

## IMPRESSIONISM IN SERBIAN MUSIC

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**SUMMARY.** Musical Impressionism is one of the currents that reflected the anti-romantic discourse of the beginning of the 20th century, having a resonance only in the French cultural space - where the preference for suggestion, for deliberately imprecise tone and nuance has always worked. Although musicological studies do not display very important differences in attitude when it comes to defining impressionist compositions, musicologists' opinions sometimes diverge. However, taking into consideration the extent to which the comparative method and the stylistic analysis, applied to music, can be conditioned by subjective experiences, the discrepancies can be said to be almost negligible. Basically, the opinion is that the elements of Impressionism in the first half of the 20th century were the most marked in certain compositions by Petar Konjović (1883-1970), Miloje Milojević (1884-1946) and Stevan Hristić (1885-1958), and to a lesser degree (only in the case of a few parameters of the musical language) we can see them in certain compositions by other composers.

**Keywords:** impressionism, suggestion, analyze, composition, musicology, Serbian

### 1. Elements of the impressionist style in the Serbian music of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Musical Impressionism is one of the currents that reflected the anti-romantic discourse of the beginning of the 20th century, having a resonance only in the French cultural space – where the preference for suggestion, for deliberately imprecise tone and nuance has always worked.

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Although the musicological studies do not display very important differences in attitude when it comes to defining impressionist compositions, musicologists' opinions sometimes diverge. However, taking into consideration the extent to which the comparative method and the stylistic analysis, applied to music, can be conditioned by subjective experiences, the discrepancies can be said to be almost negligible. "Basically, the opinion is that the elements of Impressionism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the most marked in certain compositions by Petar Konjović (1883-1970), Miloje Milojević (1884-1946) and Stevan Hristić (1885-1958), and to a lesser degree (only in the case of a few parameters of the musical language) we can see them in certain compositions by Milenko Paunović (1889-1924), Kosta Manojlović (1890-1949), Jovan Bandur (1899-1956), Mihailo Vukdragović (1900-1986), Marko Tajčević (1900-1984), Mihovil Logar (1902-1998), Predrag Milošević (1904-1988), Milan Ristić (1908-1982), Vojislav Vučković (1910-1942), Stanojlo Rajčić (1910-2000), as well as Vlatko Vedral (1879-1953), Sava Selesković (1893-1941), Stanislav Preprek (1900-1982) and Aleksej Butakov (1907-1953)"<sup>3</sup> (our translation).

Thus, M. Milojević himself stated that in his works, *Nimfa*, *Molitva Majke Jugovića zvezdi Danici*, *Zvona* and in five songs from the lyrical symphony *Gozba na livadi* there is a lot of impressionist colors, an almost impressionist atmosphere. Vlastimir Peričić, analyzing M. Milojević's work, wrote about "the gentle, almost impressionist atmosphere" in part 2 of the *Sonata for violin and piano in Si flat op. 36*, about the collection *Melodije i ritmovi sa Balkana op. 69* as "miniature with impressionist coloring", about "impressionist colors". The solo poems *Nimfa*, *Vetar*, *Čutanje* and *Zvona* display the evolution of an "impressionist style", like the composition based on lyrics by French poets ("the final consequences of the impressionist style" in *Tri pesme za visoki glas op. 67*).

Peričić also noticed impressionist colors in the compositions by P. Konjović *Noćni lotos* and *Ja nosim lik tvoj u duši* from the collection *Lirika*, and the compositions *Luda Jele*, *Đul devojka* and others in the collection *Moja zemlja*; in *Varijacijama na selu* (especially in *Variations I and II*), he talks about an impressionist tone when referring to the second string quartet. In the same way, V. Peričić discusses the impressionist achievements in Stevan Hristić's work, quoting as an example the oratorio *Vaskrsenje*, the compositions for voice and piano *Ponoć* and *Veče na školju*, and *Dubrovački rekvijem*. The impressionist color of M. Milojević's compositions was also mentioned by Katarina Tomašević in connection to the collection *Melodije i ritmovi sa*

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<sup>3</sup> Radoman, Valentina. *Muzički impresionizam*. Akademija umetnosti, Novi Sad, 2018, p. 42

*domaka Šare, Drima i Vardara*, while Melita Milin noticed it in P. Konjović's entire creation, especially in the middle movement of the work *Jadranski Kapričo*, the theme of the sea in *Makar Čudra*, variations II and V of the symphonic variations *Na selu*, and in *Kestenova gora* from the *Simfonijski triptihon*. M. Milojević noticed the impressionist fluency and neo-classical elegance of Gabriel Fauré (including the work *Ritmičke grimase*) in Dragoljub Katunac (in *Quatre morceaux* op. 23).

The problem mentioned above is complicated by the fact that post-impressionism brought to light one of the aspirations of Impressionism, which was not easy to decipher in the beginning. Herbert Read explains that: "a typical impressionist – like Monet – was able to find a motif anywhere because he was interested first in the light effects. And this was precisely one of the aspirations hidden in Impressionism against which Cézanne's 'temperament' reacted violently. His temperament was fundamentally classical; he supported structure at any cost, a style rooted in the nature of things, not in subjective sensations which are always vague. He felt that he could not achieve what he saw without such an organization of the lines and colors which could offer solidity and clarity to the painting transferred on the canvas<sup>4</sup>" (our translation).

