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## THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPHERE OF MUSICAL AMATEURISM IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE *BEOGRADSKI MADRIGALISTI* CHOIR<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In this paper we focused on investigating how the sphere of musical amateurism functioned in Yugoslavia in the decades following the end of WWII. Observing through changes in the role and significance of amateur music ensembles, specifically choirs, in Yugoslav society from the late 1940s until the late 1960s / early 1970s that were manifest in their de-massification, gradual professionalisation and extensive use in cultural diplomacy, we sought to explain that this involved multiple factors – above all, the shifts in Yugoslav international policy after the confrontation with the Soviet Union in 1948, and, consequently, the revisions of its cultural policies. Their influence was observed through a detailed examination of the activities of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir, from its foundation in 1951 until the late 1960s / early 1970s. Although it was unique among Yugoslav choirs in many respects, the early history of this ensemble clearly reflected the demand for excellence in the sphere of amateur performance from the 1950s onwards, one of the most prominent indicators of its deep structural transformation.

**Key words:** musical amateurism, choral performance, socialist Yugoslavia, cultural diplomacy, *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir, professionalisation

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## Introduction

The constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (later named the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in the aftermath of WWII can be observed as a long lasting process of radical change involving the organisation of the state, society, the economy and culture along with the sphere of international affairs.<sup>2</sup> The turbulence that periodically occurred in Yugoslav social and political life from 1945 was very intense in the first decade after the war, when the political elite struggled to impose its visions and goals across various classes and ethnic groups, while at the same time trying to limit the activities of ideological opponents and enemies in the political and public sphere. Two profoundly intertwined processes, unfolding together – one marked by the ambition to create a deeply transformed Yugoslav state, nation, society and culture compared to its interwar predecessor and the other, a continuation of the 'state of war' inside the Yugoslav borders, left a specific imprint on the different domains of society in this period, which also reverberated in many ways in the spheres of art and culture. This phase of 'naked' repression, aimed at achieving a social consensus by means of physical force and aggressive propaganda in order to eliminate the 'enemies from within' and spread new beliefs, values and hierarchies, changed course in December 1948, soon after the political rupture with the Soviet Union. Emerging as a result of resistance to the hegemonic aspirations of the Soviets, this event signaled a turnabout in the early history of the second Yugoslavia.

In severing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the main political, cultural and economic partner of Yugoslavia from the end of WWII, the political establishment faced numerous challenges in the spheres of state security, trade, education, finance and so on, which, judging by historical research, gradually led to relinquishing the pre-1948 practices of fierce confrontation with political opponents and the repression of social and cultural tendencies that failed to

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this research we used the results of previous historical investigations about Yugoslav political life, diplomatic relations and cultural policies after WWII. The most valuable were the following: Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije: 1918–1988*, Vol. 3, Socijalistička Jugoslavija, Beograd, Nolit, 1988; Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura: agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji: 1945–1952*, Beograd, Rad, 1988; Goran Miloradović, *Lepota pod nadzorom: sovjetski kulturni uticaji u Jugoslaviji, 1945–1955*, Beograd, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2012; Miroslav Perišić, *Diplomatija i kultura. Jugoslavija: prelomna 1950. Jedno istorijsko iskustvo*, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Narodna biblioteka Srbije, 2013; Ljubodrag Dimić (ed.), *Velike sile i male države u Hladnom ratu 1945–1955: slučaj Jugoslavije*, Beograd, Filozofski fakultet, Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005; Group of authors, *Jugoslavija–SSSR: susreti i razgovori na najvišem nivou rukovodilaca Jugoslavije i SSSR, 1946–1964*, Vol. 1, Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni glasnik, 2014.

conform with the dominant ideology.<sup>3</sup> Instead of strictly controlling the different realms of activity in society such as, for instance, cultural and artistic production and scientific research, the Communist Party leaders gradually adopted a policy of monitoring these realms, constantly shifting the boundaries of what was socially and politically acceptable, and what was forbidden. Actually, the type of open and direct repression was slowly but steadily replaced by a more sophisticated form which, instead of physical punishment and social ostracisation, relied more on self-censorship and the adoption of new societal norms and order.

The turmoil characteristic of the period of ‘prolonged war’ and ‘revolutionary peace’ had a more or less direct impact on the different social spheres. It was reflected in the structure and functioning of the sphere of art and culture through an internal struggle, ‘disciplining practices’ from within or from external instances, the specific hierarchy of values, the status of individuals, and traditions, etc. The revolutionary *ethos* became the cornerstone on which early Yugoslav arts and culture were firmly built. It was manifest through their massification, popularisation and ‘secularisation’ along with centralisation, homogenisation and de-autonomisation. As it underwent a transformation in the early 1950s, after ‘severing relations’ with the Soviet Union and narrowing the gap with Western capitalist countries, its more pacifistic version appeared in the form of Yugoslav socialist society, culture and arts as a unique blend of Soviet and Western European political, economic, cultural and artistic models and policies.

Since arts and culture contributed to the process of building the new, revolutionary Yugoslav society after WWII both in its ‘radical’ and ‘moderate’ phase, the investigation of different dimensions of artistic and cultural life in the first post-WWII decades can help in understanding its complexity, including the antagonisms, inconsistencies, continuities and discontinuities. Apart from that, the exploration of artistic and cultural undertakings in this period makes it possible to analyse and explain relations between the political and social strivings on the one hand, and the functioning of the artistic and cultural spheres on the other hand. In order to partly evaluate these phenomena, we decided to focus our research on one of the numerous amateur ensembles that were founded in Yugoslavia after WWII called the *Beogradski madrigalisti* (Belgrade madrigalists).

