин, на, написао Викторијен
Сврдт, превод с француског.

ЦЕНЕ МЕСТА :

Ложа у партеру и првој галерији 12 динара; ложа у другој галерији 8 динара. — У партеру: седеља
8 динара, паркет 2 динара, партер 1.50 динара. — У првој галерији: балкон 3 динара, седиште 1 реда
1.50 динара, седиште II реда 1.20 динара. — У другој галерији: балкон 2 динара, сва остала места по
1.20 динара. — У трећој галерији: први ред од (1—57) 0.60 динара; други ред 0.50 динара.

ПОЧЕТАК У 8 САХАТА, СВРШЕТАК У 11.

Електрична „Нова Трговач, Штампарија, Београд (Дубров. улица)

Illustration 3: Stanislav Binički *Na uranku* [At Dawn], one-act opera; poster for third performance in the National Theatre on 15 April 1904; main solo roles: Dobrica Milutinović (bass), Desanka Đorđević (soprano) and Raja Pavlović (tenor), conductor of the Theatre Orchestra: Stanislav Binički. Arhiv Muzeja pozorišne umetnosti Srbije [Archive of the Museum of Theater Art of Serbia], no signature number.

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Biljana Milanović

Operne produkcije v beograjskem Narodnem gledališču na začetku 20. stoletja med političnim rivalstvom in spornimi kulturnimi strategijami

Ena največjih težav srbske kulture na začetku 20. stoletja so bili poskusi ustanavljanja ločenega opernega odseka v Narodnem gledališču v Beogradu. Polemike o tem, ali naj gledališče goji le govornjo igro ali tako igro kot opero, so prispevale k nastanku kompleksnega »vprašanja opere«, na katero so vplivali estetski, politični, družbeni in gospodarski dejavniki. Zaradi »vprašanja opere« je bil razvoj glasbenega ansambla in opernih predstav v tistem času večkrat prekinjen, rešitev pa je prišla šele pozneje, s prenovo beograjskega Narodnega gledališča po prvi svetovni vojni (dramski in operni odsek leta 1920 ter baletni odsek leta 1923).

Osredotočam se na nekatere vidike zakulisja opernih produkcij v Narodnem gledališču na začetku 20. stoletja, da bi opredelila različne, a povezane dejavnike, ki so vplivali na zapoznelo reorganizacijo ustanove. Moj namen je pokazati, da so politično in kulturno rivalstvo med vodilnimi intelektualci te ustanove ter šibek položaj glasbenih predstavnikov v razporeditvi moči v Narodnem gledališču odločilno vplivali na različne poskuse ustanovitve ločenega opernega odseka znotraj gledališča. V tem kontekstu razjasnujem zgodovinske okoliščine in posebnosti na srbskem glasbenem področju. Pozornost namenjam pogostim spremembam v vodstvu, katerega predstavniki, dejavni na političnem in kulturnem področju, v svojih ideoloških in umetniških namenih niso bili dosledni. Kresanje programskih politik in boj za prevlado znotraj gledališča sta zaznamovala nepovezanost glasbene dejavnosti, to je dve kratki obdobji operne produkcije (1906–1909 in 1913–1914) pred drugo svetovno vojno.

Ključne besede: Narodno gledališče v Beogradu, opera, programska politika, vodstvo gledališča, glasbena elita

Niall O'Loughlin

Evropski glasbeni kontekst oper Slavka Osterca

Slovenski skladatelj Slavko Osterc (1895–1941) je vse svoje opere napisal med letoma 1921 in 1930, v času občutnega opernega napredka na evropskih tleh. Romantična opera je izgubila primat, finančni pritiski po prvi svetovni vojni pa so pomenili, da je bilo financiranje manj, tako da ekstravagantne scene in veliki orkestri niso bili več potrebni za uspešne operne predstave. Čeprav je Osterc napisal romantično opero na podlagi tradicionalne-

ga slovenskega epa (Krst pri Savici), je njegov glavni prispevek v petih operah v letih od 1927 in 1930, po njegovem povratku s študija z Aloisom Habo in drugimi v Pragi. Prva je operna enodejanka srednje dolžine (Iz komične opere), naslednja pa delo polne dolžine s tradicionalnim romantičnim subjektom (Krog s kredo). Preostala tri dela so zelo kratke opere, pogost s parodičnim ali satiričnim karakterjem (Saloma, Medea, Dandin v vicah). Vse izvirajo iz takratne evropske opere in kažejo, da je skladatelj izbiral različne pristope. Vprašanje, na katero se ta prispevek nanaša, je, kakšen vpliv na naravo, značaj in tehnike Osterčevih oper so imela glasbena in druga gibanja v Evropi, še posebno v Avstriji, Nemčiji, Franciji in Italiji, in kaj je preprosto odsev glasbenega duha tistega časa.