If impressionist colors can be discovered in the harmonic language of key examples of Serbian Impressionism, this can practically confirm the position of a small number of musicologists mentioned above concerning a certain resemblance between the compositions of Serbian authors and C. Debussy's work. Key examples of Impressionism in Serbian music can refer to those compositions that Serbian musicologists have emphasized in previous research – naturally, based on their own understanding – as "impressionist". As previously stated, the discussion refers first of all to selected works by P. Konjović, M. Milojević and S. Hristić, in which it is possible not to implement consistently C. Debussy's expressive means in all the parameters of the musical language, but in which the presence of those means, at least in certain layers of the musical language, offered musicologists and musicians the possibility to talk about the similarity between the achievements of Serbian composers and C. Debussy's work. In this respect, the impressionist compositions of Serbian music could include the following works:

1. Petar Konjović's solo compositions: *Noćni lotos* (1917), *Noć* (1906), *Chanson* (1906), *Ja nosim lik tvoj u duši* (1915), *Iščekivanje* (1906), *Lirika*, *Luda Jele* and *Đul devojka* from the second and third notebook in the cycle

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<sup>4</sup> Rid, Herbert. *Istorija modernog slikarstva, od Sezana do Pikasa*, translated by Olivera Stefanović. Jugoslavija, Beograd, 1963, p. 16

*Moja zemlja* (1921-1924), symphonic variations *Na selu* (1915., rev. 1935), concerto for violin and orchestra *Jadranski kapričo* (1936) and *Drugi gudački kvartet* (1937);

2. Miloje Milojević's solo compositions: *Molitva Majke Jugovića Zvezdi Danici* (1920), *Japan* (1909), *Nimfa* (1908), *Vetar* (1920), *Ćutanje* (1920), *Jesenja elegija* (1911) and *Zvona* (1920) from the cycle *Pred veličanstvom prirode op. 3* (9 i 31), *L'heure exquise op. 21* (1917), *Plave legende, pesnička op. 34* (1924-1927), *Dve pesme na tekst Franca Tusena op. 39a i 39b* (1927): *Depuis qu'elle est partie* and *L'ombre d'un feuille dbranger*, piano compositions: *Quatre morceaux op. 23* (1917), *Kameje - impresije za klavir op. 51* (1937-1942), *Melodije i ritmovi sa domaka Šare, Drima i Vardara op. 66* (1943), *Moja majka - zvučna ispovest za klavir op. 77* (1943) and *Tri komada za klavir op. 79* (1943);

3. Stevan Hristić - *Poema zore i oratorijum Vaskrsenje* (1912), the opera *Suton* (1925), the solo pieces: *Veče na školju* (1937), *Ponoć* (1930) and *Novembar* (1930), the choral compositions: *Jesen* (1910), *Dubrovački rekvijem* (1930), *Zvezda*, and the ballet *Ohridska legenda* (1947).

## 2.a. Petar Konjović

P. Konjović's compositions also display the combination of various stylistic areas. Serbian musicologists noticed impressionist elements in P. Konjović's compositions *Luda Jele* and *Đul devojka* from the collection *Moja zemlja*. The stylisation of folk songs in the collection *Moja zemlja* determined such a way of musical thinking, which through certain color harmonic effects (such as the modalism in the composition *Luda Jele*, example no. 37a) resembles the impressionist musical discourse, but it can be clearly differentiated from it mostly by applying an augmented second interval. Despite the metrical and rhythmical complexity (in *Luda Jela*), of the dynamic nuances (in both songs) and of the reduced texture (*Đul devojka*, example no. 37b), which demonstrate a certain closeness of P. Konjović's musical discourse to Impressionism, the simplicity of the shape is still underlined (in stanza form), just like the insistence on the same type of structure during the entire discourse – these being the features of P. Konjović's compositions, which make it impossible to compare it to C. Debussy's work.

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E.g. 1

Глас *Andantino più rubato.*  
Ba-ca - la se Je - le,  
Клавир *mp*  
ja - bu - kom od zla - ta.

Petar Konjović, Luda Jele, m. 1-9

E.g. 2

Глас *Andante.*  
Клавир *ppp* *ad lib.* *cresc.*  
P  
Gjul de - voj - ka, ojl.  
*ppp* *simile*

Petar Konjović, Đul devojka, m. 1-4

Even in his chamber and orchestral compositions P. Konjović did not implement consistently the means of impressionist music, which is why Melita Milin rightly comments that in P. Konjović's orchestral compositions "impressionist illumination" is only occasional. The impressionist reflections bring a slightly more stratified sonorous image. For example, in variation 2

(*Suton*) P. Konjović achieves a textural solution whose basis is a harmonic pedal (on the contrabass and then on the violoncello) on which he overlays an ostinato model (in horn and then bassoon) and a discretely ornamental motif (for violins and clarinets). On this background (which maintains the heterophonic stratification of the voices and the balance achieved among the ostinato models) a modally colored melody develops, in fact, a variation of the basic theme (the composition by S. S. Mokranjac *Pušči me* from *Rukoveti X*).

In what follows, this variation is subject to certain subsequent melodic and rhythmic changes, which take different instrumental colors. It can be noticed that P. Konjović, in a distinctive sonorous landscape, emphasizes the colors of the solo parts of the wooden wind instruments which evoke the sound of folk instruments, as well as many unusual combinations of the different registers of certain instruments. P. Konjović applies similar procedures in variation V (*Noć, priče, snovi*). The archetype achieved by overlapping ostinato models in different orchestral sections, the solo interpretations of instruments (violoncello, English horn, flute, and clarinet), the specific color of the acute register of violins and violas, as well as the dynamic *pianissimo possibile* – indicate an impressionist source of expressive means.

Nevertheless, the density of the orchestral part, the complexity of the thematic transformations and the rhythmic tension of the parts are evidence of P. Konjović's late Romanticism thinking. Similar conclusions can be drawn also about his other instrumental compositions (*Jadranski Kapričo, Drugi gudački kvartet*), in which, mainly because of the "sublimation" of the texture, an impressionist tone can be heard. P. Konjović's attitude towards the program – embodied in the titles of the movements (in variations *Na selu* and in the concerto *Jadranski capričo*) – is typically impressionist, because the same procedures are applied in different contexts of the programme (*Suton* and *Noć, priče, snovi iz varijacija; Pesma našeg mora iz koncerta*), as in the case of many of C. Debussy's compositions (the linear heterophony and polyrhythm are the means through which the French composer evoked the sound of the *gamelan* in the composition *Pagoda*).