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<sup>3</sup> On the transformation of policies in the sphere of politics, culture and international relations in Yugoslavia in the decade after WWII, see Branko Petranović, “Obrana nezavisnosti”, op. cit., 195–262; Miroslav Perišić, op. cit., 21–48; Ljubodrag Dimić, “Ideology and culture in Yugoslavia (1945–1955)”, in: Ljubodrag Dimić (ed.), *Velike sile i male države u Hladnom ratu 1945–1955...*, op. cit., 303–320; Ljubomir Petrović, “Kulturni sukob blokova tokom Hladnog rata u jugoslovenskoj prestonici 1945–1955,” in: Ljubodrag Dimić (ed.), op. cit., 321–342; Svetozar Rajak, “In search of a life outside the two blocs: Yugoslavia’s road to non-alignment,” in: Ljubodrag Dimić (ed.), op. cit., 84–105.

There are several reasons for choosing the mentioned choir as the ‘case’ for our investigation. To begin with, it was founded in the transitory period of the first, ‘revolutionary’ decade of Yugoslav society, which enabled us to take a closer look at the tendencies both in the sphere of amateur artistic and music performance, as well as in the domain of the mass education and cultural emancipation of the working and lower classes. Besides, we were able to observe the influence of the modifications of Yugoslav internal policies along with international relations and cultural diplomacy from 1945 onwards. Although, in many respects unique among amateur choirs at the time – with able singers, musically educated conductors, and a repertoire dedicated mostly to the genre of sacred music – the *Beogradski madrigalisti* effectively show how the sociocultural shifts in socialist Yugoslavia were reflected in the changing role of amateur art and performance in the decades following the end of WWII. As we shall point out in this paper, this specific and important segment of Yugoslav musical and cultural life underwent deep structural changes that gradually led to its exclusivistic configuration. Moreover, musical amateurism not only became less accessible to the masses in the course of time but it also lost its emancipatory potential. Instead of helping the cultural elevation of the workers and peasants, it mainly started to serve for promoting the Yugoslav model of society abroad.

The case study of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* encompassed two research steps. Especially important was the reconstruction of how this choir functioned from its foundation to the beginning of the 1970s, which was based on data collected from the published memorials of the ensemble (1976, 1991)<sup>4</sup> as well as reports and articles from leading music journals (*Muzika*, *Zvuk*, *Savremeni akordi*, *Pro Musica*) and the daily press of the time (*Borba*, *Politika*). Parallel to that, it was necessary to examine Yugoslav cultural policies after WWII with a focus on the problem of the social positioning and functioning of amateur choral and folk ensembles. For that purpose we examined the available archive materials (Archives of Yugoslavia, Committee for Arts and Culture of the FPRY, F314) as well as the mentioned dailies and periodicals.

Before we discuss the problem of the manifestations and influences of Yugoslav revolutionary and post-revolutionary policies in the sphere of amateur art after WWII, using the *Beogradski madrigalisti* as a paradigm, it is necessary to consider its first twenty years of existence, pointing to the dominant aesthetic aspirations, repertoire strategies and status on the national and the international scene.

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<sup>4</sup> *Beogradski madrigalisti 1951–1976*, Beograd, Radiša Timotić, 1976; Milko Štimac (ed.), *Beogradski madrigalisti 1951–1991*, Beograd, Compuscan, 1991.

### ***Beogradski madrigalisti: An overview of its first two decades***

Owing to the published memorials of *Beogradski madrigalisti* on the ensemble's 25th and 40th anniversary which consisted of biographies of the conductors, their testimonies on the choir's activities from the 1950s to the 1980s and the lists of concert performances in Yugoslavia and abroad, along with data from other sources, it was possible to discern several distinctive phases in its activities, mainly due to the discontinuities in the aesthetical and interpretational preferences of its conductors and artistic committees. These phases were the result of the transformation of the artistic approach of the ensemble's leaders and, concurrently, of the gradual change in its status in the Yugoslav public and cultural sphere. Besides, they were a reflection of the intertwining processes in the spheres of politics, culture, art and music in and outside Yugoslavia, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

An analysis of the repertoire of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* along with its national and international concert activities shows at least three phases in the first twenty years since its foundation. Coincidentally or not, their disparity and delineation coincided very much with the work of four different conductors whose aesthetical views seem to have profoundly shaped the ensemble's 'profile.' The first phase (1951–59) was a period when the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir was led by an experienced conductor and composer, Milan Bajšanski, while in the second phase (1959–64) a musicologist, Dimitrije Stefanović, took the leading role. In the final phase (1964–71), the leadership was handed to two conductors – first to Vojislav Ilić (1964–67) and then to the renowned Dušan Miladinović.

Each phase was marked by a certain tendency either in the domain of concert performance, repertoire choice or national and international competition. Therefore, one of the greatest priorities in the first phase was the involvement in Yugoslav cultural diplomacy in Western European countries along with the creation of the repertoire frame, whereas in the second phase it was the popularisation of academic studies of Byzantine music and the public presentation of the earliest music from Yugoslav territory that gained attention. The third phase, by contrast, was marked by an inclination towards the semi-professionalisation of the ensemble, which encompassed broadening the repertoire together with improving the ensemble's performance quality.