Ključne besede: Slavko Osterc, opere, evropska opera, opera 20. stoletja, kratka opera

Gregor Pompe

Repertoarna analiza ljubljanskega opernega uprizarjanja od ustanovitve Dramatičnega društva do danes

Začetke slovenskih opernih predstav lahko povežemo z ustanovitvijo Dramatičnega društva, ki je želelo uprizarjati tudi glasbeno-gledališka dela. Glavni namen članka je osvetliti značilnosti repertoarjev ljubljanske operne hiše. Najprej je bilo treba opredeliti jasna zgodovinska obdobja z lastnimi kontekstualnimi značilnostmi. Jasno je postalo, da so značilnosti repertoarjev v izbranih zgodovinskih obdobjih nekako povezane z družbenimi vidiki. Gradivo sem razdelil na pet zgodovinskih obdobji: od ustanovitve Dramatičnega društva do selitve v novozgrajeno Deželno gledališče, od selitve do začetka prve svetovne vojne, medvojno obdobje, od konca druge svetovne vojne do razglasitve neodvisnosti Slovenije ter od neodvisnosti do danes. Posebej sem se posvetil vprašanju, kot so delež slovenskih oper, pomen »lahkotnejših« žanrov, aktualnost repertoarja in nacionalna raznolikost. Odgovori na ta vprašanja razkrivajo glavne značilnosti repertoarjev ljubljanske opere: prevlado slovanskih del (najpogosteje izvajana opera je Smetanova Prodana nevesta), pozen prihod klasične opere, redke izvedbe baročnih oper in različnih žanrov sodobnih del ter po drugi svetovni vojni popolno prezrtost »težkega« nemškega repertoarja (zlasti Wagnerja in Straussa). Večina teh značilnosti je povezanih s posebnim položajem opere po drugi svetovni vojni. Novi režim ni neposredno posegal v operni repertoar, vendar sta bila proračun in posledično družbeni pomen opere moč-

Wolfgang Marx

Opera in Ireland – A Continuing Struggle for Acceptance

This essay offers a comparison of the provision of opera in Ireland (particularly in Dublin) in the early twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with a special focus on structural issues such as the number of opera companies, the size of venues or the degree of state support. It shows that despite a recent increase in the number of productions and performances there still were more performances at least in Dublin (although probably not elsewhere in the country) a century ago. There is a recently designated “National Opera House” in a small town in the Irish South-East which remains unused for most of the year while there is also a recently formed “Irish National Opera” company which does not have a home venue. In 2017/18 opera productions in Ireland were run by sixteen different national and international companies, ranging from full-scale productions of canonic and (surprisingly many) non-canonic works to concert performances and smaller productions with reduced orchestras. Long-term strategic planning is very difficult due to the Irish Arts Council’s funding strategy. However, about three new operas per year are currently funded, commissioned and premiered in Ireland.

Keywords: Opera in Ireland, opera in Dublin, contemporary opera, opera and nationalism, operatic infrastructure

Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča

Opera and national culture in Latvia: centenary balance

The article overviews the relationship between opera and national culture in Latvia in the crossroads of the 100th anniversary of the state and Latvian National Opera and Ballet. Chronological perspective reveals several crucial contexts and concepts related to the opera and Latvian-ness in the light of social history.

Standing on crossroads between Russian and German political and cultural influences, opera since the first Latvian opera troupe founded by Pavuls Jurjans on 1912 has been one of the cultural cornerstones leading to national state. The features of Latvian national identity on opera stage appear long before the proclamation of a national state. Latvian National opera has been one of the Latvian cultural pillars both institutionally and artistically during the first Republic (1918-1939), during two world wars and the following Soviet occupation. First Latvian original operas – „Baniuta” by Alfreds Kalnins and „Fire and Night” by Janis Medins in the early 20-ies of the 20th

century marked the endeavour to put the Latvian national music and drama onto the level of European high culture. The article outlines the role of Latvian National Opera as institution and opera as a genre in the context of Latvian national culture in 3 main aspects: 1) representations of Latvian national identity in the pre-state period until 1918; 2) national representations in first Latvian operas marking the turning point in national musical culture of the First Republic (1918-1940) and the Soviet era as well as the concept of “White House” – a poetic metaphor used to speak of Latvian National Opera as a symbol of Latvian culture, and 3) relationship of opera and national culture today in-and-out opera house: short outline of Latvian diaspora discourse in opera through the example of “The Heiress of “Vilkachi” by Bruno Skulte staged in 2011 and the current trend of world-famous Latvian opera singers as cultural „ambassadors” of Latvia establishing a perception of opera as national brand.