## 2.b. Miloje Milojević

In Miloje Milojević's creation, the elements of the impressionist style were already present in the solo compositions written in Munich in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later, until his last compositions, M. Milojević used the expressive means of this style, very often in combination with the romantic musical language or late Expressionism. In the collection *Pred*

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*veličanstvom prirode*, as well as in the composition *L'heure exquise op. 21 no. 1*, in addition to the examples mentioned as evidence of the color potential of certain intervals and chords, there are also many devices which characterize C. Debussy's musical style, such as the flexible form, the frequent change of the image, the metrical and rhythmic complexity, the agogic movement recorded in detail, the sophisticated dynamics.

In certain cases, these led to unusual solutions, such as staccato chords which feature in the piano dynamic:

**E.g. 3**

(Hitro kao nemirni vetar u jesen.)  
(Allegro vivace.)  
Più mosso.

stru - - - - - ja: | pre što si - - -

*p* *f* *mf* *p*

**Miloje Milojević, Vetar, m. 5-7**

or the nuance *pp* at the climactic tone moment and at the highest sound density:

**E.g. 4**

(Andante sostenuto ed espressivo) *espress.* *poco a poco rit, sin al*

Bez - kraj - - - - - lje. Kad ti - voi pa - da

*mf* *pp* *poco a poco rit, sin al*

**Miloje Milojević, Jesenja elegija, m. 63-66**

or offering special instructions:

*Andante sostenuto e espressivo. Prozirno, sa najdubljim osećanjem.*

Chant. *p* Oj, Da - ni - će.

Piano. *pp* Tih, kao daleki šum zvezda u letnju noć.

### Miloje Milojević, Molitva Majke Jugovića Zvezdi Danici, m. 1-2

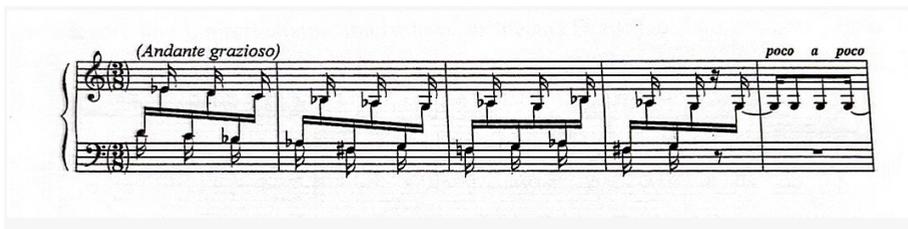
Although the color of all the musical parameters was highlighted by the above mentioned methods, typically impressionist (it was a novelty in the Serbian music at the given moment), it can be seen that the mentioned melodies also have elements of late Romanticism: the rich chromatic and enharmonic modulations, the dense texture (although not overloaded), the rhythmic homogeneity of the voices in the piano scores, the leaps in the vocal parts. Also, these compositions, as previously mentioned, display the beginnings of the concentration of the musical material that M. Milojević was interested in particularly in his more mature expressionist compositions.

When considering the relationship between the text and the music in M. Milojević's solo compositions in the collection *Pred veličanstvom prirode* and the song *Zanosni čas*, Ana Stefanović also notices the composer's ambivalent attitude in choosing the chromatic and impressionist nuances. In the composition *Japan*, M. Milojević introduced another significant aspect, "exotic" in his work – the world of the Orient, represented by the poem of the Japanese poet Ōtomo No Yakamochi, 717-785). Nevertheless, unlike C. Debussy or Paul Gauguin, M. Milojević clearly hesitated between the aesthetics of the traditional European art and a different aesthetic orientation. Reciting Yakamochi's poem in French and adapting the verses to the laws of the European poetry did not give M. Milojević many opportunities to change the aesthetic principles: M. Milojević opted for a composed macroform which follows the logic of the poetic units, with very well-structured lyrics, as well as a musical illustration of the poetic content. Despite such a romantic mimetic principle, M. Milojević managed to repeat a motif from the beginning of the poem (mentioned for the first time with the words "Yamato's country") which talks about the typically impressionist "constant renewal".

A similar path (from late Romanticism to adopting impressionist and then expressionist elements) to the formation of a unique stylistic language can be followed in M. Milojević's piano compositions: some musicologists believe that in the cycle *Quatre morceaux op. 23*, M. Milojević employs impressionist means of expression. At the same time, Stana Đurić-Klejn underlines the descriptive nature of the previously mentioned compositions as indicated by their titles, the accentuated color of the harmony and the careful interpretation instructions given by M. Milojević – which show the subtle feeling of the piano sound and the sophistication suggesting an impressionist thinking of music. Mirjana Živković notices the “romantic basis of these compositions and the emphasis on the color potential of the harmony. However, because of the classicist lines which dominate *Quatre morceaux*, they should not be compared to C. Debussy's compositions, but to the compositions by G. Fauré or M. Ravel”<sup>5</sup> (our translation).

M. Milojević added expressionist elements to the strange combination of late romantic and impressionist elements, first in the compositions in the piano cycle *Kameje pentru pian op. 51*. However, it is not difficult to notice that some of the miniatures, such as *Jedan grob na pariskom groblju Pere-Lachaise* and *Katedrala u Kelnu na Rajni*, dominate the musical language of the late Romanticism. But in the other miniatures, even in those in which the illustrative moment is clearly expressed, the expressive means of different stylistic elements combine. Thus, in the first part of the cycle, *Igračice u plavom* (named after the painting by Degas: *Les danseuses en bleu*) C. Debussy's preferred sonorities can be noticed (the tone scale, the second movements which imitate the pinch of the guitar chords):

**E.g. 6**



**Miloje Milojević, Igračice u plavom, m. 53-57**

M. Milojević's insistence on using the second, fourth and fifth intervals, many metrical changes which contribute more to the impression

<sup>5</sup> Živković, Mirjana. *Stilsko-stvaralačka krivulja Miloja Milojevića u ogledalu njegovih kompozicija za klavir, u: Miloje Milojević, kompozitor i muzikolog*, Udruženje kompozitora Srbije, 1986, p. 64

of tension than to the fluency of the musical discourse, as well as to supporting the small size, which is not subject to frequent modifications – this is what distinguishes the Serbian composer from the French Impressionism.

