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Slovenski Mozart: Knjiga o Josipu Ipavcu

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Najnovejša knjiga vrhunskega poznavalca slovenske kulturne zgodovine in še posebno rodbine Ipavec je nekakšna sinteza dosedanjega vedenja o naših ljudeh in prostoru v prelomnih desetletjih pred prehodom iz 19. v 20. stoletja in po njem. Iz besedila vidimo, kaj je v tem času pomenilo biti pravi umetnik v večnarodni monarhiji. Josip Ipavec namreč sodi med tiste naše velikane, ki so prestali preverjanje talenta v mednarodnem okolju. Skladatelj in zdravnik Josip Ipavec je namreč živel med letoma 1873 in 1921. Glede na dejstvo, da je njegov smrtni dan isti kot pri Prešernu – zanimivo, tudi njegov krstitelj se je pisal Prešern –, je misel, da so Ipavci za slovensko glasbo isto kot naš največji pesnik za slovensko literaturo, dodaten izziv za širšo pripoved, kot jo narekujejo zgolj življenje in delo velikega skladatelja.

Danes običajna obravnava naših umetnikov zgolj v povezavi z njihovim neposrednim delom siromaši tako njegovo vsebino kot pomen. Ipavci kot rodbina namreč niso samo glasbeniki, ampak bistveno več. Pri tem v mislih nimamo županske funkcije, ki jo je opravljal Josipov oče, tudi ne vloge in pomena zdravniških čudodelnikov, kamor so po zaslugi prvega Ipavca, zdravnika Franca (1776–1858), prištevali to zdravniško dinastijo, ampak družbeni kontekst slovenskega kulturnika v Habsburški monarhiji in še posebej na Štajerskem. So eden najbolj znanih primerov uveljavljanja pripadnikov slovenskega meščanstva v takratni avstrijski družbi – tudi njegovega ženskega dela. Frančeva žena Katarina Schweighofer je v rodbino prinesla glasbeni talent, ki so ga potomci oblikovali v komponiranje. Tri vnukinje, potomke hčere Ivanke, so bile članice prvega avstrijskega damskega kvarteta, ki je bil med drugim premierni izvajalec njihovega znanca Johannes Brahmsa, ki je zaradi njih obiskal Šentjur, znan zaradi rodbine Ipavcev. Nacionalna pripadnost posameznika namreč ni bila tako velika ovira za njegovo uveljavljanje v takratni družbi, kot to slikajo pripadniki teorije o Avstriji kot ječi narodov. Josip Ipavec je edini možni in sprejemljivi primer danes tako razvpite »multikulti« kulture. To ne pomeni odpad od lastne, kot to mnogi razumejo, ampak biti velik v svoji in neslovenski! Siljenje v ospredje in opozarjanje nase mu je bilo tuje. Vse je v njegovem ustvarjanju.

Glasba ima pri nezgodovinskih narodih, med katere sodimo Slovenci, poseben pomen. Okolice ne prepričajo s svojo slavno zgodovino, temveč z živo