The idea of founding the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in conjunction with setting its artistic goals and identity in the sphere of amateurism in Yugoslavia came from the respected conductor and artist, Milan Bajšanski, whose career started during the interwar period. Bajšanski demonstrated an interest and ability in working with amateur vocal ensembles soon after he finished his studies at

the (secondary) Music School in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup> His collaboration with the amateur 'Abrašević' choir was particularly significant, since it was part of one of the largest organisations dedicated to the cultural emancipation of the workers in interwar Yugoslavia (United Workers' Artistic Groups 'Abrašević'), along with the professional choir of Radio Belgrade, both before and after WWII (1937–41, 1944–46, 1948–51).<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that Bajšanski's considerable experience with vocal ensembles, both amateur and professional, contributed to the quality of the performance of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in the first eight years following its foundation and to the successes in the Yugoslav sphere of amateur music performance. Apart from that, it was Bajšanski's choice of repertoire that made this ensemble unique on the Yugoslav music scene. Unlike the growing number of ensembles founded in the post-WWI period, whose conductors and artistic directors favoured mass songs and choral pieces inspired by the celebrated and heroic *narodno oslobodilačka borba* (People's Liberation Struggle), Bajšanski was focused on *a capella* works by composers from various historical periods and traditions. He chose three variants of repertoire – one that consisted of sacred pieces by Renaissance masters, the second was based on the madrigals of Italian, Flemish and French composers, and the third included the secular and sacred works of Yugoslav composers.

The combination of the uncommon choice of repertoire together with the meticulous approach to the ensemble's performance resulted, on the one hand, in gradual public recognition, and, on the other hand, in building a good reputation among the state officials. The first significant indicator of the choir's increasing prominence was its selection for the International Music Festival in Arezzo in 1956, along with several other amateur ensembles from the different Yugoslav regions. The symbolic reward for the efforts of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* by the officials certainly represented a turning-point in its first phase. Among other things, it opened the way to the ensemble's active participation on the local and international music scene and placed it among the numerous mediators of Yugoslav cultural diplomacy.

Apart from the important contribution to cultural diplomacy, the activities of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* which continued in the second and third phase, other tendencies that manifested themselves in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s in the artistic efforts of its conductors and directors were also very significant. For instance, some major modifications in the functioning of the en-

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. "Bajšanski, Milan", in: *Muzička enciklopedija*, Vol. 1, Krešimir Kovačević (ed.), Zagreb, Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1971, 114; B. Đaković, "Bajšanski, Milan", in: *Srpski biografski rečnik*, Vol. 1, Čedomir Popov (ed.), Novi Sad, Matica srpska, 2004, 367.

<sup>6</sup> B. Đaković, op. cit., 367.

semble were introduced during the second phase when the young musicologist, Dimitrije Stefanović, assumed a leading role. Stefanović's interest in the scientific research of Byzantine music from Yugoslav territory resulted not only in repertoire changes, but also in the ensemble's usual concert activities. Namely, in that period the *Beogradski madrigalisti* started to participate in various academic events, including scientific conferences and congresses, illustrating in sound epochs from the distant past. For example, it took part in the 12th World Congress of Byzantine Studies in Ohrid, Macedonia (1961), then in the Congress of Yugoslav Conservators-Restaurateurs in Hopovo, Vojvodina (1962) and, finally, in the International Conference on the Origins of Slavic Musical Culture, in Bratislava (1964). This practice continued after Stefanović left the ensemble in 1964.

Stefanović's contributions to the remodelling of the repertoire were significant. Beside the inclusion of Renaissance English madrigals, his focus on the sacred compositions of distinguished modern Serbian authors (Kornelije Stanković, Stevan Mokranjac, Josif Marinković, Stevan Hristić, Petar Konjović, Marko Tajčević), along with the early music from Yugoslavia that belonged to the Byzantine music tradition was of great importance. In this respect, the rendition of the sacred piece *Ninje sili* ('Now the powers') from the 15th century written by Kir Stefan Srbin, who is believed to be the oldest known Serbian composer, represented an event of historical value. It was performed during the opening part of the 12th World Congress of Byzantine Studies in Ohrid in 1961 together with a Greek song from the 13th century, a hymn dedicated to Saint Clement of Ohrid and the Russian harmonisation of the Greek version of Psalm 103.<sup>7</sup>

The unusual intermingling of scholarly and artistic aspirations that appeared in the second phase accentuated once more the distinctiveness of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* from other amateur choir ensembles in Yugoslavia, which was noticeable from its foundation. Its distinctiveness, especially in the choice of repertoire, was preserved in the third phase which was marked by the ambition to elevate the ensemble's quality of performance. This was particularly visible in the efforts of Dušan Miladinović, whose vast experience in conducting the monumental operatic and instrumental works written by Russian and European com-

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<sup>7</sup> Dimitrije Stefanović, "Ohridski vizantološki kongres i muzikologija", *Zvuk*, No. 52, 1962, 165. As stated by Melita Milin in her paper "Orthodox Sacred Music as an Undesirable Segment of Tradition in Communist Yugoslavia" (published in: Stefan Keym and Stephan Wünsche (ed.), *Musikgeschichte zwischen Ost und West: von der 'musica sacra' bis zur Kunstreligion. Festschrift für Helmut Loos zum 65. Geburtstag*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015, 231), Kir Stefan Srbin's piece was, on this occasion, performed solo by a musicologist and chanter Andreja Jakovljević without the participation of a choir.

posers probably influenced the inclusion of technically more demanding choral and vocal-instrumental pieces in the ensemble's concert programs. In that context, it is important to mention his concentration on the works of contemporary Yugoslav artists of the middle and younger generation (for example, Konstantin Babić, Mihovil Logar, Rajko Maksimović, Predrag Milošević, Aleksandar Obradović, Stanojlo Rajičić, Vojislav Simić, etc.), along with the works of Russian composers of sacred music (Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Alexander Arkhangelsky, Dmitry Bortniansky, Pavel Tchesnokov, Rodion Shchedrin, etc.) and, finally, the canonical monumental works from the Baroque and Classical era (Bach's Mass in A major and Christmas Cantata, Handel's Passion According to St. John, Vivaldi's Gloria, Mozart's Coronation Mass, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