Apparently, both S. Hristić and P. Konjović shared M. Milojević's position concerning the romantic origins of Impressionism, that is on the last wave of "Romanticism of the 19th century which disintegrated, disappearing in Expressionism and Impressionism"<sup>6</sup> (our translation). When taking into consideration such an attitude of Serbian composers, the reason/meaning of the dense combinations in the last part of the romantic and impressionist discourse in the compositions of S. Hristić and P. Konjović becomes clearer, the same is true for the synthesis of the late romantic poetics, impressionist and expressionist, in Miloje Milojević's music. This attitude is also the key to understanding the type of structural changes in the impressionist language in some of P. Konjović's creations and M. Milojević's piano compositions, in which the folk type of musical material development applies (the folk music material is not subject to the logic of the development of impressionist music).

It is precisely the insubordination of the folk music to a different poetics which indicates the accentuated traditionalism of Serbian composers, their position concerning the relationship between folklore and the artistic tradition. Despite the complex changes that P. Konjović or S. Hristić introduced to the folklore thematic materials in their instrumental compositions (P. Konjović in the symphonic variations *Na selu*) and in the creations for the scene (S. Hristić in the ballet *Ohridska legenda*), the Serbian creators of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be said to have developed an unusual synthesis of that idea which was supported by the Russian composers in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "a folk song can and has to be transformed, each of its parameters can be subject to certain changes, even radical ones"<sup>7</sup> (our translation). Individual genres (such as solo compositions or piano compositions) display ideas supported by Russian composers in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the folk song is a symbol with a deep meaning that the composer must discover to "place" the song in the adequate harmonic and metric context. Depending on the chosen genre, but also on the brightness of the material, the folk song remains recognizable despite the complex changes, preserving its symbol status. The Serbian composers opted for the dominance of one of the two attitudes over the other.

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<sup>6</sup> Milojević, Miloje. *Francuski muzički impresionizam*, Muzičke studije i članci, Beograd, 1953, p. 167

<sup>7</sup> Radoman, Valentina. *Muzički impresionizam*, Akademija umetnosti, Novi Sad, 2018, p. 141

This indicates the fact that their attitude towards citing the musical content of folk origin (in compositions colored by elements of the impressionist style) was completely different from that of C. Debussy. While C. Debussy's attitude towards the most diverse folk songs can be marked, according to the terminology proposed by Dubravka Oraić-Tolić, as "illuminating because the French composer adapted the musical materials of folk origin to the cultural traditions different from his own poetics, treating them as any other musical content, the Serbian composers gave priority to the illustrative type of citing the folk melody, underlining the importance and the meaning of those melodies and subordinating their own poetics to the logic of the development of the folk melody"<sup>8</sup> (our translation).

It is understandable, for various reasons, that the means of the impressionist musical language were not applied consistently in the works of other Serbian composers which were active at the same time as P. Konjović, M. Milojević and S. Hristić, or by those who started their creative journey later. While the creations of composers from older generations (such as P. Konjović and S. Hristić) display a synthesis of the late romantic and impressionist musical scenario, in the creations of composers from younger generations there is a complex combination of Romanticism, Impressionism, Expressionism, and sometimes neoclassic elements – which also feature in M. Milojević's creation. Nevertheless, whereas in M. Milojević's compositions, the elements of the romantic language represent the starting point for the composer's musical discourse which moves in the areas of Impressionism or "post-Impressionism", the creations of young composers are dominated by an expressionist or neoclassic musical language. At the same time, the impressionist means of expression most often serve to illuminate and color the stylistic discourse which was selected as the basis.

Thus, for example, in Milenko Paunović's creation, it is possible to see the impressionist treatment of the orchestra in the second movement of the composition *Jugoslovenska simfonija* (1914), although, as underlined by Biljana Milanović, "such an illumination of the musical language is in fact achieved in the late Romantic style"<sup>9</sup> (our translation). A similar observation can also be made for certain compositions in the creation of Vlatko Vedral, Sava Selesković, Jovan Bandur, Aleksej Butakov and Kosta Manojlović.

It is interesting that some musicologists consider that the use by Serbian composers of certain impressionist harmonic color leads to the conclusion that in such cases those are style elements of the composition

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 142

<sup>9</sup> Milanović, Biljana. *Milenko Paunović - dva modaliteta stvaralaštva*, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2004, p. 15

under discussion. However, it must be remembered that the impressionist harmonic scales became very fast the general inheritance of a European musical tradition. In this respect, there is no basis for stressing the impressionist color in the piano compositions called *Sedam balkanskih igara* (1926) by Marko Tajčević, treating the parallel succession of chords (in *Četvrta igra*) as an exclusively impressionist method. The analysis of the sonorous context of these parallelisms indicates the fact that this is about emphasizing the power of the stylistic impact, while the impressionist color in this case is only a decorative element.

Attributing an impressionist way of thinking to a composer of another stylistic orientation can also be seen in the case of Vojislav Vučković. However, certain musicological texts clearly stress the fact that the piano suite *Peron* (1928) by V. Vučković (an example of elements applied to the impressionist musical language) is still the result of an accident, not of the composer's natural aesthetic preference; the question is whether V. Vučković really wanted to obtain an impressionist sound or he had a more modern one, but the technical level did not allow him to express it.

Some compositions by Stanojlo Rajičić, as well as the early creations of V. Vučković and M. Ristić, display Impressionist elements, which are only a preparation for the composer's inclusion around the expressionist sound. Thus, referring to the compositions *Zima na selu* (1939) and *Ledene kiše: Pejzaž i Jesen iz ciklusa Jesen* (1940), Aleksandra Hadži-Đorđević notes that "the parallelisms of chords, ostinato, tone sequences and the modalism give them an impressionist nuance<sup>10</sup>" (our translation). But the author herself concludes that the expressionist language is present in S. Rajičić's creations, although it is placed in the background. Indeed, it would be difficult to recognize a "purely" impressionist method in the dense areas of ostinato in the pianistic accompaniment, in the uniform rhythmic, nearly monotonous structure of certain sections, as well as in the strong increases in the dynamics. The frequent occurrence of expressionist means of expression in these compositions is evident.