kulturo, katere hrbtnica sta jezik in glasba. Za njih še posebno velja, da je kultura »kvintesenca narodnosti«. Znano je, da so se Slovenci uveljavljali v dunajski družbi predmarčne dobe s petjem. Znano je tudi, da so graški Slovenci kot politično najbolj organizirani del slovenske politike v pomladi narodov pritegnili Benjamina Ipavca za svojega zborovodjo in s svojim pevskim zborom lomili protislovenska nacionalistična čustva. Kot skladatelj in politiki so pripadniki rodbine Ipavec, in pri tem mislimo na širše sorodstvo, lomili protislovensko hysterijo, »determinante tal in krvi«, ki so bile na slovenskem Štajerskem in v Gradcu še posebno izrazite, vendar proti vrhunskim glasbenikom in zdravnikom brez učinkovitih sredstev. Gradec kot najmočnejša trdnjava nemškega jugovzhoda je bil pred umetnostnim genijem votel in zgolj namišljena trdnjava. V časih, ko glušimo od vreščanja »kulturnikov«, je odmevnost ustvarjanja Josipa Ipavca primer, kdo se sme kot tak deklarirati. Njegovi samospevi po zaslugi basbaritonista Leona Luleka niso zasanjali zgolj številnih v dvoglavi monarhiji, temveč tudi v Evropi in celo ZDA. In tu nastopi slovenska majhnost, ki ne prenese boljših od sebe. Še zlasti, če niso Ljubljanci ali vsaj Kranjci. Nastopil je čas, ko so postali Ipavci »bolj preteklost kot zgodovina«, ki ga je nasledila »doba dirigiranega spomina in načrtovane pozabe«, in končali kot silhuete, ker so bili meščani. Najslabše pa se je godilo Josipu Ipavcu. Mogoče tudi zato, ker je bil mednarodno najbolj uspešen. »Vsemu navkljub pa je glasba Josipa Ipavca tudi v desetletjih najglobljega pogreza v mrak zamolčevanja preživela« (str. 30). Večdesetletni napor za njegovo vračanje na ustrezno mesto v slovensko kulturo so bili kronani s premiero opere *Princesa Vrtoglavka* 29. novembra 1997. Seveda ne v Ljubljani, temveč v Mariboru. Nedvomno veliko prispevata k tem prizadevanjem, tudi v smislu nekdanje dosežene internacionalizacije, mednarodno uveljavljena pevca Bernarda in Marko Fink, ki njegove samospeve – veliko je izgubljenih – vključujeta v svoje solistične nastope.

V prikazu sicer ne najbolj običajnega družinskega življenja Ipavcev pretresajo takrat dokaj običajne smrti bratov in sester, za našo dobo pa je najbolj presenetljiv prikaz načina in pomena vzgoje v samostanski nižji gimnaziji. Najprej v Sankt Lambrechtu, kjer so imeli konvikt za mlade pevce, pozneje pa v Šentpavlu, ki je s Slovenci bistveno bolj povezan. Tu je leta 1888 tudi prvič vrhunsko zablestel. Očitno so starši načrtno investirali v solidne, če že ne vrhunske temelje izobrazbe. Višjo gimnazijo je obiskoval v Celju, kjer je pri Josipu Ipavcu že »prišlo do prave eksplozije ustvarjalnosti« (str. 73). Komponiral je samospeve, zborovske skladbe, tudi izstopajočo *Ave Mario* za moški zbor s solistom, flavto in godali.

Čeprav je šel na Dunaj študirat medicino, je bilo njegovo srce pri glasbi. To je spoznal tudi njegov glasbeni učitelj Alexander Zemlinsky. Grdina ne omenja možnosti, da je ravno zaradi prevelikega veselja z glasbo moral v Gradec in tam končal medicino. Bralec tudi pomisli na možnost, da se je Josip Ipavec v cesarski prestolnici okužil z boleznijo, ki ga je, ker ni bila pozdravljena, pozneje

prezgodaj spravila ob človeško dostojanstvo in v prerani grob. Na to na nape-ljuje stavek: »Zelo malo vemo o tem, kaj je Josip počel od leta 1893 do začetka aprila 1895« (str. 79). Iz biografij znanih Slovencev poznamo taka skrivnostna leta, ki so bila največja družinska skrivnost.

Tudi v Gradcu se je predajal glasbi, toda pod nadzorom strica Benjamina, sicer uveljavljenega zdravnika in tudi v tamkajšnjih krogih čislanega skladatelja. Žal se v mestu ob Muri ni glasbeno šolal pri znamenitem Wilhelmu Mayerju, ampak »pri precej manj uglednem deželnosodnem in dvornem sve-tniku Aloisu Torglerju«, ki pa se je že »uvrščal med privržence novonemške šole« (str. 80). Josip Ipavec, ki ni bil glasbeni radikalec, je, kljub dejstvu, »da se je vse do konca gibal pod visokoromantičnimi ozvezdji« (str. 80), nedvou-mno glasbeno napredoval. Grdina zlasti omenja odmevnost kasneje zgubljenе skladbe *Des Woiwoden Tochter*. Pisal je tudi zborovsko glasbo in se spogledoval s »simetrično 'arhitektoniko', ki je bila skladatelju očitno blizu« (str. 86). Nastop orkestra graških slovenskih študentov v Celju 1898. leta pred okoli 500 poslu-šalci je bilo opozorilo, kaj dozoreva v Gradcu in kaj bodo z njim pridobili, ko se bo vrnil v rodni Šentjur.

