
REVIEWS

Article received on February 29th 2020
Article accepted on June 5th 2020
UDC 78.071.1:929 Марић Љ.(049.32)

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**Melita Milin, *Ljubica Marić:
komponovanje kao graditeljski čin*
[*Ljubica Marić: Composing as an Act of
Creation*], Belgrade: Institute of
Musicology SASA, 2018, 479 pages,
ISBN 978-86-80639-38-3¹**

The newly founded award of the Serbian Musicological Society, “Stana Đurić-Klajn”, for a significant contribution to Serbian musicology in the year 2019, was

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¹ This review was written as part of engagement at the Institute of Musicology SASA, funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

given to Dr Melita Milin, a musicologist and principal research fellow of the Institute of Musicology SASA, for the book *Ljubica Marić: Composing as an Act of Creation*. A number of articles published in reputable journals, a publication dedicated to the centenary of Ljubica Marić’s birth² and a few other activities concerning the promotion and affirmation of the composer’s work speak volumes about Dr Melita Milin’s long-lasting interest in the creative work of Ljubica Marić. As a result of fusion of Dr Milin’s previous works, completed and enriched with her latest research, thoughts and conclusions, she wrote the monograph *Ljubica Marić: Composing as an Act of Creation* which was then published by the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (2018).

The fact that this research is based on unprocessed archived data (the legacy of Ljubica Marić and many other files) kept in the SASA Archives, the Archive of the Institute of Musicology SASA, the Archives of Yugoslavia, the Archive of Serbia, and the Faculty of Music, proves its extraordinary value. The author gathered

² Мелита Милин, *Љубица Марић, 1909–2003: “... тајна – тишина – творење...”*, Београд, САНУ/Службени гласник, 2009.

many important pieces of information from a number of contacts and archive groups outside of Serbia. In addition to that, the long-term friendship between Dr Melita Milin and Ljubica Marić was also, in a way, incorporated into the monograph, which gives it special importance. In this monograph, the author crosses the borders of musicology by including the socio-political, cultural and artistic context while exploring the versatile activities of Ljubica Marić (she did not only compose, but was also performing, conducting, educating, organizing and was even engaged in literary, visual art and philosophical activities) and giving a valuable scientific contribution to the entire realm of national humanities.

The research is divided into two major parts – *The Lifetime of Ljubica Marić: A Need for the Act of Creation* and *Crossings* – comprising a few smaller chapters. Apart from the number of music sheet examples, which illustrate analytical segments of the text, the monograph has a lot of appendices (which takes up almost a hundred pages). The first group of appendices contains correspondence, documents and literary texts incorporated by the composer into some of her works. The second group contains facsimiles of handwritten compositions, letters, poems, reproductions of paintings and pages from Marić's copy of *Octoëchos* by Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac. Together with photographs, among which there are some from the composer's childhood, the following additional material is of great value: *A Timeline of Important Moments in Ljubica Marić's Life*, *A List of Compositions by Ljubica Marić* (with additional information about every

printed and recorded music piece, literary works and also about her lost or destroyed compositions), as well as *Bibliography of Writings about Ljubica Marić* (ranging from the most simple articles to monographic research). As a conclusion, the book is complemented with a detailed index of names, the author's biography in two languages and a summary written in English.

After an explication of her methodology, the author, in the introduction of the book, concisely presents Ljubica Marić's opus, which consists of five stages of creation (first stage: 1928–1944, second stage: 1945–1951, third stage: 1956–1967, fourth stage: 1967–1983, fifth stage: 1983–1996). As Dr Milin said herself, she wanted to connect every part of Marić's life and creation, so she “[...] made chronological notes about the events which were essential for the composer's artistic development and which affected her career, including intermittently reviews of her compositions and other works of art”³

First part, *The Lifetime of Ljubica Marić: A Need for the Act of Creation*, consists of the following facts: the composer's family tree, her childhood in Kragujevac, Belgrade and Valjevo, school time in the Music School in Belgrade, studies at the Prague Conservatory, travels and specialization in Berlin, Amsterdam and Strasbourg, return to Belgrade, life in Zagreb, another trip to Prague and, finally, return and employment in Belgrade.

³ Мелита Милин, *Љубица Марић: компоновање као трагедијелски чин*, Београд, Музиколошки институт САНУ, 2018, 17.

Through these chapters, it is easy to follow the artistic development of Ljubica Marić. The author, who is an expert in the musical and cultural happenings of the 20th century, considered every environment in which the composer had spent a certain period of time. There are a lot of outstanding individuals who greatly influenced the professional growth of Ljubica Marić, starting with Miloje Milojević and Josip Slavenski in Belgrade and then Josef Suk and Alois Hába in Prague. In the part of the book which tells us about the composer's years in Prague, the author observes her biography through the prism of modernist tendencies in this city during the 1930s, taking into consideration other Serbian composers, members of the famous Prague group. Special attention was paid to some key events in Marić's life, which played a great part in her affirmation, such as, for example, the performance of the *Wind quintet* at the Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Amsterdam (1933). The chapters about the first decades of Marić's life are completed with meticulous analytical segments. The author constantly emphasises the modernist orientation of Ljubica Marić, which began forming during her studies, by giving thorough and vivid analyses of her early works, such as *Sorrow for the Girl* (for a men's choir), *Sonata Fantasia* (for a violin solo), *String Quartet*, *Wind Quintet*, *Music for Orchestra* and *Sketches for Piano*.