The elements of Expressionism are even clearer in Stanislav Preprek's impressionist compositions. In the cycles of solo works *Proleće! Proleće!* (1919-1944), *Crv Smrti* (1921-1935), *Arapske noći* (1924), in the pianistic cycle *Proljetna svita II* (1940), one can notice a piano texture with rhythmic and harmonic disjunction, effects of the harmonic pedal, breaking with the severe rhythmic patterns for third, fifth and sixth movements, rich nuances of the piano sound, all indicating the impressionist origin of the

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<sup>10</sup> Hadži-Đorđević, Aleksandra. *Solo-pesme Stanojla Rajičića*. Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 1988, p. 34

composer's musical thinking; equally important is the rich chromatics, the dense texture of the piano and the strong dynamic accents which show traces of late Romanticism.

Unlike S. Rajičić and S. Prepek, Predrag Milošević adopted a sort of anti-romantic musical language – in *Sonatina za klavir* (1926), which, however, some musicologists considered part of impressionist music. Thus, Jelena Mihajlović-Marković believes that the macroform of P. Milošević's composition is traditional, but the microform displays “a tendency towards a complex form expressed in the non-periodic structure, the asymmetry of the musical discourse”<sup>11</sup> (our translation). Having treated the color of the harmony and applied the modal folk melody in *Cvekje cafnalo* (second movement), we can talk about the impressionist color of this composition. Nevertheless, apparently the reference to the color treatment of the microstructural harmony and complexity is indeed an insufficient reason to describe the above-mentioned composition as impressionist. The clear classical lines, as highlighted by Vesna Pašić, “give the entire composition (and especially the third movement) an objectified musical expression, a refined pianist texture, in which there is no rhythmic or harmonic asynchrony of voices”<sup>12</sup> (our translation); the clarity of the dynamic contrasts speaks in favor of the idea that this composition should be considered as being outside of the stylistic framework of Impressionism – which is why Vesna Pašić suggests that we should look at the above mentioned composition from the perspective of the neoclassical style.

## 2.c. Stevan Hristić

Tijana Popović, for example, emphasized the fact that, in the case of S. Hristić's creation, “there is no certainty concerning the simultaneity and coordination of the elements of impressionist means of expression in all the layers at the same time; S. Hristić's creation is sensitive and open to impressionist influences which penetrate its musical tissue combined with elements from other styles”<sup>13</sup> (our translation). The same statement can also be applied to the creations of P. Konjović and M. Milojević. Dealing with the

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<sup>11</sup> Mihajlović-Marković, Jelena. *Stilska orijentacija kompozitora Predraga Miloševića*. Međimurje, Beograd, 1988, p. 153

<sup>12</sup> Pašić, Vesna. *Neoklasicizam u srpskoj muzici šeste i sedme decenije XX veka*. Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 1994, p. 21

<sup>13</sup> Popović-Mladenović, Tijana. *Elementi impresionističkog stila u stvaralaštvu Stevana Hristića sa akcentom na elementima impresionističkog stila*. Muzikološki institute Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Beograd, 1995, p. 44

issue of form in S. Hristić's impressionist compositions, Tijana Popović notices in most of the examples the contours of a tripartite structure (which C. Debussy was particularly attached to), while at the microstructural level, she notices "the fragmentation and condensation of the motif structure, the concentration on a certain movement, sound or harmonic effect"<sup>14</sup> (our translation). According to the author, S. Hristić uses the impressionist device of blurring the transition between the formal units so that "different content units stem one from the other by transforming the elements of the musical language which are intertwined"<sup>15</sup> (our translation).

Based on previous observations about the harmonies and formal solutions to which S. Hristić resorted in his compositions, a conclusion can be drawn about the composer's affiliation to the sound of Impressionism. However, when taking into consideration the details of S. Hristić's compositions and the relationship between the musical parameters, the impressionist poetics arises only as one of his choices. Analyzing the composer's relationship with the textual patterns of the solo melodies, Ana Stefanović identifies in the selected examples the presence of mostly two different aesthetical principles and a diverse treatment of the macroform, as well as the implementation of certain musical means of expression which are stylistically different. While in the solo poem *Ponoć* the impressionist/symbolist succession of poetical images is translated into a compound musical form, in all the other strata of the musical language, the mentioned dualism is remarkable (applying the illustrative mimetic principle and the late Romantic poetics, of the mimetic-aesthetic or reflexive-symbolic principles of the impressionist musical language).

The poem *Veče na školju* is dominated by the impressionist concept, in which the traditional three-part form (A B A) is a consequence of the logic of the "content and two-layered structure of Šantić's text, although Hristić – based on the implementation of the musical-poetic vision – proposes clear sequences of chord structures, the richness of the structure, the increase of the volume of the sound up to *ff*, as well as the permanently unsettling rhythm of the movement (all connected to the romantic subjectivity, as a return towards traditionalism"<sup>16</sup> (our translation).

Only in the composition *November*, according to the criteria formulated by Ana Stefanović, S. Hristić fully adopts the impressionist aesthetic principle. Noticing the three-part structure of this composition, the author states that

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 47

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 48

<sup>16</sup> Stefanović, Ana. *Srpska vokalna lirika na raskršću tradicija*. Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 1995, p. 48

“this form cannot be considered traditional, but it should be interpreted according to S. Hristić’s idea of setting a trade-off to the textual pattern through music, but at a higher, symbolic level”<sup>17</sup> (our translation).

If the treatment of the text in the choir fragments selected by S. Hristić is considered in the same way, one can also notice the composer’s vacillation between romantic and impressionist aesthetical principles. All three impressionist choirs by S. Hristić present features of the tripartite structure, which can indicate both a romantic and an impressionist treatment of the form. The mimetic principle expressed (using the “bell” leitmotif) in the choir *Dubrovački Rekvijem*, as well as the consistent implementation of the poetic form through music in the choir *Zvezda*, clearly show S. Hristić’s romantic way of thinking. Apparently, also in the choir *Jesen*, S. Hristić resorts to the concept of the three-part musical form – which does not rely explicitly on the structure of the textual pattern – only to fulfil a predetermined musical and formal condition and not to complete the semantic layer of the poetic work through music, as the impressionists did.

