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The Slovenian Philharmonic after the Second World War – From Ideology and Professional Disputes to Art

Slovenska filharmonija po drugi svetovni vojni – od ideologije in stanovskih razprtij k umetnosti

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IZVLEČEK

Povojni čas je ob že formiranih težnjah slovenskega glasbenega prostora prinesel nove možnosti in izzive. Slovenska filharmonija je takoj po ustanovitvi začela uresničevati idejo kolektivism, obenem pa se je kmalu po afirmaciji začela od nje odmikati in iskati pot k trdnejši programski politiki. Na tej poti je morala premagovati tudi (nekatero dobronamerne) ovire stanovskih društev.

ABSTRACT

Alongside the previously formed aspirations of the Slovenian music scene, the post-war period brought new opportunities and challenges. Immediately after its founding, the newly established Slovenian Philharmonic began to realise the idea of collectivism. Soon after its affirmation, however, it started to shift away from this ideal and seek a path towards a firmer programme policy. On this path, it also had to overcome certain (sometimes well-intentioned) obstacles arising from various professional societies.

Reflection on one of the central Slovenian music institutions – on its operation and cultural policy, and on the influence and role that it has had in the past and continues to have today in the Slovenian music scene – opens many questions that are yet to be answered by the profession. The present discussion will limit itself to those questions that concern the operation of the Slovenian Philharmonic in the post-war period, in the newly established state whose new political regime directly or indirectly marked the operation of numerous cultural institutions. Questions of the cultural policy of the Philharmonic and of the possible influences of the political authorities on the work of the institution will also be addressed, as well as the mission that was realised in the post-war period, in the first years after its founding.

Historical Assumptions

The post-war musical-cultural environment represented, in certain respects, a continuation of the musical-aesthetic points of departure that had been formed in the second half of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. In terms of creative output, the composers who contributed to the formation of the Slovenian symphonic repertoire established themselves (Bravničar, Osterc, Škerjanc, Arnič).¹ However, despite strong determination and genuine endeavours (the Ljubljana Philharmonic with domestic and guest conductors), the performance scene was unable to realise itself beyond the limited frameworks of societies, while the latter were themselves undermined by a financial uncertainty that symphonic activities were no longer able to withstand.² There were few opportunities for domestic conductors: apart from the Opera, only the Radio Orchestra was active alongside the Ljubljana Philharmonic (Polič, Neffat, Švara, Štritof, Hubad, Žebre and Šijanec). When the latter ceased to give concerts in 1941, the Radio Orchestra played an important role with a series of symphonic concerts. After the war, however, the name of its conductor (Drago Mario Šijanec), who, in a decade of leading the Radio Orchestra, had undertaken what was for many an enviable task, was (intentionally) assigned to oblivion.³

In addition to the already formed aspirations of the Slovenian music scene, which included the established need for an institutionalised orchestra, the post-war period brought new opportunities and challenges. The initiative on the part of Slovenian musicians to establish the Slovenian Philharmonic was supported by political will (Edvard Kardelj). Irrespective of these efforts, the institutionalisation of a philharmonic orchestra in Ljubljana was most likely only a matter of time, as it was not an isolated case in the new state at that time: after the Slovenian Philharmonic, the Belgrade and Zagreb philharmonics were also established. The founding of the Slovenian Philharmonic was thus

1 Primož Kuret and Mateja Kralj, "Sporedi koncertov 1862–2001" [Concert Programmes 1862–2001], in *Slovenska filharmonija = Academia philharmonicorum: 1701–2001* (Ljubljana: Slovenian Philharmonic, 2001), 412–419.

2 Urška Šramel Vučina, "Ljubljanska filharmonija" [The Ljubljana Philharmonic], *Muzikološki zbornik* 44, nr. 2 (2008): 66.

3 After Drago Mario Šijanec was accused of cultural silence at the end of the Second World War and was left without a job, he moved to Italy. His path then led to Argentina, which became his new home. Jasna Nemec Novak, "Radijski orkester med leti 1928–1955" [The Radio Orchestra 1928–1955], in *Simfonični orkester RTV Slovenija*, ed. Matej Venier et al. (Ljubljana: RTV Slovenia, Mladinska knjiga, 2006), 72–73.

the institutionalisation of something that already had a tradition prior to the war: with a government decree, the Ljubljana Radio Orchestra (and the Radio Chamber Choir) came to the Slovenian Philharmonic. The orchestra was joined by musicians and a conductor (Čipci) from the dissolved Trieste Philharmonic.⁴

In the continuation, we will attempt to establish the extent to which the new organisational institution was professionally independent, and the extent to which its work reflected the social and political events of the time.