The subsequent chapters are focused on the composer's life and work in Belgrade. After the analysis of compositions in which Dr Melita Milin emphasises a change in Ljubica Marić's style, the

change being a decrease of modernist expression (*Water Flowed*, *Three Preludes and Etude*, *Branko's Round Dance*, *Children's music*, *Three Folk Songs*, *Verses from 'The Mountain Wreath'*, *Sonata for violin and piano*), the reader will encounter a period which was, in the writer's opinion, the peak of Ljubica Marić's creative energy (1956–1967) and in that period, she wrote the following pieces: *Songs of Space*, *Passacaglia*, *The Music of Octoïch*, *Octoïcha 1*, *Byzantine Concerto*, *The Threshold of Dream*, *Ostinato super thema Octoïcha*, *The Enchantress*, *Word of Light*, *Lament*, *Pastoral and Hymn*. A precise and clearly substantiated analytical discourse proves the author's great competence, dedication, careful and thorough approach to the formal and tonal and thematic aspect of these compositions. The writer tried to keep track of the genesis of the mentioned compositions and, at the same time, describe Ljubica Marić's passion for medieval Byzantine culture, the complexity of her attitude towards the Serbian Octoëchos and possible influences of other composers on Marić's opus.

Since Ljubica Marić 'retreated' for a while (from 1967 to 1983, she only wrote *Song for the Flute*) the author's focus then turns towards some social aspects of the composer's life, which attest great respect for Ljubica Marić by the intellectuals of that era. Engagement with the Biennale of Contemporary Music in Zagreb, the selection of Ljubica Marić as a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and a number of meetings, conversations and travels of the composer and her acquaintances are described further. The reader learns

about the composer's interest in broadcasting and also with her less famous works and her great talent in poetry and visual arts.

The last segment of this detailed part is dedicated to the composer's late (fifth) stage of creation and the following pieces are analysed: *Invocation, From the Darkness Chanting, Monodia Octoïcha, Asymptote, The Wondrous Milligram, Archaia, Archaia 2, Torso, Harmony in Stone*. Since Ljubica Marić was still inspired by the Octoëchos in her late stage of creation, Dr Melita Milin achieved continuity with the prior chapter with her analytical approach, pointing out the characteristics of the composer's subsequent approach towards the Octoëchos's melodies compared with the approach from her third stage of creation. The modernist poetics of Ljubica Marić were always highlighted in detailed analyses of musical language, but segments from both national and foreign newspaper reviews are also very important to understand every piece mentioned, because the reader learns about the reception of these pieces at the time they were produced and performed for the first time.

The second part of the monograph is called *Crossings*. In four chapters, the author writes about essential aspects that prevail in the poetics of Ljubica Marić. The chapter *Both Serbia and Byzantium as Motherlands* is about the composer's specific experience of Byzantine heritage and provides a broader context of interest in Byzantine culture and art in this region. The next chapter, *Ljubica Marić and the Octoëchos* is about the enormous influence of this liturgical book on the creation of Ljubica Marić, who was actually

the first Serbian composer who used the Octoëchos chant in non-liturgical compositions. The author, among other things, writes about Marić's philosophical thoughts about time as a specific synthesis of crucial elements of the archaic and the present in the fourth chapter *Time in Ljubica Marić's Music: Depths of the Fourth Dimension*, with references to Henri Bergson and Igor Stravinsky's time categories. The last chapter *Instead of a Conclusion: Fluid Borders of Modernism in Ljubica Marić's Music* is a summary of all five stages of creation of the composer, but with a succinct description of the essential features of the means of expression typical of Ljubica Marić's way of composing. At the end, the author poses questions about the potential interpretation of Ljubica Marić's later pieces of work in the context of postmodernism (or, to be more precise, modernism which is open for postmodernist ideas), as well as her possible influence on the 'acts of creation' of younger Serbian composers.

With a clear articulation of her scientific mind and her recognizable, pleasant language, Dr Melita Milin offers to experts and other readers alike an abundance of hitherto unknown information about the life of Ljubica Marić and a unique interpretation of this artist's opus, which does not consist only of musical works. Having almost 500 pages, the book *Ljubica Marić: Composing as an Act of Creation* is not just one of the most extensive and detailed researches about Serbian composers, but also carries a historical value, since it is so far the biggest and most complex scientific contribution about the character and work of this classic of Serbian contemporary music.