Musicologist studies have already underlined the fact that S. Hristić employed means of expression belonging to the impressionist style in act II of the ballet *Ohridska legenda* (to underline the difference between the representation of the real world which dominates act I and “the world of fantasy” – to which act II is dedicated), although it is also highlighted that Impressionism (“which played its role during the creation of S. Hristić) is in this case a completely secondary component of his creation; that lyrical disposition of act II is not real impressionism”<sup>18</sup> (our translation).

Petar Bingulac emphasized that: “if this music is impressionist, this is only because of certain harmonic and orchestral overturns (the chromatic slide of minor chords and a succession of enhanced three chords, which gives the impression of a tone scale), the use of the sourdine, of fast and short figurative tones. But the real impressionist atmosphere (the refined sound, the harmonic indeterminacy, and the melodic fragmentation – as demonstrated by Debussy in *Nuages* and *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*) is not convenient for S. Hristić”<sup>19</sup> (our translation).

Tijana Popović stresses that the harmonic language of the work *Ohridska legenda* is romantic, and that the impressionist elements are present only in the orchestral part, while Milena Petrović, however, believes that *Ohridska legenda* contains elements of the impressionist style, except

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 135-138

<sup>18</sup> Mosusova, Nadežda. *Ohridska legenda Stevana Hristića*. Zvuk, Beograd, 1966, p. 114

<sup>19</sup> Bingulac, Petar. *Ohridska legenda Stevana Hristića*. Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, Beograd, 1988, p. 146

for the harmonic language and of the orchestration manner – which is basically romantic. In S. Hristić's ballet, according to the author, "the dissonant rhythms are solved in third and sixth intervals which have an impressionist color, while the combination of different rhythms (the simultaneous movement of different voices in third, sixth, eighth and sixteenth intervals) contributes to the impressionist relaxation of the sonorous image"<sup>20</sup> (our translation).

It can be said that all the above opinions, although different, are basically correct. Taking into consideration the treatment of all musical parameters in the composition *Ohridska legenda*, it is easy to notice that this work was written in the language of late Romanticism based on folk musical materials and partially on the principles of intrinsic development in the folk musical material. Especially in Act II of the ballet, the color potential of all the musical parameters was used. Taking into consideration the fact that the impressionist poetics of C. Debussy was created precisely by emphasizing the color aspect of the musical language (at the same time preserving some traces of late Romanticism), while observing the many characteristics of the musical folk legacy (from different cultural environments), it is not unusual to encounter difficulties in discerning the origin of the musical content in an opera such as *Ohridska legenda*.

The thematic material of this composition (based on the original by S. Hristić, but also on the folk melodies quoted by S. S. Mokranjac) displays the same class and glamour which characterize the themes of many compositions by C. Debussy. Oftentimes, this is achieved, like in the case of C. Debussy, through modalism which contributes to the impression of exoticism of the musical material. The specific orchestration also contributes to the impressionist sound of certain passages from *Ohridska legenda*. Similarly, to C. Debussy, S. Hristić likes to use the sound of solo instruments – oboe, clarinet, violin, violin and violoncello, trumpet, English horn, horn and harp, the color of the voices of the horn, trumpets, and muted violins, as well as special interpretation modalities: *glissando*, *arpeggio*, *flageolets*, sustained tones, *tremolo*, *pizzicato*, etc.

### 3. Conclusions

The period during which Impressionism was one of the dominant stylistic movements of European art (the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) was very prolific for Serbia as an independent

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<sup>20</sup> Petrović, Milena. *Ohridska legenda Stevana Hristića*. Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 1998, p. 42

country: a period of “independence and Serbian cultural maturity”<sup>21</sup> (our translation). However, in the historiography of Serbian art, there is no mention of the Serbian cultural independence. The most important issue is the dependence of Serbian culture on the cultural traditions of developed European countries: the Serbian elite at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was made up of people educated in countries from West and Central Europe which, upon returning from their studies, brought with them the newest political, artistic, and scientific concepts to their country.

It is difficult to determine to what extent changing the geographic or social positions influenced the transformation of those concepts, because the interpretative methods that researchers use when trying to ascertain this matter can always be questioned. While, for example, the data connected to the industrial modernization of Serbia in general cannot be ambiguous, facts that are important for the political history or the history of different arts are often interpreted in contradictory ways.

In Serbian musicology there is no attempt (like in the history of literature) to give an extremely general sense to the term Impressionism, to include many compositions of Serbian authors and to define the framework of the Serbian musical Impressionism. In the works of Serbian composers there are “elements of the Impressionist style”, “associations with Impressionism”, the fact that “in the works of Serbian composers there is not a great number of compositions in the impressionist style in all the parameters of the musical language”<sup>22</sup> and that, in general, as compared to Serbian music, “there is rather a decorative reference to the impressionist atmosphere and color, which is often ingrained in the national content and the musical image of the opera” (our translation). Thus, a precise definition of Impressionism refers to its most recognized external signs, more than to the avant-garde innovation of a composer like C. Debussy.

There are impressionist techniques in some paintings of Serbian artists (short, sharp, and dense strokes, which give the work a tactile dimension, diffuse light – infiltrated and translated in color, lyrical expression), but there are no scenes and compositions to clearly evidence the autonomy of the painted surface. “The Serbian impressionist painting was preoccupied by the *outer reality* and especially by national symbols: *St. Sava Church* (in the creation of Kosta Miličević), *Manasija*, *Gračanica*, *Hilandar*, the image of the Emperor *Dušan* (in the creation of Milan Milovanović), *Kosovski božuri*

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<sup>21</sup> Grol, Milan. *Iz predratne Srbije, utisci i sećanja o vremenu i ljudima*, Srpska književna zadruka, Beograd, 1939, p. 9

<sup>22</sup> Popović-Mladenović, Tijana. *Elementi impresionističkog stila u stvaralaštvu Stevana Hristića sa akcentom na elementima impresionističkog stila*. Muzikološki institute Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, Beograd, 1995, p. 42

(in the creation of Nadežda Petrović)<sup>23</sup> (our translation). In music, both in the compositions with text and without text, the aesthetics did not reach that relationship that C. Debussy had with the text or the program, which almost always involves *sublimation in aesthetics* (the musical reflection of the semantic layer of the text), but not at the level of objective, realist transposition, but by achieving a unique musical creation which can complete the semantic layer of the text).