Beginnings and the Idea of Collectivism

From the period of the first director of the institution, Marjan Kozina (1948–1950), the existence of documents that would bear witness to the operation and plans of the Philharmonic is questionable. Thus its operation can only be observed from concert programmes and a few newspaper articles. In the latter, the expression of enthusiasm that was evident on the foundation of the Philharmonic continued in explanations of its utilitarian purpose: “The importance of the founding of the Slovenian Philharmonic as a state institution becomes clearest to us if we realise the differences between our philharmonic and philharmonics elsewhere in the world, except in the Soviet Union. In the capitalist world, philharmonics have a very narrow significance, as they are aimed at and serve only a thin layer, the so-called ‘upper ten thousand’, and only in the main cities. Our Slovenian Philharmonic will serve all of the working people, as the focus of its work lies both in raising the artistic level and in organising cultural-artistic events in industrial regions, in cooperative centres and throughout our Republic.”⁵

The declarative ideas were realised in numerous concerts by the orchestra and choir in a diverse range of locations throughout Slovenia. In its first nine months of operation, the Philharmonic organised 52 concerts, of which 15 were guest appearances and 16 were occasional concerts (for the Pioneers’ Association, celebrations, etc.), while 21 concerts were held in two concert halls in Ljubljana (the Slovenian Philharmonic and the Union Hall). We can observe that fewer than half of the concerts were planned for performance in a concert hall, the primary venue symphonic concerts.⁶ This “strategy” continued in the following season, in which guest appearances represented half of all of the Philharmonic’s concerts.⁷ The idea of collectivism, which marked the first years of the institution’s operation, was a consequence of the cultural policy of the new state, which was oriented towards satisfying the cultural needs of the broadest possible strata of society, and thus towards the creation of a socialist culture. This was because the new authorities conceived of the new state as a state of farmers and workers, in which

4 The Slovenian Philharmonic was founded on 30 December 1947, when the Slovenian government issued a decree on its foundation based on a proposal from the Minister of Education, Potrč Kuret, “Slovenska filharmonija 1947” [Slovenian Philharmonic 1947], in *Slovenska filharmonija = Academia philharmonicorum*, 77.

5 Vlado Golob, “Nekaj besed k ustanovitvi Slovenske filharmonije” [A Few Words on the Foundation of the Slovenian Philharmonic], *Ljudska pravica*, 11 January, 1948, 5.

6 Kuret and Kralj, “Sporedi koncertov 1862–2001” [Concert Programmes 1862–2001], 419–424.

7 This division of concerts into those held in one of Ljubljana’s two concert halls and those presented elsewhere in Slovenia is simply an attempt to systemise something that was not specifically categorised in the operation of the Philharmonic at that time. The majority of the concerts were based on the ongoing organisation of events.

everyone would be given equal opportunity for development and for participation in culture.⁸ The Slovenian Philharmonic thus adapted its primary mission to the new sociopolitical expectations. It seems there could not have been any significant reason for dissatisfaction amongst the musicians, as the foundation of the Philharmonic did not in itself establish any specific artistic and organisational guidelines. At the same time, as the first professional body of its kind, the Philharmonic offered full-time employment to numerous musicians. Another interesting fact is that, in the first years of operation, we do not find any critiques of the concerts given by the orchestra or choir in any daily newspaper.

A survey of the concert programmes from the first three seasons shows that the majority of concerts included at least one work, and sometimes a number of works, by Slavic composers (Slovenian, Yugoslavian and Slavic). In spite of the number of concerts, and their apparently diverse functions, we can also observe that the same works appear several times, irrespective of the “character” of the concert. It seems that the planning of the concert programmes was similar to the planning of the concerts and guest appearances. The programme policy of the Philharmonic fluctuated between aspirations, availability and expectations: without a previously determined programme scheme, there was a rotation of programmes performed at numerous concerts in many places throughout Slovenia. The programmes included numerous works by Slovenian composers, which, due to the modest domestic symphonic production, were in most cases welcome.

