

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

Dejana Marunović



Papandopulo made his first contact with music within his family. His mother was famous singer Maja Strozzi-Pe , while his step-father, chemist Bela Pe , was accomplished pianist often accompanying the performances of his wife. His more serious dealing with music began with piano lessons with the singer Koš evi ěBađali , 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 talented 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-Classicalist 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-Classicalist 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

