

ТАМБУРИЦЯ ЯК ЕТНОКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ЕЛЕМЕНТ СЕРБСЬКОЇ ДІАСПОРИ В АМЕРИЦІ

Стаття присвячена аналізу функцій музичного інструмента тамбуриці як етнокультурного елементу сербської діаспори в Америці.¹ Від середини ХІХ ст. серби інтенсивно населяли Америку. Вони привезли з собою свої звичаї і культурну спадщину. Перебуваючи в нових обставинах, елементи їхньої культури набули нових рис, стали певними символами національної ідентичності. Тамбуриця – є таким символом. Згодом сербська діаспора вдосконалювала гру на цьому інструменті, який став частиною традиційної культури сербських іммігрантів в Америці.

Ключові слова: тамбуриця, сербська діаспора в Америці, етнічна ідентичність.

Serbs were massively settled in America in several waves from the mid 20th century. However, the first Serbian immigrant, Jovan Misković, was registered in the USA in 1740 [5, p. 36]. It is necessary to mention a Serb Đorđe Ribar Šagić – George Fisher (1735 – 1873) who came to America in 1815 and soon become politically active in Philadelphia [17, p. 49]. Because of his philohellenism Greek king George appointed him as the Greek consul in San Francisco [3, p. 362]. The first large group of Serbs migrated to America, to New Orleans in the 1830's [17, p. 919; 6, p. 49].

The overall political and economic situation in Austria-Hungary in the 19th century made an influence to migrations of its population [10, p. 81]. The attitude of Serbian government and Serbian national movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina suppressed the movement for emigration to Serbia and indirectly contributed that the mainstream of the emigration movement of Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina to be directed to America in the 20th century [9, p. 619]. During the 20th century there were several waves of immigration of Serbs to America. Each of them brought their customs, culture and habits from the old country, and thus enriched the existing cultural mosaic.

According to F. Barth, in order to delimit the others, an ethnic group does not select everything, but only certain symbols considering them as relevant [11, p. 806]. Ethnic symbols, as visible characteristics of a group,

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are believed to symbolize the unity of the group while being separated from all other ethnic group [2, pp. 127-128]. In that sense, I observed the musical instrument “tamburitza” which became a symbol of ethnic identity among Serbs in America. Besides, performers from Diaspora made contribution and developed musical performance on this instrument.

Writing about the musical identity of Serbs in the Diaspora, D. Stefanović concluded that singing, playing and dancing are parts of the spiritual, national, cultural and musical identification by which our immigrants are connected with the homeland [21, p. 145].

All social events of American Serbs, whether they were religious holidays, picnics or golf tournaments, are not complete without tambura orchestra. Immigrants from areas under the Austrian-Hungarian rule brought tambura to the USA. Usually four or five musicians-singers are performing [18, p. 790].

Tambura - often referred to by the diminutive *tamburitza* - is the basic instrument of traditional folk music, usually performed by small orchestras of three to ten members. However, large orchestras capable of playing even classical pieces arranged for tambura also exist. The basic forms of tamburitza are: *samica*, *prim*, *bas-prim* or *brač čelović*, *bugarija* or *kontra*, *čelo*, *bas* or *berda*. Tamburitza orchestras can have various formats from a trio to a large orchestra. A basic trio consists of a *prim*, a *kontra* and a *čelo*. Larger orchestras also have *bas-prim*s and *bass-prim-terc* tamburas [4, p. 61]. First tambura orchestra were formed in Bačka in the first half of the 19th century [4, p. 6]. In the second half of the 19th century performances of tambura orchestra become popular among many different ethnic groups throughout Srem, Banat, Bačka and Slavonia, and spread throughout whole Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Austria, Czech, and by the end of the century emigrants brought it even to America and other continents [8, p. 452].

The tamburitza of the South Slavs came to America with the immigrants in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It has flourished through several American-born generations [14, p. 12]. Tamburitza music was heard, first in the boarding houses, pool halls, and saloons and later in the taverns, church halls, night-clubs, restaurants, and ballrooms. Today, musicians and fans gather throughout America to hear the bright and happy sound of the tamburitza, and the delightful music also accompanies banquets and picnics as well as baptisms, weddings, anniversaries and holidays.

Milan Opacich is an instrument maker from Gary. Milan's extraordinary contribution to the perpetuation of Serbian tamburitza music makes him

an important figure in the local Serbian-American community. Milan said in one interview: "If I'm going to make an instrument for some particular person – man, I would try to put my heart and soul into that thing. I'd do everything but blow breath into the sound chamber, hoping to make it come to life, you know?" [<http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org/?p=2199>]

In America tambura orchestras are organized in Serbian Orthodox parishes. For example, in California, in the parish of St. Petka in San Marcos in 1971 an ensemble named *Serbian Youth – North County Tamburitza* was organized. The instructor was Milan Nedić, a second-generation immigrant. His parents, who thought him how to play tambura, came from Lika in the late 19th century. At first they didn't have a room for practice. Children, mostly girls, spoke Serbian for a half time during rehearsals and then English during the other half. They performed in front of the audience at Saint Sava and Vidovdan celebrations at the church hall of the St. George church in San Diego, and at occasional picnics. The tambura orchestra of that parish performed songs "Crven fesić", "Bledi mesec", "Šumadijo, šumovita zemljo moja mila". When the girls from the older group enrolled in college, the tambura ensemble was placed in history – *tamburas rusted and the girls got married!* [20, p. 111]. In the parish of St. Stefan Prvovenčani two tambura ensembles with 6-7 performers each were organized [1, p. 154].