The impressionist creations in the Serbian music whose name clearly indicate a national theme reflect the domination of the national ideology. Nevertheless, the question remains: why did Miloje Milojević (despite the synthesis of the mimetic-aesthetic principle in a great number of solo melodies with an impressionist color, composed between 1908 and 1927) return to the illustrative device (in a creation without a national theme) at the end of his creative journey? Namely, in the composition *Proletnja kiša* (Spring rain) from the cycle *Tri pesme za klavir op. 79* written in 1943 (work which, in the context of the entire Serbian music of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, uses the impressionist means of expression the most consistently) the composer chose a musical illustration of falling rain drops.

In this way, M. Milojević, surprisingly, gave up the possibility of offering the impression of rain, water, nature, the passage of time, in fact, everything connected to the mentioned title and that could raise the relationship between music and the title to a symbolic level. The reason for this return to the mimetic principle and the combination of impressionist means of expression with the romantic understanding of the relationship between music and text may be explained by the composer's attitude towards the origin of the impressionist and the expressionist styles (which should be searched in Romanticism); this confirms the composer's failure to recognize the subtle differences between the romantic and the impressionist poetics.

Did the Serbian art reach aestheticism (because the conditions for its emergence already existed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Dragiša Vitošević)? Or is this about accepting European, French aestheticism as a clear attempt to establish the Serbian identity of music (which, in its turn, would ensure the presence of the Serbian artistic identity in the international symbolic communication of cultures)? The answer could be partially offered taking into consideration the attitude of Serbian artists towards one of the most important concepts in the long history of art, to whom the French impressionists paid special attention: the concept of beauty.

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<sup>23</sup> Radoman, Valentina. *Muzički impresionizam*, Akademija umetnosti, Novi Sad, 2018, p. 173

In a fully impressionist fashion, Bogdan Popović wrote on behalf of many Serbian artists: “a work of art which arouses no emotions is not a work of art. A song which does not make us feel something pure and beautiful is not a beautiful song. It can have other positive qualities: thoughts, originality, style, force; but if it is not warmed by feelings, it will not be a beautiful song. A high work of art has a fine quality of emotion, a fine quality of the emotional tone”<sup>24</sup> (our translation).

Most “impressionist” works in the Serbian art show that for some Serbian artists the category of beauty was in fact equivalent with the national expression. This is why Nadežda Petrović wrote: “the revolutionary art carries, among other loads, the national feelings of its temperament and character. If art is more individual, it carries a stronger national character in all its details”<sup>25</sup> (our translation). This is why she admired Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Cézanne, showing that they went “towards people, towards nature, in order to banish that snobbish feeling which started to suffocate Paris, and make their art national”<sup>26</sup> (our translation).

Taking into account the predominant nationalism in the Serbian art of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, M. Milojević (composing the work *Japan* based on the text of a Japanese poet from Munich, in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) guided the understanding of the concept of beauty which at that time dominated the European art – but not the Serbian art (as mentioned earlier, most likely due to the decorations of the World Exhibitions).

Musicologists have already dealt with the problem of the origin of M. Milojević’s compositions in the impressionist language at a time when he was not familiar with C. Debussy’s music: talking about the creation *Nimfa* (composed a year before *Japan*), Vlastimir Trajković stresses that no one in Munich at that time had used such an impressionist composition style. However, Roksanda Pejović underlines the similarity between Miloje Milojević’s compositions and those by Richard Strauss, and the fact that: “Miloje Milojević’s compositions display features of late romantic creativity with all the novelties borrowed by musical creators of that time” (our translation); this is why “the impressionist elements could be observed in some of them even before the composer left for France”<sup>27</sup> (our translation).

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<sup>24</sup> Popović, Bogdan. *Antologija novije srpske lirike*. SANU, Beograd, 1953, p. 3

<sup>25</sup> Trifunović, Lazar. *Slikarski pravci XX veka*. Prosveta, Beograd, 1981, p. 57

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Pejović, Roksanda. *Mogući uticaj Riharda Štrausa na kompozicije Miloja Milojevića, u: Kompozitorsko stvaralaštvo Miloja Milojevića*, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Beograd, p. 36

Considering the issue of the textual pattern of the solo compositions by M. Milojević, Koraljka Kos highlights also the romantic origin of the composer's interest in the cultures of the Orient, although she mentions in the same context C. Debussy's work as well, and points to two specific features in the selection of poetic texts authored by M. Milojević: "a new attitude towards themes and motifs related to nature and to the distant cultures of the Orient" (our translation). The author underlines the fact that the mentioned features link M. Milojević to "a series of European composers of his epoch arising as a consequence of the departure of the music at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the historicism and realism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – by exceeding the concrete time and space"<sup>28</sup> (our translation). M. Milojević's passion for the Orient will be shared later by, for example, Stanislav Prepek (in the cycles of solo poems written based on the lyrics of Arab and Chinese poets) and by Mihovil Logar (in the piano compositions *Dve japanske priče*).

