

## CROATIAN MUSIC AND CROATIAN RADIO<sup>1</sup>

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This research is the first to focus on ensembles that were established by Croatian Radio to fill its programme needs in production of classical music and in which it was an active programme creator. Previously published studies about Croatian Radio dealt with its history (Vončina, *Prilozi za povijest radija u Hrvatskoj* [Contributions to the History of Radio in Croatia, 1986, 1997, 1999] or with a single ensemble: (*Zagrebački solisti* [The Zagreb Soloists, 1994], *Sfumato — 10 godina*, [Sfumato — 10 years, 2007], *Simfonijski orkestar Hrvatske radiotelevizije — 8 desetljeća*, [The Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra — 8 Decades, 2010]).

In the early 1920s, soon after the European radio stations started broadcasting, they began forming their own ensembles and influencing in several ways the music life of their communities: by becoming the leading employers in the music industry, organizing cycles of public concerts, inclusion into public concert repertoires of works beyond standard repertoire, and promoting national repertoire on tours and organizing specialized festivals. One of the goals of this study is to show that Croatian Radio and its historical predecessors (Radio-stanica Zagreb [Zagreb Radiostation], Hrvatski krugoval [Croatian Wireless], and Radio Zagreb were not an exception in this respect.

Launched in 1926, Croatian Radio eventually became a leading employer and organizer of cycles of public concerts, a spreader and promoter of national repertoire and co-initiator of and participant in specialized festivals. In order to substantiate these claims, I have collected and systematized scattered and unprocessed data on public concerts given by the Croatian Radio ensembles and compiled a list of the works performed, which can be found in the Appendix to this thesis. Another goal of this research has been to present and evaluate important aspects of the relationship between Croatian classical music and Croatian Radio, such as the promotion of contemporary creativity, researching and performing

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works from music heritage, as well as the creation of the standard repertoire of Croatian classical music. For this purpose, I have selected from the collected music critic reviews the reactions of experts on the radio ensembles' repertoire policies, particularly the promotion and performance of works by contemporary Croatian composers and works from Croatian music heritage, as well as the quality of performance. The relationship between Croatian music and Croatian Radio is shown through the repertoire of public concerts for each ensemble respectively, among which the Symphony Orchestra stands out in number, significance, and public reception of its concerts, together with its associated ensembles — the Chamber Orchestra and the Zagreb Soloists. The repertoire of the Choir is also largely influenced by the repertoire of the Symphony Orchestra, that is, performed in collaboration with this ensemble, and to a lesser extent independently.

After the Introduction, the results of the research are presented in three main chapters: Chapter One begins with the founding of the Zagreb Radiostation and the Radio Orchestra and ends with the separation of the Symphony Orchestra from Radio Zagreb (1926-1948). Chapter Two begins with attempts to re-establish the Symphony Orchestra, culminates in the simultaneous activity of as many as four ensembles, and ends with the separation of the Zagreb Soloists from Radio Zagreb (1948-1979). Chapter Three is devoted to the work of the Croatian Radio's two remaining ensembles (1979-2010).

Chapter One is divided into four subsections: already in the first subsection, which deals with the first 16 years of activity of the Radio Quartet, the Radio Orchestra and other Radiostation ensembles (1926-1941), when they mostly performed in the studio, I present a host of new data, such as the schedule of the first (studio) performances of the Radio Orchestra, its repertoire and structure. Croatian lexicographical literature reports that the Radio Orchestra began performing in 1930; however, it is evident from the daily newspapers of that time that the Radio Orchestra had begun performing regularly in September 1929. The Radio Orchestra repertoire was determined by the number of its members: at the beginning there were only five musicians, while this number increased only gradually. Because of this fact, the Radio Orchestra repertoire until 1937 was composed predominantly of evergreens and arrangements of individual pieces of popular classical music, fantasies, and potpourris or medleys of operas and operettas. During that period the first public concerts of the Radio Zagreb ensembles also took place, together with the first music critics' reviews of the concerts given by these ensembles, as well as the work of the Radio Orchestra. By 1937, the orchestra had increased the number of its members to 10, who began performing ever more ambitious programmes from 1939, placing more emphasis on Croatian composers. The change in repertoire was certainly influenced by the fact that the Zagreb Radiostation was nationalized (until then it had been a stock company). At the beginning of 1941, the Radio Zagreb management doubled the number of the Radio Orchestra members and founded the Chamber Choir. After the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during World War II and the