It is evident from the available sources that Miladinović wished to promote the ensemble's competence not only by widening the repertoire but also by increasing the number of concerts in the national and the international arena. Thus, in that period the ensemble took part in numerous festivals, exhibitions, congresses, symposiums, memorials, anniversaries and ceremonial academies in Yugoslavia and abroad. Since 1965, the *Beogradski madrigalisti* started regularly touring the European countries and the countries of the Eastern Bloc while they also became standard participants in the most important Yugoslav choral and artistic manifestations.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, one of the culminating points in this phase was reached in 1970 with a concert of sacred music that took place in St. Paul's Basilica (Rome) in the presence of Pope Paul VI and Vatican state officials. The concert, together with an exhibition entitled 'Serbian Medieval Art' represented an event of enormous political significance, symbolically marking the restoration of diplomatic ties between Yugoslavia and the Vatican state after eighteen years of frosty relations.

Finally, another important contribution by Miladinović, along with his predecessor, Vojislav Ilić, was the revival of concert performances of integral versions of the liturgies by some of the most influential modern Serbian composers, which had been interrupted after WWII. The breakthrough happened first in 1966, when Vojislav Ilić conducted Stevan Mokranjac's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* in Perugia during the festival Sagra musicale and, subsequently, in 1967 when the same piece was performed in one of the most prestigious concert halls in Yugoslavia, Belgrade's Kolarac Hall, with Dušan Miladinović conducting the ensemble.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Milko Štimac, op. cit., 8–11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17–22.

<sup>10</sup> The activities of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s were not considered in this paper because we decided to focus on manifestations of the 'good indica-



## **Musical amateurism and Yugoslav (socialist) cultural policies – a controversial relationship? A glance at the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir**

From the foundation of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in 1951 until the late sixties, when Dušan Miladinović became its conductor, musical amateurism in Yugoslavia went through several stages of development. All of them reflected on the functioning of this ensemble and were manifested in the gradual transformation of the artistic aims of its conductors and artistic committees, along with the type and frequency of its participation in the Yugoslav and international music spheres. Looking at the post-WWII period, especially at the first two decades, it is possible to notice the correlation between the changes in the Yugoslav geopolitical position and the shifts in the sphere of musical amateurism. Namely, it is obvious that before the major split with the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern Bloc in 1948, Yugoslav officials tried to apply the Soviet model of cultural emancipation, including its methods, policies and ideological grounding which resulted, among other things, in the expansion of all sorts of amateur arts. It was believed that dealing with art in a direct manner – through active performance or production – was indispensable for the intellectual enhancement of the masses, together with the appropriation of the new ‘revolutionary’ *ethos*. This assumption in conjunction with the view that the oppressed masses, who were mostly excluded from different kinds of intellectual endeavours in inter-war Yugoslav society,<sup>11</sup> needed access to the cultural and artistic spheres both as

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tors in musical amateurism’s structural transformation and its consequences. The boundary was set to 1970 and the events surrounding the Yugoslav-Vatican *rapprochement* although the actual ‘symbolic closure’ of this process occurred several years earlier with the foundation of the biannual Yugoslav Choral Festivities in Niš (Jugoslovenske horske svečanosti) in 1966. This festival marked a transition to a more nuanced approach to national (federal) representation compared to the previous period (see the discussion in the following chapter). On the aims and goals of the initiators of this specific occasion that combined the competition of amateur choirs and workshops on the interpretation of choral music and its analysis, see Anonymous, “Niš – jugoslovenski Areco?”, *Pro Musica*, No. 18, 1966, 8.

<sup>11</sup> The conclusion from the partially presented findings of research of the archival and published sources (Cf. Ivana Vesić, *Konstruisanje srpske muzičke tradicije u periodu između dva svetska rata: uloga ideoloških podela u srpskoj političkoj i intelektualnoj eliti*, unpublished Ph. D. Diss., Beograd, Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2016), is that musical amateurism was not of central importance to Yugoslav interwar authorities and was limited by the unsystematic work of certain state organisations. The most fruitful efforts in that context were those of representatives of the Soko Kraljevine Jugoslavije (Soko of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) organisation, which supported the creation of amateur folk orchestras both in urban and rural parts of the country and the appropriation of Yugoslav folk

consumers and participants, served to encourage the establishment of amateur music, folk and drama ensembles as well as the proliferation of amateur artistic production.

According to the testimonies of various artists of the time,<sup>12</sup> music ensembles, especially amateur choirs, flourished throughout Yugoslavia – in villages, small and large towns and republican and provincial centres soon after WWII. As the majority of them remarked, choral amateurism went through a considerable transformation as a result of the process of massification. Distinct types of choral ensembles – male, female, mixed, children's, adolescent – were expanding rapidly, becoming part of either youth, workers' or peasants' organisations who were the principal mediators of the policies of cultural emancipation.<sup>13</sup> Beside these 'dilettante' troupes that contributed significantly to the development of the amateur choral scene, an important role in this process belonged to the spontaneously created vocal ensembles founded during the numerous Youth Work Drives in the late 1940s.<sup>14</sup>