For M. Milojević, beauty was not represented by what transcends concrete time and space (as Koraljka Kos had defined one of the features of modernist poetry) and by what gives "an aggressive charm" to the creation (as stated by Ch. Baudelaire). For M. Milojević, what was useful was beautiful, and what was useful was the national, because – as he wrote in connection to the oratorio *Vaskrsenje* by Hristić: "...a composition can be beautifully written, but for people it should not mean anything if it does not have the imprint of their spirit".<sup>29</sup> (our translation)

This contradiction between the aesthetical opinions of M. Milojević (embodied in his "impressionist compositions", for example, the first solo works *Nimfa* or *Japan*) and the opinions he put forth in his critical writing promoting the national ideology was already noticed in the Serbian musicology. Katarina Tomašević emphasized the unusual fact that M. Milojević, although he was a "student" of Bogdan Popović, through some of his observations was closer to Skerlić's positivist and moralist vision of nature and the functions of art: "M. Milojević's dominant position in terms of strategy for the development of the Serbian music was a path which led to the Occident"<sup>30</sup>.

Perhaps this is the reason why it could be assumed that M. Milojević did not consider "exoticism" generally undesirable. In fact, he considered it acceptable in the solo compositions, because in the European music, the solo composition was overwhelmed by exotic textual content during the

<sup>28</sup> Kos, Koraljka. *Pjesničko-glazbene slike Miloja Milojevića*. Udruženje kompozitora Srbije, Beograd, 1986, p. 90

<sup>29</sup> Milojević, Miloje. *Vaskrsenje*. *Srpski književni glasnik*. Muzički talas, Beograd, 1997, p. 11

<sup>30</sup> Tomašević, Katarina. *Srpska muzika na raskršću Istoka i Zapada? O dijalogu tradicionalnog i modernog u srpskoj muzici između dva svetska rata*. Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Beograd, 2003, p. 113-114

romantic 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, M. Milojević found natural the exotic musicality of the exotic texts (translated into French, and only later into Serbian). Nevertheless, M. Milojević saw a problem in the cases where the exotic elements of the musical language were not applied as a trade-off for the text, but as independent elements of the musical creation and in genres which had not been the subject of such a treatment even in the European music. It was the case of the oratorio *Vaskrsenje* and it is entirely plausible that M. Milojević powerfully criticised S. Hristić because of this. At the same time, it is understandable, for example, the reason that pushed M. Milojević towards the features of the Spanish song (which “for us and our context means something foreign”, as the composer himself would say) in the composition *Goja* from the piano collection *Kameje op. 51*. The use of the “foreign”, Spanish, folklore was apparently acceptable for M. Milojević if such a choice was justified by the title of the composition, that is if its function was to illustrate.

However, it is interesting that M. Milojević applied the imitation of the guitar sound (which can be associated also with Spanish music) in the composition *Goja*, but also in other compositions whose titles bear no connection to Spain, but with France – because they are inspired by the painting of French impressionists (*Girls in blue* – inspired by *Les danseuses en bleu* by Degas, and *Landscape in the sun - Inspired by Sisley and Pissarro*). M. Milojević might have found such a device adequate, considering the attachment of the impressionists, especially C. Debussy, to the Spanish culture.

But it is still interesting that in M. Milojević’s later creations, the same sound (or, more precisely, interval and texture solution) is also used in the compositions based on arrangements of folk songs (*Melodije sa domaka Šare, Drima i Vardara*), as well as in the composition *Proletnja kiša*. Therefore, it could be assumed that the second intervals (which could come from Spanish music, but also from the folklore of other musical traditions) became in time an integral part of M. Milojević’s style and acquired (similarly to the heterophony or the “exotic” scales in C. Debussy’s creation) the status of “supranational” element of the musical expression. From this point of view, it could be said that M. Milojević’s way of thinking is like that of C. Debussy.

For S. Hristić, who supported a different understanding of “national music” (or of “the national in music”), there seems to have been no conflict between the ideologies of colonialism and nationalism in the musical creation: the versatile identity of Serbian music did not trouble this composer. S. Hristić believed that national art is “a collection of creations belonging to one nation (with absolute artistic value), regardless of the direction to which the

individual creations and the individual artists belong”<sup>31</sup> (our translation). This is why, he was able to write compositions in the same “common style”, but different through “color. About the music in *Čučuk Stan* and the oratorio *Vaskrsenje*, S. Hristić confessed to M. Milojević: ‘I wrote completely different music compositions, but they all have something in common, namely the general opinions about music and its technique. Because there are always two styles which go hand in hand, one is the general, common style, the basic idea of the artistic style, and the other is the external style, which gives the color of the composition’.<sup>32</sup>” (our translation).

Such an observation can also be applied to the ballet *Ohridska legenda* and to the opera *Suton*. In both compositions, S. Hristić used a lot the color treatment of various parameters of the musical language within the late romantic and impressionist styles, but the results of applying them were completely different: while in *Ohridska legenda*, S. Hristić, by implementing folk melodies and rhythms from the Balkan region, depicted the complex “European-Balkan” aspect of the Serbian cultural identity; in *Suton*, leaving aside the folkloric colors, he opted for a “European” image of the Serbian identity. However, it is interesting that, it is precisely through the Balkan ballet *Ohridska legenda*, and not through the European opera *Suton*, that S. Hristić obtained “the international recognition of nationality”, although the composition *Ohridska legenda* (when it was completed – in 1947) was no longer modern from a stylistic point of view.

This aspect brings to light again the complexity of the problem of “the international recognition of national cultures” and shows that stylistic modernity is not always a necessary precondition to access the peripheral traditions of the international cultural/artistic circles. If this problem is seen from a post-colonial perspective, it can be noticed that *Ohridska legenda* (and the same thing could be argued about the piano collection by M. Tajčević, *Sedam balkanskih igara*) was accepted on the European artistic scene precisely because of the nationalist ideology which marked it, of its “exotic” character (folk melodies and rhythms) and not only because of its vision borrowed from late romanticism and of the elements of the impressionist style.

The paradox of the Serbian modernity is that, compared to some European literatures (especially, the main one – the French) it seemed delayed, while, at that time, compared to the national literature and to the literary and spiritual life, it can seem very premature. It is this very difference between the delay and the maturity of the Serbian art which should be researched and understood as a key factor in the attempt to reconstruct the Serbian cultural identity of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>31</sup> Hristić, Stevan. *Povodom dve kritike*. Muzički talas, Beograd, 1997, p. 62

<sup>32</sup> Idem, p. 65

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