In the parish of St. Nicholas *S.Harrisburg St. Oberlin-Steelton, PA* in late July 1970, seven boys and twelve girls formed tamburitza group. The beginning was not easy, because the majority of the children had no formal music background. Besides, they didn't have enough instruments. For over a year, the instruments had to be shared. One student would have it for the first part of the lesson, and then it was turned over to someone else for the last half of the practice session. They alternated taking the instruments home to practice. It was not until late May in 1971 that everyone had an instrument of their own. The second problem was financing. This was solved when the Mothers Club took on the responsibility of sponsoring tamburitza players. To finance this, dance nights have been held periodically over the years. The third obstacle was maintaining the interest of the children [<http://www.stnicholassteelton.org/JrTamb.html>].

A testimony of the members about importance of an tambura orchestra for gathering a community is illustrative: *It is more than just a group of youngsters learning to play the music of our people, it is a source of satisfaction seeing them together because in the name of progress our people have scattered all over this area. No longer do our homes encircle*

the church. If it weren't for activities such as the kolo and tamburitza groups, our children would not be as close as they are. We feel that this is one way of preserving our heritage through the songs and dances of our ancestors that tell the story of our people. This is the special something that binds us together, this great abiding love for what is ours [<http://www.stnicholassteelton.org/JrTamb.html>].

Special place among tamburitza ensembles belongs to The Popovich Brothers orchestra, one of the oldest, if not the oldest Serbian tamburitza orchestra [15, p. 102]. The Popovich Family consisted of five brothers and five sisters born to Serbian immigrants in Globeville, Colorado. Their father Nikola (from Lika, immigrated to the U.S. in 1902) was a roving miner and also worked on the railroads, so the family moved a lot and lived in small towns throughout Colorado, Nevada and Utah. Their mother taught them about Serbian customs and holidays, as well as to read and write, while their father, although illiterate, discovered to them the beautiful music he learned as a child in the "old country". Although he himself wasn't very prone to music, he played tambura a little [16, p. 145].

"Popovich Brothers" organized their first tour across the western part of America in 1928, together with Milan Vurdelja. They played in towns, which were near mines and in camps where "our people" didn't hear tambura's music since they left the old country. Four months later, the tour stopped in Chicago, which brothers came to like so much that they decided to bring the rest of the family there. Since then, the orchestra performs in South Chicago and its vicinity. Eli, Mark and Pete were ironworkers while Adam and Tad worked in the steel mills. But they lived for the weekends, when they played on numerous family gatherings, festivities and formal and informal gatherings, which were organized within Serbian ethnic community in Chicago [16, p. 146].

A large community of Serbian migrants lives in Chicago. They are connected in different ways, from friendly family gatherings, through Serbian clubs and parishes. Music is one of those strong elements of manifestation of their ethnicity [15, p. 122]. Tamburitza is an instrument that is common to the Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups in Chicago, and on that basis we cannot distinguish those two groups [7, p. 42]. In this paper I will try to point out the role of tambura in the Serbian community in Chicago.

After the Second World War, brothers decided to establish a business and open a night bar-tavern by the name "Club Selo" (Club Village). The interior of that bar was decorated with pictures bearing the rural scenes

from the "Old country" and the menu included Serbian specialties [16, p. 147].

In late sixties and early seventies, "Popovich Brothers" devoted themselves to recording their songs and release five LP's and eight sound tapes. In the following years, the Orchestra performed less, mostly at official celebrations organized by the church and its organizations in South Chicago [16, p. 148].

The orchestra took part in Chicago World's Fair 1933, where Adam was one of the most prominent persons, among the organizers, as well as, among the performers [13, p. 31]. They also played at the festival organized for the inauguration of the President Eisenhower in 1957, as at the President Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993, more than thirty-five years later [12, p. 25]. In 1973 the Smithsonian Institution invited the Orchestra to participate in the "Festival of American Folk-life" in Washington D.C. "After performing at that prestigious affair, The Popovich Brothers were officially introduced into 'Tamburitza Hall of Fame" [19, p. 38].