While the first post-WWII years were marked by the lack of clearly defined strategies, methods and goals in the sphere of amateurism, signs of change were becoming visible in the end of the decade. At that point, in 1948 and 1949 to be exact, the initiatives for more firmly coordinated work in the process of the cultural advancement of the masses started to appear in the public discourse.<sup>15</sup>

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dances by the masses (Cf. Ibid, 132–133, 148–150). In contrast, exceptional results in the development of musical amateurism – primarily the expansion of rural choirs and choral singing – were achieved by the opponents of Yugoslav cultural policies at that time, the Croatian music experts, intellectuals and political activists assembled in the Association of Croatian Choral Societies (Croatian Choral Union). Using the specific political platform mostly based on the program of the Croatian Peasant Party as the cornerstone, together with choral performance that represented a means for both political propaganda and cultural emancipation, the Association's leaders successfully expanded the number of choral ensembles in the rural areas, making this type of performance and production broadly accepted among Croatian peasants (Cf. Naila Ceribašić, *Hrvatsko, seljačko, starinsko i domaće: Povijest i etnografija javne prakse narodne glazbe u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb, Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2003). Although the Croatian interwar elite created a promising approach to musical amateurism, it seems that the post-WWII Yugoslav elite did not learn much from their experience.

<sup>12</sup> Oskar Danon, "Uloga savremene muzike u društvu", *Muzika*, No. 1, 1948, 12; Dragotin Cvetko, "Slovenačka muzička produkcija i reprodukcija: 1945–1948 (II)", *Muzika*, No. 3, 1949, 61–62; Mihovil Logar and Aleksandar Obradović, "Srbija", *Zvuk*, No. 11–12, 1957, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Dragotin Cvetko, op.cit., 61–62; Andreja Preger, "Muzički život i uloga reproduktivnih muzičkih umetnika u novoj Jugoslaviji", *Muzika*, No. 5, 1951, 123.

<sup>14</sup> Mihailo Vukdragović, "Muzika na Festivalu narodne omladine Jugoslavije", *Muzika*, No. 2, 1949, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, op. cit., 229–239.

The idea of creating a centralised and bureaucratised model in order to articulate and impose the policies of emancipation of the Yugoslav population were fulfilled through the establishment of cultural-artistic societies, the popular KUDs (*kulturno-umetnička društva*), along with their associations at the republican and federal level, which technically enabled strict control of the repertoire and artistic policies of amateur ensembles. Apart from the KUDs, the tendency to regulate amateurism from the 'top-down' through the cooperation of the segments of the bureaucratic apparatus and experts became apparent in the foundation of festivals of amateur art. Their main purpose was to create guidelines not only for conductors and singers of established amateur choirs, but also for the members of orchestral troupes and theatrical groups based on expert knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from an advisory role, festivals served to insert a competitive element in the sphere of amateurism in order to stimulate the improvement of the quality of performance of choirs and other amateur ensembles as well as the skills of their members and conductors. Instead of the spontaneous progress of amateur art with the emphasis on 'sensitising' individuals and groups to creative artistic processes and the 'internalisation' of revolutionary narratives and values characteristic of the first years of the post-WWII period, a new course that took shape in the late 1940s revealed the determination of intellectuals and bureaucrats to approach this part of the cultural sphere in a more systematic manner. It included the evaluation of the skills and knowledge of conductors of existing vocal ensembles, a quest for talented and educated musicians who could take a leading role in the foundation of new ensembles, the periodical critical assessment of choirs at the federal level, etc.

The orientation towards the formalisation and 'disciplining' of the amateur artistic and musical scene in this period can be confirmed in the observations of Mihailo Vukdragović, one of the leading music experts in the post-WWII Yugoslavia, and this includes the sphere of choral performance. Namely, Vukdragović, who closely surveyed the establishment of the first competitions of amateur choirs such as the Festival of Peoples' Youth in 1949, thought of them as an opportunity 'to bring together experts and youth performers in less formal collaboration' for the mutual benefit – amateurs would profit from the judgement of connoisseurs about their performing skills, both positive and negative, while cultural workers and intellectuals would be able to gain a creative impetus from a talented and enthusiastic youth.<sup>17</sup> Since there were great discrepancies in the abilities of choirs who participated in this festival which was, in Vukdragović's opinion, the result of distinctions in the level of the musical education of con-

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<sup>16</sup> Mihailo Vukdragović, op. cit., 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

ductors and their abilities, he suggested their meticulous selection by the authorities. This process required the involvement of local, republican and federal organisations, state bodies and music professionals.

The transformative processes that appeared in the sphere of amateurism in the late 1940s were interrupted in part owing to radical changes in cultural policies initiated in the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia in the end of 1949.<sup>18</sup> Although the rejection of the Soviet model of culture as well as the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the cultural sphere brought an end to various practices and institutions from the previous period, certain elements of 'revolutionary' culture continued to exist in the new socio-cultural context. While a tendency towards a less rigid approach in the cultural sphere with emphasis on flexibility, diversity and dynamism were noticeable from the early 1950s, especially in cultural production, the stance that amateur performing needed 'guidance from above' persisted in this period. Moreover, it seems that it became even more pronounced owing to the gradual improvement of diplomatic relations with countries outside the Eastern Bloc which, among other things, led to growing interest among the authorities in the cultural representation of Yugoslavia.

Considering the importance attached to the promotion of Yugoslav socialist society in the non-socialist states during the 1950s and 1960s, in which amateur performances had a crucial role, it is not surprising that this sphere was placed under the strict supervision of the Yugoslav political and cultural elite. Actually, as the amount and scope of international tours by Yugoslav amateur ensembles proliferated, the procedure of selection of the ensembles by the authorities became more complex and formalised. For instance, while during the early 1950s amateur choirs or dance ensembles that performed abroad were not subjected to strictly defined methods of evaluation,<sup>19</sup> by the end of the decade the Yugoslav

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<sup>18</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, *op. cit.*, 241; Branko Petranović, *op. cit.*, 316–331.