declaration of *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (the Independent State of Croatia) on 10 April 1941, the Zagreb Radiostation changed its name (to *Hrvatski krugoval*/Croatian Wireless) and also changed its management and programme policy. The second subsection deals with the period from 1942 — the beginning of regular public concert performances by these two basic ensembles of Croatian Radio — to 1945 and the fourth socio-political change since Croatian Radio's inception. In the three Croatian Wireless concert seasons, the Choir, the Chamber Orchestra and, from 1944, the Symphony Orchestra, gave a total of 58 concerts. At the end of World War II the Symphony Orchestra had 62 musicians and the Chamber Choir had 31 members. The new Radiostation management took over on 8 May 1945, and the Choir and the Symphony Orchestra public concert performances continued in October of that year. In the first post-war period (1945-1948) the Radiostation ensembles gave a total of 101 public concerts. This period ends with the dissolving of the Radio Zagreb Symphony Orchestra, that is, its separation from the Radiostation structure and its incorporation into the structure of the National Symphony Orchestra in Zagreb — »with the staff and inventory« — by the Decree of the Government of the People's Republic of Croatia issued on 1 April 1948. Thereby, Radio Zagreb lost its oldest, largest and most influential ensemble and in terms of repertoire returned to, if not the very beginning, but the position in which the Radio Orchestra had been in the early 1940s.

It is with this act of long-term consequences for the repertoire and the continuation of public concerts of the Radio Zagreb ensembles that Chapter Two begins, dealing with a dynamic thirty-year period, when Radio Zagreb founded two highly successful ensembles — the Chamber Orchestra (1951) and the Zagreb Soloists (1953), and again managed to bring together the Symphony Orchestra, first under the wing of Yugoslav Broadcasting (1956), and then independently (1958). The chapter is divided into five subsections, the first of which describes the attempts (from 1948 to 1951) to restart the Radio Zagreb public concerts of the Symphony Orchestra and the Choir. The second subsection describes the circumstances of the founding and repertoire policies of the two new Radio Zagreb ensembles: the Chamber Orchestra and the Zagreb Soloists, from 1951 to 1954. The third subsection, spanning the 1954-1958 period, is dedicated to the first subscription cycles (the Radio Zagreb Musical Evenings and Music of the XX Century) of three Radio Zagreb representative ensembles — the Chamber Orchestra, the Zagreb Soloists and the Choir. In this subsection I document in detail the founding of the Yugoslav Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra ensemble (1956), based in Zagreb and with most of its members coming from Zagreb. The fourth subsection is entitled the »Golden Period« because of the simultaneously very rich activity — both for Croatian music and Croatian Radio — of four excellent ensembles (the Radio and Television Zagreb Symphony Orchestra and Choir, the Chamber Orchestra and the Zagreb Soloists), which lasted for 14 seasons, from 1958 to 1972. Within this period, the artistic directors of the Symphony Orchestra, who were also artistic directors of the Chamber Orchestra and joint programmes