V vsebinskem muzikološkem pogledu predstavljata osrednji del knjige poglavji »Možiček« in »Princesa Vrtoglavka«. V vmesnem času je seveda skladal tudi samospeve in zборе, vendar se jih je po mnenju Grdine najmanj četrtnina izgubila.

»Prvi slovenski balet [*Možiček*] je vzbudil veliko pozornost. [...] Ipavčev secesijski obrat od starega in tradicionalnega je bil razumljen kot celovit in ko-renit. Po globini ni bil tematiziran kot manj pomemben od onega, ki ga je v li-teraturi izvedel Ivan Cankar z *Vinjetami* [...]« (str. 87). Vsebinsko tipična misel Grdine nam kaže širino in globino njegovega večstranskega pristopa k študiji o Josipu Ipavcu. Krek ga je označil kot modernega po obliki in duhu. V njem je videl ne le »krepek, moški duh«, ampak garanta za novo, sodobno glasbo na Slovenskem. Grdina Kreka popravlja in *Možička* označuje kot »postmoderno delo« tistega časa, »med stvaritve, ki so na prehodu iz 19. stoletja v 20. evocirale izročilo *commedie dell'arte*« (str. 90). Opozarja na sorodnost z Leoncavallovimi *Glumači*, *Carnaval Mignon* Schütta, Mascagnijeve *Le maschere* ...

Možiček ni napisan »za orkester wagnerjanskih dimenzij«, ampak za skro-mnejšo zasedbo godal, tolkal, klavirja in harmonija, ki je nadomestil pihala. Takšnega francoskega orkestra se spominjam še iz svojega mladostnega No-vega mesta, kar pomeni, da je bil napisan tudi za kraje, kjer so ljubili glasbo, a imeli omejene izvajalske možnosti. Premiera *Možička* je bila v neki graški specializirani gostilni, ki je ne gre primerjati z današnjimi. Ponovitve so bile v Novem mestu, večkrat Ljubljani, ki »se je tedaj bržčas prvič srečala z brezbe-sednim gledališčem« (str. 102), graški operi (druga v monarhiji!) in še nekate-rih drugih tamkajšnjih lokalitetah, Celovcu, Olomucu, Trstu, Celju, Mariboru. *Možiček* je Josipu Ipavcu prinesel »največjo slavo in srečo«. Občudovan je bil

tudi fizično. Ženski svet je vzdihoval nad lepo raščenim možem, gorečim za glasbo. »Možiček je bil največji triumf Josipa Ipvavca – in pomemben mejnik v zgodovini slovenske glasbe. [...] Ipvavec je s svojo neugnano partituro pokazal sposobnost povezovanja profesionalnega in improviziranega odra.« (ibid.)

Ob izteku 19. stoletja skomponirani *Možiček*, ki je skladatelju prinesel toliko veselja in zanosa, je v začetku 20. zamorila *Princesa Vrtoglavka*. Bila je njegov »ustvarjalni, pa tudi življenjski projekt«. Uspela ni zaradi neprimernega libreta Mare pl. Berks, daljne sorodnice Matije Čopa. Besedilo, ki je želelo predstaviti evropsko dekadenco, je bilo, milo rečeno, prezapleteno. Nekdo ga je označil kot blodnjak, v katerem se poslušalec oziroma gledalec izgubi. Ipvavec je nasedel ekscentrični nasilni, v najvišjih evropskih krogih znani libretistki, pa tudi sam je med komponiranjem dojel, da namesto operete zaradi zahtevne orkestracije, »ki presega pričakovanja zgolj ognjemeta melodij in neugnane senzualne zabave« (str. 128), nastaja »komische Spieloper im alten Nummernstill« (str. 127). Dokončana je bila 1910. leta. Skladateljevi poizkusi, da bi jo spravil na oder, so bili brezuspešni. Grdina nas na nekaj primerih opozori na umazano vlogo denarja v operetah oziroma operah, kar je pomagalo ogroziti tudi življenje skladatelja.