<sup>19</sup> According to the report of Dimitrije Stefanović ("Polifona muzika u Arezzu", *Zvuk*, No. 4–5, 1955, 199), choirs from Yugoslavia underwent examination by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries which was also responsible for the selection of the jury member who represented Yugoslavia at international music festivals. Still, it seems that the procedure of delegation underwent changes in the late 1950s and early 1960s and became more complex. Eventually, it involved teams of experts and several cycles of selection. As claimed by the press reports, the main role in this process was taken over by the Cultural-educational Council of Yugoslavia, its Commission for International Cultural Relations and its Secretariat. This body in cooperation with its republican and provincial departments was in charge of the delegation of amateur ensembles for international festivals and competitions. The procedure was based on the selection of ensembles at the republican level, which were subsequently evaluated by a jury of experts appointed by the Commission. The role of the

authorities established special bodies at the local, republican and federal level whose chief task was to select the proper ensembles for international representation on the basis of clearly outlined criteria.<sup>20</sup> Teams of experts and bureaucrats under the supervision of the Commission for International Cultural Relations were required periodically to organise auditions for amateur ensembles in order to single out the ones with high performing qualities and, at the same time, maintain the necessary 'ethnic balance.' The aim was to delegate the most capable choirs and dance troupes from each republic in order to demonstrate the proficiency of Yugoslav cultural policies in cultivating high standards of performance, as well as making cultural and artistic products and practices accessible to the traditionally, socially disadvantaged groups (workers and peasants).

The approach of the Yugoslav political elite to the process of international cultural representation, including the procedures of selecting individuals, ensembles and troupes during the 1950s had a great impact, *inter alia*, on the sphere of amateurism, encouraging its thorough transformation. Since international competitions and concert tours became an important means for politicians to gain a reputation and prestige, this had an effect on the work of the existing amateur ensembles at various levels and on the process of founding new ensembles. First of all, the fact that being chosen to represent Yugoslavia abroad meant winning public attention along with promotion in the national press, periodical auditions organised by the authorities in the late 1950s put great pressure on the members of the ensembles to 'do their best' both by working on individual accomplishment and on the quality of collective performance over a longer period. In addition, it encouraged the adoption of the concepts of 'success' and 'failure' in a sphere that had been free, for a long time, of the demand for excellence and competitiveness.

There is no doubt that this specific attitude contributed greatly to the decline of amateurism among the masses in Yugoslavia and discouraged the establishment of new ensembles as well as the survival of the existing ensembles especially in the culturally and economically less developed parts of the country which were unable to provide skillful vocalists and dancers, as well as well-ed-

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Commission was to create annual plans for international representation as well as for national events and anniversaries. See S. B., "Hor 'Proletera' putuje krajem mjeseca u Areco," *Oslobođenje*, 14 August 1958, 4; M. V., "Određeni ansambli za amaterske festivale u inostranstvu", *Borba*, 22 April 1961, 7; Anonymous, "Jugoslovenski horovi ponovo pozvani u Langolen i Areco", *Politika*, 22 February 1963, 10; Anonymous, "Pripreme za takmičenje horova u Arecu", *Politika*, 29 March 1963, 10; Anonymous, "Amaterski ansambli iz Beograda, Maribora i Sarajeva na festivalu u Langolenu", *Politika*, 29 March 1963, 10.

<sup>20</sup> See the previous footnote.

ucated conductors and choreographers. Consequently, the marginalisation of non-urban and ‘peripheral’ ensembles, and less competent ensembles occurred during the 1950s which became noticeable after formal auditions were initiated. More adept ensembles were compelled to adjust their schedules of performance, choice of repertoire and membership policies to the new standards and requirements of state officials and experts, which gradually led to their semi-professionalisation.

While participation in amateur performance particularly in amateur choirs rapidly declined from the early 1950s till the late 1960s, which is confirmed by the reports of music experts and journalists,<sup>21</sup> the adoption of strategies that led to attaining an influential social position and symbolic rewards was characteristic of choral ensembles which had higher standards. This process is well illustrated by the functioning of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir from its foundation until the end of 1960s.

What is noticeable from the formation of the mentioned choir is the involvement of musically well-educated or professional conductors all of whom had experience with vocal ensembles. The tendency to hire highly qualified musicians for the purpose of preparing amateur choirs to perform publicly was not unusual in the early 1950s especially for the more ambitious ensembles living in urban areas or in the republican centres. If we analyse the trajectory of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* up to the 1970s it is possible to observe the tendency to appoint more experienced conductors with a broader knowledge of the repertoire of vocal (and vocal-instrumental) music, who were capable of changing the ‘routines’ of performance, the selection of programs, etc. The culminating point in this process was reached with the appointment of Dušan Miladinović, who was at the time famous for his work in the domain of operatic performance, traditionally one of the most prestigious segments of art music performance. This decision by the choir’s Artistic Committee clearly was the expression of a long-term goal to improve the performing quality of the ensemble and, consequently, to acquire a more prominent position on the Yugoslav amateur choral scene.