of the Choir and the orchestras, left their artistic imprint on particular seasons, whilst the Zagreb Soloists chose their own path, mainly outside Croatian borders, under the permanent and sole leadership of Antonio Janigro. For the first three seasons (1958-61), the permanent conductor of the Radio and Television ensembles was Stjepan Šulek. He rehearsed to perfection the standard repertoire with the Symphony and the Chamber Orchestra — which they had not played since 1948. Šulek was succeeded by his student Pavle Dešpalj who, as the first chief conductor of the Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra, made them independent from the Zagreb Soloists in six seasons (1961-67), because the constant absence of its members from Zagreb for prolonged periods of time prevented the other two ensembles' regular activities. In the 1967-68 season, the Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra suddenly lost their chief conductor (because Dešpalj decided to continue his career in the U.S.A.), and the Zagreb Soloists ended their co-operation with Antonio Janigro. Another Šulek's student, Krešimir Šipuš, became the leader of the Symphony Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra in 1968. He radically changed the repertoire of both ensembles, especially the Chamber Orchestra, in favour of works by Croatian composers, with special emphasis on new compositions (27), a number of which were performed in Zagreb and the remainder at festivals of contemporary music in Graz and Opatija. Krešimir Šipuš was the last permanently employed chief conductor — the next one with such status was Vladimir Kranjčević in 1983, and four conductors succeeded each other in the twelve intervening years: Josef Daniel, Milan Horvat, Oskar Danon and Uroš Lajovic. In the fifth subsection of Chapter Two much of this period (1971-79) is discussed, beginning with the crisis and ending with the second upsurge in activity of the Symphony Orchestra/the Zagreb Symphonists, the Zagreb Soloists and the Choir. The crisis at the beginning of the period produced two seasons without a chief conductor, when the Chamber Orchestra activities came to a halt, whilst the Symphony Orchestra was most often conducted by Milan Horvat and Igor Kuljerić (who was the permanent conductor of the Choir). In a situation in which the quality of musicianship of the Symphony Orchestra became the subject of constant criticism, the Czech conductor Josef Daniel took over the post of chief conductor in 1973. Along with Daniel, the largest number of concerts was conducted by the Croatian composer and conductor Igor Kuljerić. In 1975, the Radio and Television Zagreb Symphony Orchestra was renamed the Zagreb Symphonists of Zagreb Radio and Television, and Milan Horvat started working as the Orchestra's new chief conductor. Horvat tended towards the standard repertoire so Kuljerić, who became his assistant, conducted contemporary works, and Vladimir Kranjčević took charge of the Choir in 1976. He increased the number of the Choir's independent public performances, and like all his predecessors, conducted with increasing frequency the joint programmes of the Choir and the Symphony Orchestra. 1978 was the last year of the Zagreb Soloists as a Zagreb Radio and Television ensemble — on 1 January 1979 the Zagreb Soloists were registered as an independent association of musicians. When Oskar Danon took the post of chief conductor with the Zagreb Symphonists in 1978 it became the

most prominently media covered debut of a new chief conductor in the history of the Orchestra. It was also the shortest 'period' of any chief conductor: it lasted only one season when the deepest commitment to Croatian music was shown by Igor Kuljerić.

Chapter Three of the thesis is devoted to the period from 1979 to 2010; it is divided into two subsections. The first deals with the consequences of the reduced number of ensembles and the participation of Croatian music in the repertoire of the remaining two ensembles, the Zagreb Symphonists / the Symphony Orchestra and the Choir. The first part of this subsection discusses the two seasons with Uroš Lajovic as chief conductor (1979-1981), the two seasons of Zagreb Symphonists without a chief conductor (1981-1983), the six seasons when this position was occupied by Vladimir Kranjčević (1983-1988), and the four seasons with Pavle Dešpalj as an honorary chief conductor (1988-1992). Lajovic showed the most interest in older Croatian music for which Vladimir Kranjčević, as chief conductor of the Choir, also had a very strong affinity, while Igor Kuljerić dealt with the programmes consisting of contemporary Croatian works. After negative public reactions to the 1981-82 season, during which Lajovic ceased being chief conductor but still conducted the largest number of concerts, the Zagreb Symphonists faced another season without an acting chief conductor. Responsibility without status was shared by Pavle Dešpalj, Vladimir Kranjčević and Uroš Lajovic. Acting as the chief conductor of the Zagreb Symphonists, Vladimir Kranjčević, as a founding member and artistic director of the Varaždin Baroque Evenings festival, encouraged performances of older Croatian music. Kranjčević's period also coincided with an economic crisis, which influenced both the repertoire and performances. The result of the crisis was a growing reliance on young interpreters and the co-operation with the Symphonic Orchestra and the Choir of Radio and Television Belgrade. In the middle of Pavle Dešpalj's second mandate in the post of the chief conductor for four seasons (1988-1992), the war broke out and pushed into the background the discussions about the level of performance and repertoire quality, rather bringing forth fundamental existential questions of individuals and the community. The war changed the programme policy of the Croatian Radio and Television ensembles which, under those circumstances had to and wanted to give moral support to the citizens of their homeland when at home, and when abroad, to build the image of Croatia as a part of Europe. Along with the struggle to preserve Croatian national culture, HRT (Hrvatska radiotelevizija [Croatian Radio and Television]) Music Production had to struggle for the preservation of their ensembles after the announcement of the HRT Managerial Board on a »temporary reduction in the number of musicians and musical ensembles of HRT and putting them under suspension« in 1991. After this crisis, Nikša Bareza took charge of the Symphony Orchestra in 1992, and was to remain its chief conductor for 18 seasons. Along with Bareza, the largest number of the Orchestra's concerts and premieres of works by Croatian composers were conducted by Mladen Tarbuk (from 2000 the first conductor of the Orchestra). In his work with the Orchestra,

