

BASEES Study Group for Slavonic and Eastern European Music Annual Conference 2024

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ABSTRACTS

Ivana Medić: *The 'forgotten' Symphonies of Vasilije Mokranjac*

With this presentation I wish to draw attention to the hundreds of 'forgotten' symphonies written in the second half of the 20th century in the countries of East and Central Europe. Although Yugoslavia was not under strict Soviet political influence after 1948, many similarities remained, including an affirmative assessment of the 'great' Beethovenian symphony as a 'supreme' genre and a 'substitute for the mass' in the atheistic communist world. Due to the lack of a symphonic tradition in Yugoslavia before WW2, after the war ended and the communists seized power, composers were strongly encouraged to write symphonies to 'fill in the gaps' in the local history of music and to contribute to the narratives that conveyed triumph over the evil, especially concerning the heroic partisan resistance during the war. Many symphonies were never performed outside of the countries where they were written and remained largely unknown even in the neighbouring lands; and nowadays they are all but forgotten, even in their own countries. Among his peers, Vasilije Mokranjac (1923-1984) emerged as the most talented, if not the most prolific symphonist. He belonged to the generation that started as moderated modernists in the 1950s, but then attempted to 'modernise' their style throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with mixed success. I will use Mokranjac's symphonic output to try and outline reasons why these works were considered important and relevant when they were composed, and why they are neglected today.

Dr Ivana Medić is a Principal Research Fellow of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, where she also serves as President of the Research Council and a member of the Governing Board. She is a Full Professor at the Department of Multimedia Design at the Faculty of Computing in Belgrade and President of the Serbian Musicological Society. As an alumna of the University of Manchester, where she received her doctorate in 2010, she has served as a convenor of the BASEES/SEEM Study Group since 2011. She has led many national and international projects; currently, she is Head of the project *Applied Musicology and Ethnomusicology in Serbia* (2022-24). She has published five monographs and edited ten collections of essays. She has won several awards for outstanding contributions to Serbian musicology.