Knjiga o Josipu Ipvavcu ni prvi Grdinov poseg v slovensko glasbo. Ta se mu mora zahvaliti za marsikaj. Avtor knjige ni muzikolog, zato bo kdo iz teh vrst mogoče pogrešal kakšne ugotovitve o tehnikalijah skladb. Seveda so pomembne. So pa nevarne, kot obravnave literarnih del zunaj časa in prostora in ob ignoriranju ljudi. Grdina dojema glasbo kot svaritev človeškega duha, umetnino človeka, ki jo namenja soljudem. Glasba sama na sebi, brez človeka ... kaj je to? Ob koncu knjige se bralec sprašuje, ali so današnji muzikologi sposobni odkriti resnični nadpovprečni potencial znotraj slovenskega prostora in njegovih ljudi ali pa mora priti potrditev iz tujine.

Glavna pomanjkljivost knjige je v dejstvu, da avtor nikjer ne omenja svojih prizadevanj za polnokrvno vrnitev Ipvavcev v naše občestvo, katerega vrh je prva uprizoritev *Princese Vrtoglavke*. Brez njegovega angažmaja, pomoči prijateljev in znancev, predvsem pa prevoda (in predelave) besedila izpod njegovih rok je še danes ne bi bilo. Verjetno pa bo to vsebina ene naslednjih knjig.

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The latest book by a great connoisseur of Slovenian cultural history, and the Ipavec family in particular, is to some extent a synthesis of the knowledge about Slovenian people and their territory in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. It sheds light on what it meant to be a “true artist” active in a multinational monarchy, as Josip Ipavec is one of those distinguished Slovenians who gained international recognition. A composer and a physician, he was born in 1873 and died in 1921. Considering the fact that Ipavec passed away on the same date as the greatest Slovenian poet France Prešeren – interestingly enough, Ipavec’s baptized surname was also Prešeren – one could say the Ipavec family is as significant for Slovenian music as Prešeren is for Slovenian literature. This presents an additional challenge to an already extensive narrative about the life and work of this great composer.

Nowadays, Slovenian artists are studied only in the context of their work which does not fully elaborate on Ipavec’s essence and importance. The Ipavec family were by no means only musicians. This does not refer to Josip’s father being a mayor, nor to the role and importance of medical miracle workers as the doctors of the family were referred to, thanks to Franc (1776–1858) who was the first prominent member of the Ipavec family and a doctor. Rather, this refers to the social context of this Slovenian cultural worker in the Habsburg Monarchy and perhaps in Styria in particular. They are renowned for being members of the Slovenian bourgeoisie who established themselves in the Austrian society of the time. This applies to women as well. The music talent of the Ipavec family stems from Franc’s wife Katarina Schweighofer and was molded by her descendants into the arts of composing music. Three granddaughters, the offspring of Franc and Katarina’s daughter Ivanka, were the first members of the First Austrian Ladies’ Quartet which, for instance, premiered some of the works of Johannes Brahms, who was not only the family acquaintance but even visited the Ipavec family home in Šentjur. One’s nationality was not as great an obstacle to establish oneself in the society of that time as depicted by those who claim Austria was a prison of nations. Josip Ipavec is the only possible and acceptable example of the present-day notorious “multicultural” society. This does not mean he renounced his national identity as many assume: he

was an important figure for both Slovenian and foreign cultures. He avoided the limelight, however, and instead focused on his artistic work.