he built up a reputation as a conductor who was encouraging premieres, and recording and commissioning rarely performed musical works. In addition to participating in these performances, the Choir (first under the leadership of Kuljerić and then Tonči Bilić) launched a separate cycle of public concerts in 1998 called *Sfumato*. The cycle proved to be very interesting both to audiences and critics, and thanks to it Tonči Bilić managed to establish himself as one of the most active conductors of the Croatian Radio and Television ensembles. Besides Bareza, Tarbuk, and Bilić, the largest part in the promotion of Croatian music in this period was played again by Igor Kuljerić, who simultaneously composed several very important works for the Choir and the Orchestra. During the Bareza period, the number of performances and premieres of works by Croatian composers was reduced, and a rejuvenated and reinforced Orchestra, with whose quality the public was increasingly satisfied, struggled — often unsuccessfully — against playing at various occasional concerts.

The final part of the thesis addresses what I consider to be the causes and consequences — fully presented and documented in the previous three chapters — of the Croatian Radio programme policy on Croatian classical music. In the framework of the causes I discussed the socio-political context and the level of political influence on the repertoire of the Croatian Radio ensembles, and the influence of Croatian Radio on music life in Croatia in the framework of the consequences. From 1939 until today, Croatian state-owned radio, with political selection of its directors (who then select and appoint heads of programmes and production), has ensured its influence on all aspects of production. Thus, all the programme and production heads have had to be 'politically correct', whilst their music education was not of crucial importance. The direct influence of politics on the selection of personnel, who were then in a position to influence the ensembles' repertoires, usually ended at this level. Among the happiest periods of Croatian music at Croatian Radio were the ones when the ensembles' chief conductors considered the promotion of Croatian music as their own particular mission, and not just the mission of the Radio as a state-owned institution; they included Krešimir Šipuš and Milan Horvat, the former with more contemporary Croatian music and the latter with more standard Croatian music repertoire. Historical circumstances have had a decisive impact on the share of Croatian music in the repertoire of public concerts — the Radio ensembles have largely performed Croatian music during the most difficult periods of Croatian history: World War II and the three post-war seasons, then during what is known as the Croatian Spring, and during the Croatian War of Independence. As regards the influence of Croatian Radio on Croatian music, it is now the leading employer in the field of classical music, an organizer of the public performances given by its ensembles, in which it incorporates works beyond the standard repertoire in terms of style and genre. Among the influences of Croatian Radio on Croatian music are the promotion of Croatian music outside Croatian borders, through the exchange of recordings or with guest performances of its ensembles at various international



festivals both in Croatia and abroad (*Musikprotokoll*, Berlin Music Biennale, the Dubrovnik Summer Festival and Music Biennale Zagreb). Among the roles of European national radio stations that Croatian Radio has not yet accomplished, I mention the publishing of its own concert and studio recordings. The role of Croatian Radio as the initiator of music creativity and broadening and creation of the standard repertoire of Croatian music is discussed in detail. In respect of the strong reliance of this research on secondary sources, I concluded by commenting on the impact of music criticism on three important aspects covered in the research: the reception of premieres of works by Croatian composers, the reception of the repertoire policy of the Radio ensembles, and the reception of the quality of their performances.

The set goals have been achieved with this research: for the first time in the history of Croatian Radio, data about studio and public concerts of all its ensembles have been collected and systematized. All performed works are listed alphabetically, by the names of composers, by the title of the composition, and then all the performances of the same composition are registered. The list gathers in one place the compositions performed, including 1477 works by Croatian composers, of which 292 were premiered. Some 750 collected music critic reviews and other articles on the Croatian Radio ensembles and their public concert activities have served for documenting the reception of first performances of works by Croatian composers, other performances of works by Croatian composers and other works in the repertoire of the Croatian Radio ensembles, as well as repertoire policy and the quality of ensembles. This work for the first time in the history of Croatian Radio presents and evaluates various aspects of its impact on Croatian music, especially in encouraging contemporary creativity, research and performance of works from Croatian musical heritage and the creation of the standard repertoire of Croatian classical music.