Keywords: Latvian National opera, Latvian operas, national culture, singing nation

Biljana Milanović

Opera productions of the Belgrade National Theatre at the beginning of the 20th century between political rivalry and contested cultural strategies

One of the most intricate problems of Serbian culture at the beginning of the 20th century referred to the attempts to establish a separate Opera branch of the National Theatre in Belgrade. Polemics about whether the Theatre should cultivate spoken drama only, or both drama and opera as well, contributed to the arising of the “opera question”, a complex issue affected by aesthetic, political, social and economic agents. The “opera question” resulted in discontinuities in improvements of musical ensemble and opera performances of the time, being resolved only later, in restructuring of the Belgrade National Theatre after the First World War (branches of Drama and Opera in 1920, and of Ballet in 1923).

I focus my attention on a set of behind-the-scene aspects of opera productions of the National Theatre at the beginning of the 20th century in order to define different, but mutually intertwined agents of the postponed reorganisation of this institution. My main aim is to show that 1) the political and cultural rivalry of leading intellectuals of this institution, and 2) the weak positions of musical representatives in the distribution of power at the National Theatre were crucial in different attempts to establish a separate Op-

era branch in the Theatre. In this context I illuminate the historical circumstances as well as peculiarities in the field of Serbian music. I place attention on frequent changes of the management staff whose representatives, being active in both the political and cultural fields, showed inconsistency between their ideological and artistic intentions. Contesting programme policies and struggles for power inside the Theatre determined discontinuity of musical practice, actually the two short periods of opera production (1906–1909; 1913–1914) before the Great War.

Keywords: National Theatre in Belgrade, opera, programme policy, theatre administration, musical elite

Niall O'Loughlin

The European Musical Context of the operas of Slavko Osterc

The Slovene composer Slavko Osterc (1895-1941) composed all his operas between 1921 and 1930 in a period in which there was considerable development of opera all over Europe. Romantic opera had fallen out of favour and financial pressures after the First World War meant that expenditure was necessarily on a smaller scale, with extravagant sets and large orchestras no longer being required for successful operas. Although Osterc composed a romantic opera on a traditional Slovene legend (*Krst pri Savica*) in 1921, his main contribution consists of five operas in the years 1927 to 1930 after his return from studies with Alois Hába and others in Prague. The first is a one-act opera of medium length (*Iz komične opere*), the next a full-length work on a traditional romantic subject (*Krog s kredo*) and finally three very short operas, often with parodistic or satirical character (*Saloma*, *Medea*, *Dandin v vicah*). They all have their precedents in European opera of the time and show the composer working with the different approaches. The question that this study addresses is what effect the musical and other developments in Europe, in particular Austria, Germany, France and Italy, had on the nature, character and techniques of Osterc's operas, and what is simply a reflection of the musical spirit of the age.

Keywords: Slavko Osterc, operas, European opera, 20th-century opera, minute opera

Gregor Pompe

Analysis of the Repertoire of the Ljubljana opera since the Establishment of the Drama Society until Today

The beginnings of the Slovenian operatic performances can be connected with the establishment of the Dramatic Society, which wanted to perform also the musical-theatrical works. The main goal of the article is to shed light on the specifics of the repertoire of the Ljubljana opera house. The first task was to delineate the clear historical periods with the own contextual characteristics. It becomes clear that the specifics of the repertoire in the selected historical periods are somehow connected with the social aspects. The material was therefore divided into five historical periods: from the establishment of the Dramatic society till move to the newly built Provincial theatre, from move into the new Provincial theatre till the beginning of the First World War, the time between both World Wars, from the end of the Second World War till independence of Slovenia, from independence till nowadays. Of special importance were the questions of the share of the Slovenian operas, the importance of „lighter“ genres, the actuality of the repertoire, national diversification. The answers to this questions reveal the main specifics of the repertoire of the Ljubljana Opera house: the predominance of the Slavonic repertoire (Smetana's Bartered Bride is the most often performed opera), late introduction of the classical opera, rare performances of the Baroque opera and different genres of contemporary works, after the Second World War total neglect of „heavy“ German repertoire (especially R. Wagner and R. Strauss). Most of these specifics are connected to the special status of the opera in the time after the Second World War. The new regime did not impose direct demands on the repertoire of opera, but the budget of the opera and therefore its social importance were severely brought down, hence opera (as a genre and as an institution) sunk into the fringe.

Keywords: Ljubljana Opera house, Dramatic society, opera, 20th-century music

Florinela Popa

On the Romanian Opera, Bucharest: One Author, Two Views

An unusually prolific scholar, whose work has tackled the history of Romanian music in numerous volumes, Octavian Lazăr Cosma (b. 1933) has also championed exploring the “national opera.” This paper proposes to chart