STJEPAN ŠULEK

Stanko Horvat

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.