

# STJEPAN ŠULEK



"Stjepan Šulek"  
10. II. 1958 Malum

Stjepan Šulek, the great Croatian composer, was above all a versatile artist. After abandoning very early his career of a violine virtuoso, he devoted himself entirely to composing. In his impressive body of work, he relies mostly on the Late Romantic style, combining with it the Neo-Baroque, Neo-Classical and the Neo-Romantic elements. He is a very skilled in the composition technique and unmatched in orchestration. The music of Šulek originates from his enormous musical gift and creative energy, from a firm belief in his own mission and artistic ideals but also from his inexhaustible musical invention and an exquisite sense for the sound and interpretation. Šulek was truly one of the greatest interpreters of his age, and his interpretations, especially those as a conductor of the Zagreb Chamber Orchestra, are ranked among the worlds' best. He was also an excellent teacher. As an expert arbitrator in the issues of musical esthetics, he represented a mainstay to his students. Even those among them who later explored entirely different ways are looking at him today with unreserved respect and remember him with awe.

Stjepan Šulek was and has remained the key personality of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Croatian music, which he replenished with all it lacked, and we are therefore always indebted to him.

**Pavle Dešpalj**

Stjepan Šulek - composer, conductor, violinist and teacher - is beyond any doubt an extraordinary personality, an unique artist in our region. With his too early departure our last Renaissance-type master left, a man of versatile interests and activities, a man of excellent knowledge, a humanist, a man of firm principles, and finally, a man of extraordinary gift. Stjepan Šulek has left behind a huge body of great musical achievements. A large number of his pieces of art stand firm as landmarks of the Croatian post-war musical culture. Naming just two, I would say, key elements of his creative assumptions: highest-level mastership and professionalism, and a profound humanity and warmth of his musical expression.

It seems to me worth mentioning that Maestro Šulek attained his skills as a composer almost completely alone, without a teacher to look at, or better to say to many teachers he was choosing by himself, and he chose the greatest ones: Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner,... and remained always faithful to them. The fact that an extraordinary talent looks back at past in his creation deserves special study and consideration. For me, this is a kind of anticipation of phenomena we are witnesses of today, especially in literature and fine arts, anticipation of post-modernistic phenomena and of emergence of authors "with memory", as they say today. Master Šulek is an author "with memory", and, as Borges and Eco write about books from past ages, so does Master Šulek speak in his scores about the music of the past. As much as we might have been surprised and puzzled by such an attitude, as we were growing older, having actively participated in the turbulent developments in music, we started to turn more and more to the past, finding beauty, peace, order and human dignity in it, all the things our unsettled age has been depriving us of.

Stanko Horvat