In addition to the choice of conductors, the desire to attain high standards in performance and prestige at the federal level was perceptible in the aspirations of the choir’s artistic directors to support its participation in international

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<sup>21</sup> Mihovil Logar and Aleksandar Obradović, op. cit., 7; Radomir Petrović, “Horski amaterizam u savremenom društvu”, *Pro Musica*, No. 32–33, 1968, 14; Đura Jakšić, “Stanje muzike u Srbiji”, *Pro Musica*, No. 44, 1968, 11. As Jakšić stated ‘except students and the younger parts of the Yugoslav population, the older generations rarely took part in the small number of amateur choirs that we have, while in other countries there is a large number of non-youth choirs and ensembles’.

festivals and competitions. Starting from 1956, when the *Beogradski madrigalisti* took part in the newly established International Music Festival in Arezzo (Italy), it gradually increased its presence on the international scene, by going on concert tours and taking part in competitions. As for performance statistics, one cannot overlook the choir's visibly greater presence in the international arena. For instance, unlike the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the *Beogradski madrigalisti* occasionally performed outside Yugoslav borders, mainly at the festivals in Arezzo and Llangollen (Scotland, Great Britain), which the Yugoslav authorities greatly appreciated, from 1962 onwards this ensemble appeared abroad once or several times a year, which culminated in the 'Soviet tour' in 1972.<sup>22</sup>

As we can observe, the increase in the number of performances outside Yugoslavia unfolded at the same time as the constant quest for more experienced conductors in the first decades of existence of the *Beogradski madrigalisti*. This was also underpinned by insisting on an ever more complex and diverse repertoire. These tendencies coalesced throughout the 1950s and 1960s in the whole amateur sphere in Yugoslavia, coupled with an important shift that resulted from the foundation of national competitions with international aspirations as well as various music festivals such as, for instance, the Yugoslav Choral Festivities in Niš and the summer festivals in Dubrovnik, Ohrid, Split, and Ljubljana, etc. Thanks to this, amateur ensembles from all over Yugoslavia were given a chance to compete and perform in the country and gain the attention of local and federal authorities, music experts and a wider audience. The creation of a 'space' for national representation, parallel to international representation during the 1960s seems to have reinforced the processes that already existed in the segment of amateurism in the previous period. At the same time, it contributed to partially suppressing the trend of 'alienation' of amateur ensembles from their local community which could be interpreted as the by-product of extensive cultural diplo-

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<sup>22</sup> According to data from the memorials dedicated to the *Beogradski madrigalisti*, this ensemble performed only once outside Yugoslavia in its first decade (in Arezzo, Italy, in 1956), but since the early 1960s it started to give concerts abroad more frequently. For instance, this choir went on a small tour in Great Britain in 1962 (performances in Llangollen, Weston Rhyn, Oxford), and the same year it participated in the festival in Arezzo. In 1963 it performed in Bratislava and Nimice, Czechoslovakia, the following year in Venice, Italy, while in 1965 it held concerts in Czechoslovakia (in Bratislava and Brno). Still, the groundbreaking years in the international concert performances of this ensemble were 1966 and 1972. In 1966 the *Beogradski madrigalisti* went on a tour in Italy (Perugia, Assisi, Foligno) and in 1972, the first tour in Soviet Union (Leningrad, Vilnius, Moscow and Tbilisi). See Milko Štimac, op. cit., 21.

macy or, to be more exact, a complete concentration on the international arena and the neglect of the national and federal context.<sup>23</sup>

Apparently, the pressure to be appear and be known both ‘locally’ and ‘globally’ did not deter the artistic directors of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in the late 1950s. On the contrary, the newly established ‘duality of perspective’ probably reinforced their ambitions concerning the need for the ensemble to reach an artistic, semi-professional level. We can assume that these circumstances significantly intensified the demand for excellence in comparison to the previous period, which led to the increasing complexity of the concert programs as well as the number of performed pieces and their stylistic and technical variety. This presumably resulted in further restrictions in membership policies, owing to which musically more competent and educated individuals were favoured as opposed to those who were less proficient.<sup>24</sup>

The expansion of the possibility to compete and perform in a national/federal frame, besides on the international scene, played a part in bringing about major changes in the policy of the public presentation of church music. This was clearly manifest in the work of the *Beogradski madrigalisti*, the ensemble that played a major role in the ‘normalisation’ of sacred music in the Yugoslav public sphere. Since the performance of pieces written exclusively for the liturgy were not allowed outside religious institutions since the end of WWII, the fact that this choir performed the *Liturgy St. John Chrysostom* by Stevan St. Mokranjac,

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<sup>23</sup> As concluded by the press, it was not unusual for the local and broader community in Yugoslavia not to be acquainted with the work of their successful amateur ensembles. One of the most notorious examples of that kind was the Macedonian *Mirče Acev* choir from Skopje that was awarded the first prize at the festival in Llangollen in 1962. Although this ensemble achieved great success, people from Skopje were not familiar with this ensemble because of the fact that it had never performed in Yugoslavia from the time it was founded. A similar problem persisted with the *Orce Nikolov* folk and dance ensemble from Macedonia, which participated in more than 2,000 concerts in Yugoslavia and abroad (The Netherlands, Great Britain, Romania) but was nevertheless completely unknown in Skopje. See D. Nikolić, “Prvi koncert – u inostranstvu”, *Politika*, 8 August 1962, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Actually, from its foundation the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir was open to musically well-educated vocalists (Cf. *Beogradski madrigalisti 1951–1976*, 1) who had had experience with choral performance. Its first members played a crucial role in the choral ensemble of Radio Belgrade 2, founded after WWII. When this choir was disbanded in the early 1950s, singers enthusiastically joined the newly founded troupe – *Beogradski madrigalisti*. Although there were problems with the frequency of rehearsals and participation of some of the members, especially in the first decade of its existence, the tradition of engaging musically educated individuals continued throughout the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, when the ensemble was ‘reinforced’ by incorporating a group of young and educated vocalists (Cf. *Ibid.*, 15–16).