In 1976, twelve hundred Serbian-Americans came to Chicago from all over the country to celebrate The Popovich Brothers' 50th anniversary of making music for the Serbian community. Just a few months later, the youngest brother and prima player, Marko, died suddenly of a heart attack. The remaining brothers felt no desire to continue making music and for some time there was talk of The Popovich Brothers never playing again. Then one day, the filmmakers, who had never lost hope, got a phone call from one of the Popovich sisters who told them that the brothers were beginning to make music again around the kitchen table, and talking about finding a young Serbian musician to join the group. A year later, The Popovich *Brothers Tamburitza Orchestra* accepted a New Years gig at Kojo's bar, where they played their hearts out for the community. Bobby Lalich, a 17-year-old brach player had joined the brothers. The Popovich Brothers continued making music for South Chicago and all the other Serbian communities in the U.S., until Adam Popovich died in 2001. All in all, they played together for 75 years [<http://www.folkstreams.net/film,40>]

Tamburitza has found its place in popular culture, too, in films that were devoted to the significance of this instrument in the life of Serbian migrants in America. They are: *The Popovich Brothers of South Chicago* (1978), directed by Jill Godmilow, Martin Koenig and Ethel Raim. Produced by Mary Koenig, Ethel Raim and Jill Godmilow. Second movie is *Ziveli! Medicine for the Heart* (1987, 51 minutes), filmed and directed by

Les Blank. It was produced by Flower Films in association with the Center for Visual Anthropology, University of Southern California, based on ethnography by Andrei Simic. This film is a portrait of the Serbian-American communities of Chicago and California, highlighting their history in this country, their music, dancing and religion.

As Marco Trbovich, one of his grandchildren, explains in the film, the tamburitza would always come out after dinner, and the Popovich children grew up steeped in Serbian folk music, which they would hand down to their own offspring. One of the cousins, unidentified in the film, explains that when she was a child she identified as Serbian, not American, and when she met her future husband, also Serb, she was attracted by his strong ethnicity [<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/how-the-south-sides-popovich-brothers-took-the-best-of-serbia-with-them/Content?oid=4330093>].

The members of Serbian community in Chicago view and interpret the tamburitza of Popovich Brothers as a symbol of Serbian cultural heritage and of their ethnic identity. In that sense, it had a multiple importance for that community. In a symbolic way, distinctions between the emigrants of different age and social status as members of the same cultural heritage, tambura augments the cohesion of their ethnic community. Tambura music has an educative function. Many emigrants of the later generations learned their native tongue and acquired first knowledge about history and cultural heritage of their ancestors from its music and the words of their songs. On the other hand, that orchestra represented an enormous inspiration for numerous younger tamburitza orchestras throughout America [16, p. 149].

As we have seen, tamburitza is spread over a wide area of the Old Continent in many ethnics groups. It has found a fertile ground in America among immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds. It is especially popular in the Serbian community across the North American continent. Playing on this instrument is cherished in various Serbian immigrant communities. Orchestras are comprised of tamburitza performers of different age. There are children ensembles in parishes, and professional, too. The ensemble of Popovic brothers especially stands out for its immense contribution to musical performance of this instrument.

Tamburitza illustrates the fact that an immigrant culture is never identical to that in the homeland, and that there is always an inventive

adaptation to the successive immigrant waves. Not only that it gained popularity among immigrants from regions where it was unknown. But the popularity of tamburitza is much higher in the America than in the homeland. Besides, we can see on the example of this instrument that even though it does not have ethnic exclusivity (it belongs to various ethnic communities in the homeland and Diaspora) it may be important in the expression of ethnic identity and gathering of community that likes and cares for it.

Благоевич Гордана

ТАМБУРИЦА КАК ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ ЭЛЕМЕНТ СЕРБСКОЙ ДИАСПОРЫ В АМЕРИКЕ

Статья посвящена анализу функций музыкального инструмента тамбурицы как этнокультурного элемента сербской диаспоры в Америке. С середины XIX ст. сербы интенсивно заселяли Америку. Они привезли с собой свои обычаи и культурное наследие. Находясь в новых обстоятельствах элементы их культуры приобрели новые черты, стали определенными символами национальной идентичности. Тамбурица – является таким символом. Со временем сербская диаспора совершенствовала игру на этом инструменте, который стал частью традиционной культуры сербских эмигрантов в Америке.

Ключевые слова: тамбурица, сербская диаспора в Америке, этническая идентичность

Blagojević Gordana

TAMBURITZA AS AN ETHNO-CULTURAL ELEMENT OF SERBIAN DIASPORA IN AMERICA

The main interest of this work lies in the function of the musical instrument of tamburitza as an ethno-cultural element of Serbian diaspora in America. Since the middle of the 19th century Serbs intensively inhabited America in several waves. They brought with them their own customs and the cultural heritage from back home. When placed in the new life circumstances certain elements of their culture got a function of a symbol of the ethnic identity. One such symbol of communion is the tamburitza. This musical instrument is wide spread among many ethnic groups in Europe, and they brought it with them to Diaspora. Further on, Serbian diaspora in America gave a great contribution and left its own mark on the performing on this musical instrument. In this way, it has become a part of the traditional culture of the Serbian immigrants in America.

Keywords: tamburitza, Serbian diaspora, America, ethnic identity

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На сторінках видання розглядаються проблеми традиційної культури діаспори, аналізуються джерела та історіографія, особливості розвитку етнічних груп в іноетнічному середовищі, міжетнічні взаємини у традиційній культурі.

Збірка рекомендується етнографам та історикам, фольклористам, мистецтвознавцям, краєзнавцям, студентам і учням загальноосвітніх шкіл.

Автори статей несуть повну відповідальність за підбір, точність наведених фактів, цитат, власних імен, географічних назв та інших відомостей.

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