Boris Papandopulo (1906-1991) on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death

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Papandopulo made his first contact with music within his family. His mother was famous singer Maja Strozzi-Pe , wifile his step-father, chemist Bela Pe , wifis accomplished pianist often accompanying the performances of his wife. His more serious dealing with music began with piano lessons with the singer Koš evi Badali , and later with Antonija Geiger. However, soon he has shown interest to understand the structure of music as well, thus he started to take private lessons in musical theory and harmony with Fran Lhotka. Later he assumed composition studies at the Music Academy, the then Conservatorium, in the class of Bersa and Dugan. Igor Stravinski, who was a friend of the family, had a significant influence on the young Papandopulo, and with him came the influence of the *Russian Fifth* and of Sergey Prokofiev.

He was also a skilful conductor (he graduated in conduction from the New Vienna Conservatorium in the class of D. Fock). However, the conflict with Baranovi about the artistic policy of the Zagreb Theatre was why Papandopulo felt alienated from Zagreb, which was not fond of him either, and he used every opportunity to leave Zagreb and find his artistic peace in Split, Sarajevo or Rijeka, which, on the other hand, was the very reason why he never became established as a conductor. This clash with the establishment could also explain the fact that, to date, an intolerably small number of authors - as if autarchy was the first and the last governing principle of Papandopulo's artistic personality - dealt with his body of work. And yet, they all agree on one point: clear distinction in the style of the composer's creations until the Second World War, mainly but not exclusively characterised by his leaning on the national musical expression, and the post-war period, in which Papandopulo turned to contemporary European tendencies, without abandoning the national expression.

Although the national idiom mark the early works of Papandopulo, the idea of a middle way successfully synthesising the national idiom and the neo-Classicist tendencies, revealed primarily in the firm motorics of the Baroque provenance seems to me more appropriate. Works created in that period reveal virtuosity in the treatment of musical expression, inclination towards a polyphonic structuring of musical composition, intense combinations of sounds and external decor, all these contrasted with the context of daily life of the Croatian people at that time that found its full expression in the form of the cantata and concerto. The interest towards the neo-Classicist musical language makes him the pioneer of this stream in the context of the Croatian music.

Viewed from today's perspective, the reason(s) why Papandopulo's creative work is being so marginalised and why his work is almost entirely outside the domain of the obligatory interpretations, both the scientific and reproductive ones, is entirely unclear to me. This is also corroborated by the fact that not even his body of work has been fully catalogued. Accordingly, various sources quote from 300 to even 400 works. In the Webzine on our website you can read *A Croquis of Papandopulo's Opus*, which attempts to include at least the most significant contributions of Papandopulo to Croatian music.

To be able to fully understand Papandopulo's creative work, one should first comprehend his own creative aesthetics. Like Sulek, Papandopulo's view was that the technique of composing in its essence should in no event become a substance of the very process of composing, although it indeed is a key prerequisite for it, it should be treated primarily like a tool rather than the purpose of composing. Clearly, despite the great importance of technique, which by no means should be denied, it still can't grant the essence to the music that first of all needs an insight and not just a technical reasoning.

Further, although Papandopulo's opus displays the composer's artistic versatility in terms of style, initially almost exclusively based on the folklore idiom of various origins (Bosnian, Mediterranean, Istrian, the one from the region of Zagreb hinterland - Zagorje), even when he turned to contemporary

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trends, Papandopulo almost never thrust aside tradition. In this respect, one can follow a two-fold development of his stylistic synthesis: the neo-national and the neo-neoclassical, whereby the category of *neo* or new is present with Papandopulo exclusively in terms of applying the 12-tone technique (the ballet *The Gold*). This category of the new turned into a paradigm of the 20th century and Papandopulo was one of the composers who were definitely sceptic about the permanent sustainability of the avantagarde trends, which, according to him, had gone so far that the need for a return became a necessity. In Papandopulo's opinion, avant-garde music became stereotyped, exhausted and lost within its own movement. All of these underlie the purpose and reason of Papandopulo's continuous leaning on tradition, either in terms of the folklore idiom, neoclassical tendencies and preference for the achievements of the baroque, or the Russian school. One should note that Papandopulo got acquainted with classical forms in a time of their exhausted persistence. Thus, no wonder that he showed an inclination to fill these forms with new, contemporary contents or to abandon the rigidity of classical forms altogether and to embrace higher level of formal freedom that enables a more liberal expression of the composer's ideas.

As a composer, Papandopulo always sought, in addition to the inevitable preconceived sound image, the one that is also programmatically defined (which reflects the influence of Russian composers), assessing that it protects artist of stereotype or petrified routine. Given such a conception, one can easily understand Papandopulo's preference to musical forms that lean on extramusical content (let us recall just how numerous are cantatas written by author). And yet, this does not mean that music needs a kind of an interpreter or a mediator because music is a type of art defined above all by its own effect rather than by technique, as many believe, which would then explain the construction of a musical whole. Papandopulo revealed a huge diversity in his approach to texts, relying again and again on the meaning of the text itself, or, in other cases, he would be attracted by the musicality of texts, in which case he would pay great attention to inflections and accentuations of the language, often with the assistance of language experts.

Papandopulo was also author of many professional articles, in which he presented his views about the cultural function of music, considering that music plays a key role in the culture of an individual. Nevertheless, music increasingly loses its function in today's culture, which, on the other hand, looks more and more like the end of a highly developed civilisation that is no longer able to close the insurmountable gap between the technical progress and the spiritual values. Contemplation and beauty Papandopulo perceives as the essential elements of the cultural function of music, which is entirely at risk in today's culture, both because of an overall contemporary tendency of denying meaning and existence of beauty in the music, as well as due to the lack of the necessary musical education on all levels as a prerequisite for comprehending the quality of the musical and of music itself, which at the end leads to the dehumanisation of the music.

The collaborative skills of the Croatian Mozart, who would rather write a new composition than rewrite the existing one, could be best illustrated by the following words of Jana Puleva, his long-time partner in life and partner in art: 'He was so relaxed that some would criticise him of being too easy going in his work, he was remarkable, he would never torture anyone, his authority was unobtrusive and he gave everyone freedom of independent artistic expression'. Papandopulo was indeed an extraordinary creative artist in the Croatian music of the 20th century. Unfortunately, most of his works have never been honoured by appropriate musical interpretations. Furthermore, the information about his life and career cannot be found or obtained in our institutions devoted to music, where they should be readily available. Why is it so is a question which inevitably arises. What are the actual reasons allowing the entire Croatian musical establishment to ignore one of the greatest personalities of the 20th century Croatia? Even though one should mention the interest in Papandopulo's creative work, which emerged in Istria in the 1990s (which, one has to admit, never stimulated further investigation and evaluation of the composer's opus). Furthermore, we believe that one should finally raise a question why his native Zagreb even today, ten years after his death, is revealing itself as a milieu unfavourably disposed toward the unique personality of Papandopulo, which is first and most of all to the detriment of our own musical history and culture.