one of the most prominent works from the modern tradition of Serbian church music, in a public venue represented an event of great historical significance. Apart from discontinuing the marginalisation of church music in the public domain, these and similar performances of sacred music in Yugoslavia after 1967 also contributed to dismantling the double standards typical of the 1950s, when certain 'problematic' music pieces were allowed to be presented abroad, meanwhile they were practically prohibited in local concert halls. The pathway of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* in the performance of Serbian church music from the 1950s to the 1970s reflects, on the one hand, the gradual changes in the sphere of music performance in Yugoslavia – a growing flexibility and the removal of severe limitations, and, on the other hand, a revision by the political elite in its approach to the official religions. Therefore, the activities of this ensemble with regard to the promotion of church music both in and outside Yugoslavia deserve to be thoroughly examined as one of the indicators of the changing relations between the Yugoslav authorities and religious institutions in this period.

### **Concluding remarks**

Even a brief look at the Yugoslav sphere of musical amateurism in the first decades after WWII, focussing on the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir suggests the complexity of influences of political and social interests and motives that shaped its structure and work. Placing this ensemble in the center of the analytical process revealed many important dimensions of the post-WWII socialist cultural policies concerning music amateurism. It is also testimony of the significance of the tendencies in international relations and cultural diplomacy intertwined with the different trends in culturally emancipating the masses, amateur performing and the public presentation of religious art.

The early history of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* clearly illustrates the gradual transformation of the sphere of music amateurism throughout the 1950s and 1960s, which was initiated in the late 1940s. With the ever more significant involvement of Yugoslav amateur ensembles in the process of international cultural representation, together with the development of national competitions, the demands for excellence and the artistic quality of performance gained the upper hand. Instead of making art accessible to the masses through amateur performing, which was one of the main goals of the cultural policies in the 'revolutionary' phase, from the end of the 1940s onwards the sphere of musical amateurism was slowly alienated from the majority of the population. Actually, the benefits of the collective engagement in music performance typical of amateur choirs and orchestras, such as the development of closer social bonds, the spreading of socialist values and norms, the cultivation of taste in music, among other things, were persistently disregarded in the decades following the end of WWII.

Rather than allowing 'disadvantaged' social groups to freely enjoy various cultural activities, the Yugoslav authorities continually suppressed the mass population from the sphere of amateurism, indirectly giving the advantage to more educated and economically advanced groups. Consequently, amateur performing became a prestigious social activity which served as a vehicle for the social promotion of individuals who had more appropriate qualifications (a musical education, exceptional talent, etc.).

The inclusion of elitistic criteria into this sphere led to its marginalisation among the masses, who were compelled to find alternative sources for their involvement in cultural production and consumption. On the other hand, this process contributed to the expansion of artistically proficient amateur ensembles, allowed the lines between the amateur and the professional to become blurred.

The trend of the semi-professionalisation of amateur ensembles, including the processes that contributed to it, was visible in the activities of the *Beogradski madrigalisti*, especially in the selection of conductors, shaping the repertoire, performing activities and rehearsal policies. In coping with the imperative of constant advancement, the artistic directors and leaders of the ensemble participated in the mediation of the political and cultural program of the Yugoslav authorities. This was instigated both through international cultural activities and, later on, in the activities at the national/federal level.

Although the analysis of the early history of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir provides an insight into the complexity of the process of the structural transformation of amateurism, its broader significance can be comprehended only by means of a detailed examination of various amateur ensembles which were active in the decades after WWII along with the organisations and institutions dedicated to monitoring and regulating them. If one pursues a parallel investigation of the musical education and cultivation of taste in music of the masses in this period and its findings, it would be possible to pinpoint more accurately the interconnection of the different spheres and processes in socialist Yugoslavia and stress the intricacies of the evolution and topicalisation of its cultural policies.

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## Summary

In this paper we examine the sphere of musical amateurism in Yugoslavia in the decades following the end of WWII. Having noted the profound changes in the role and significance of amateur music ensembles, specifically choirs, in Yugoslav society from the late 1940s until the late 1960s / early 1970s, manifested in their de-massification, gradual professionalisation and extensive use in cultural diplomacy, we found the explanation lay in several factors – above all, in the shifts in Yugoslav international policies after the confrontation with the Soviet Union in 1948, and, consequently, the revisions of its cultural policies. As we point out, the impetus towards de-Sovietisation in Yugoslavia at that time, followed by more active cultural collaboration with non-socialist European (and Third world) countries, brought about a modification in the approach to musical amateurism. As folk and choral ensembles became important mediators of Yugoslav culture and society abroad, their performing qualities and repertoire gained more attention from officials and music experts. Meanwhile, amateur ensembles started to shape their policies in accordance with the growing tendency to perform at international festivals and competitions which reaped various symbolic rewards. As time passed, the predominant position of cultural diplomacy over the concept of the cultural emancipation of the masses that had

relevance soon after WWII, deeply transformed the sphere of musical amateurism in socialist Yugoslavia. Instead of representing a 'space' for nurturing and elevating the cultural needs and aims of socially disadvantaged groups such as workers and peasants, it 'matured' into an exclusive area that was primarily open to the urban, musically well-educated and artistically adept segments of the population. This process is observed through a detailed examination of the activities of the *Beogradski madrigalisti* choir from its foundation in 1951 until the early 1970s.