Music bears a special significance for non-historic nations, including Slovenians. They are not praised for their glorious history but rather for their lively culture, the backbone of which is language and music. For them, it is all the more true that culture is the “quintessence of nationality.” It is well known that Slovenians gained recognition in the Viennese society of the pre-March era by singing. It is also well known that Benjamin Ipavec became the choirmaster of Slovenians in Graz as they were the most organized part of Slovenian politics during the Spring of Nations. The choir fought against anti-Slovenian nationalist sentiment. As composers and politicians, the members of the Ipavec family – this refers to the extended family – withstood the anti-Slovenian hysteria, “the determinants of soil and blood” that were particularly vigorous in Slovenian Styria and Graz, but powerless against first-class musicians and doctors. Graz, as the ultimate German stronghold in the southeast, was hollow and only a fictitious stronghold compared to the artistic genius. In times when loud complaints of “cultural workers” are ever-present, the echo of Josip’s Ipavec artistic work sets an example who has the right to declare themselves an artist. Thanks to the bass-baritone Leon Lulek, his lieder did not only enchant many people in the dual monarchy but also across Europe and in the USA. And this is where Slovenian small-mindedness and resentment towards anyone who is better comes into the picture. Even more so, if those who succeeded are not from Ljubljana or at least the area of former Carniola. There was a time when the Ipavec family was “rather a matter of the past than history,” followed by a “period of orchestrated memory and planned oblivion,” ending up eclipsed because they were bourgeois. Josip Ipavec struggled the most. Perhaps also because he was the most internationally successful. “However, despite everything, Josip Ipavec’s music has survived even in the decades of the greatest descent into the darkness of silence” (p. 30). The attempts to put him back on the map of Slovenian culture were crowned with the premiere of the opera *The Dizzy Princess* (*Princesa Vrtoglavka*) on 29 November 1997. Of course, not in Ljubljana, but in Maribor. Undoubtedly, the internationally renowned singers Bernarda and Marko Fink contributed significantly to these efforts, also in terms of the already accomplished international recognition. They include some of his lieder in their solo performances.

If we take a look at the not exactly ordinary family life of the Ipavec family, there were also tragic deaths of his siblings at that time. However, what is the most surprising today is the manner and significance of education in a monastic lower grammar school. First in Sankt Lambrecht, where there was a dormitory for young male singers, and later in Šentpavel which has a much stronger connection to Slovenians. This is where, in 1888, he achieved his first success. Obviously, his parents intentionally invested in good, if not first-class

education. He attended the upper grammar school in Celje where “his creativity exploded” (p. 73). He composed lieder and choral works, including the remarkable “Ave Maria” for a male choir with a soloist, flute and bowed string instruments.

Although he moved to Vienna to study medicine, in his heart, he remained devoted to music. His music teacher Alexander Zemlinsky recognized this as well. However, Grdina does not mention the possibility that Ipavec had to relocate to Graz and complete his studies there precisely because of his great love for music. One may also consider the possibility that Josip Ipavec caught a disease in the imperial capital which, since it was not cured, later prematurely robbed him of his dignity and sent him to an early grave. This is implied in the sentence: “There is very little known about what Josip did between 1893 and the beginning of April 1895” (p. 79). Such mysterious years are common in the biographies of prominent Slovenians and were regarded as the greatest family secret.

In Graz, he dedicated himself to music as well, but under the supervision of his uncle Benjamin, a well-established physician who was a highly respected composer in local circles. Unfortunately, in the town on the Mur river, he did not take music lessons from the famous Wilhelm Mayer but from “the much less respectable state court and court councilor Alois Torgler,” who “already qualified as one of the followers of the New German School” (p. 80). Josip Ipavec, who was, in terms of music, no radical, made significant musical progress even though “he moved in the sphere of High Romanticism his entire life.” Here, Grdina emphasizes the resonance of the later lost composition *Des Woiwoden Tochter*. Ipavec also composed choir music and flirted with “symmetric ‘architectonic’ of which the composer was obviously fond” (p. 80). The performance by the choir of Slovenian students in Graz, which took place in Celje in 1898 in front of five hundred visitors, was a reminder of what was unfolding in Graz and what Ipavec’s return to his native Šentjur would mean.

From the musicological point of view, the central part of the book are the chapters “A Little Man” and “The Dizzy Princess.” Of course, Ipavec also composed lieder and choral works, but according to Grdina, at least a quarter was lost.

“The first Slovenian ballet (*A Little Man*) attracted a lot of attention. Ipavec’s Secession turn from the old and traditional was understood as complete and thorough. In terms of profundity, it was regarded as not less important than that of Ivan Cankar with his *Vignettes* (*Vinjete*, 1899) in literature...” (p. 87). This notion, which is characteristic for Grdina in terms of content, shows the breadth and depth of his multilateral approach to his study about Josip Ipavec. Krek declared Ipavec modern in form and spirit. He saw in him not only a “strong, male spirit” but also a guarantee for new, modern music in Slovenia. Grdina corrects Krek and describes *A Little Man* as a “postmodern work”

of the time, “one of the creations that at the turn of the twentieth century, evoked the heritage of the *commedie dell’arte*” (p. 90). He points out the analogy with the Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, Schütt’s *Carnaval Mignon* and Mascagni’s *Le maschere*.

A Little Man was not written for a Wagnerian orchestra but rather for a smaller ensemble of bowed string and percussion instruments, piano and harmonium, which replaced woodwind instruments. I can still recall such a French orchestra from my hometown Novo Mesto which suggests that *A Little Man* was also written for places where they loved music but only had limited performance capabilities. *A Little Man* premiered in Graz in a special tavern, which also served as an event venue and cannot be compared to today’s inns. There were repeat performances in Novo Mesto and several in Ljubljana that “then probably had its first encounter with wordless theatre” (p. 102), the Graz Opera (the second-largest in the monarchy!) and some other Austro-Hungarian towns, such as Klagenfurt, Olomouc, Trieste, Celje, Maribor. *A Little Man* brought Ipavec “immense glory and joy.” He was also admired for his good looks and women gasped at the sight of the man with a great physique and a heart set on music. *A Little Man* was Josip Ipavec’s greatest triumph – and an important milestone in the history of Slovenian music. “With his vivacious score, Ipavec showed the ability to blend the professional and the improvised theatre” (ibid.).

A Little Man, composed at the end of the nineteenth century, brought the composer plenty of joy and enthusiasm, whereas *The Dizzy Princess* from the beginning of the twentieth century discouraged him. It was his “creative project but also the project of his life.” The opera was not successful because of the unsuitable score of Mara von Berks, a distant relative of Matija Čop. The text which aspired to present European decadence was, to say the least, too complicated. Someone referred to it as a maze in which the audience gets lost. Ipavec was deceived by the eccentric, fierce librettist, who was well-known in Europe’s highest circles. However, while composing, he noticed that instead of an operetta with “a challenging orchestration that surpasses the expectations of it being merely a firework of melodies and vehement sensual entertainment” (p. 128), “komische Spieloper im alten Numernstill” (p. 127) was in the making. It was completed in 1910. The composer’s attempts to put it on stage were futile. Grdina cites a few cases of corruption connected with operas or operettas which further harmed the composer’s life.

The book about Josip Ipavec is not Grdina’s first intervention in Slovenian music, for which we should be grateful to him for several reasons. The author of this book is not a musicologist, which is why some readers will feel the absence of observations about the technique of the compositions. Of course, technique is important. But it can also be a hindrance: it is like a literary analysis in which space and time are not taken into account, and people are ignored.

Grdina perceives music as a creation of the human spirit, an artwork made by a human for other humans. Music on its own, without man – “What’s the point of it?” he asks. At the end of the book, the reader wonders whether modern musicologists are capable of discovering the above-average potential of Slovenians and within Slovenia, or whether recognition has to come from abroad.

The book’s main shortcoming is the fact that the author does not mention his own efforts for the resurrection of the Ipavec family, which culminated in the premiere of *The Dizzy Princess*. Without his dedication, the help of his friends and acquaintances, and most importantly, his translation (and adaptation) of the libretto, this opera would still have not been performed to this day. This will probably be the subject of one of his future books.

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