The Informbiro Dispute and the Party Cell

The new social order followed the Soviet model, which was also clearly evident in cultural policy, with a strong presence of Soviet art.⁹ In the first year of the Philharmonic’s operation, we find only one work, or one concert, dedicated to Soviet art, with a performance of the oratorio *Emelian Pugachev* by Marian Viktorovich Koval on 12 and 13 April 1948. The content of the oratorio, which deals with a peasant uprising in the time of Empress Catherine II (18th century) led by Emelian Pugachev (who also found followers amongst miners and Russian industrial workers) corresponded with the prevailing political ideology. However, as this is the only work of this kind mentioned in the programmes of the Philharmonic, we can conclude that the presence of Soviet art was negligible. The Informbiro dispute between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union of 1948, which marked the cultural policy of the time, could not have had any repercussions for the work of the Slovenian Philharmonic, as it had only just commenced its activities.

The fact that the leadership of the Philharmonic did not pay particular regard to

8 Aleš Gabrič, *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika: 1945–1952* [Slovenian Agitprop Cultural Policy: 1945–1952] (Ljubljana: Mladika, 1991), 489.

9 Aleš Gabrič, “Sprememba kulturnopolitične usmeritve po informbirojevskem sporu” [Changes in Cultural-Political Orientation after the Informbiro Dispute], *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 38 (1998): 137–139. Gabrič states that in the then territory of Yugoslavia, the most important theoretical works by Soviet politicians were translated with the aid of the propaganda machine. In terms of cultural policy, this meant the promotion of those works that had political and social content with a propaganda emphasis.

the political system, which had instructed party cells to take control of specific institutions, but instead navigated a path between its capabilities, the profession and its own understanding of the work of the institution, is confirmed by a report on a meeting of the basic party organisation in the Philharmonic in 1950. We learn from the report that, in a debate on the necessity of taking a leading role in the institution, those present determined that “the cell does not have an influence on the makeup of the programme because none of those forming the programme are communists, and they regard communists as professionally less worthy, as, due to meetings, etc., they are unable to educate themselves sufficiently”. It is also clear that the cell did not even attempt to take a role. We learn that the party organisation attempts to gain appropriate authority by “establishing a collective of communist musicians who would discuss each concert, especially from the professional perspective” and published their own critique. We also read that the Philharmonic has “the greatest difficulties with various leaders who do not make arrangements with either the party or the union organisation, but instead communicate directly with individual officials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, frequently providing them with incorrect information”.¹⁰ The aforementioned professional capabilities of the members of the Philharmonic’s party cell had an influence on the (in)efficiency of the cell’s work, and consequently on the question of its authority. The fact that the institution’s leadership resolved all of the questions that arose directly with the political elite, bypassing the party cell, is sufficiently eloquent in itself. Doubt also arises as to whether the officials actually cared a great deal about culture or the programme policy of the Philharmonic, as they did not see any “danger” in its operation. It should be added that, during the period of Kozina’s leadership, the programme of the orchestra/choir did not include any works by contemporary European (or world) composers of the 20th century, works that would perhaps have awoken the “interest” of the authorities one way or another. The works by contemporary Slovenian composers with declarative titles¹¹ also apparently corresponded with the idea of the “democratic” character of the new Slovenian culture, which was supposed to be in line with the interests of the broader masses, and consequently also the interests of the state.

In 1951, the authorities had still not achieved optimal supervision of cultural-artistic institutions, as is revealed by the Draft of the Annual Report of the Cultural-Educational Unit of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia: “The staff who work in these foundations and are part of our nomenclature are, from our point of view, the least developed. Although we have them under supervision, this is adequate neither for our nomenclature nor for our records. Work in this field is even more difficult than with scientific staff [...] After the conference we held on 1 April 1950 at the Cultural Unit of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, we established the realisation of certain recommendations, such as keeping reliable records of cultural-artistic personnel (file), undertaking a fundamental analysis of the individual institutions

10 *Poročilo o sestanku osnovne partijske organizacije v Filharmoniji dne 10. 1. 1950* [Report on the Meeting of the Basic Party Organisation in the Philharmonic, 10 January, 1950]. Historical Archive Ljubljana, LJU 684, City Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia Ljubljana 1945–1954, box 1.

11 Some examples include: Arnič – *Partizanske bolnice* (Partisan Hospitals), Bravničar – *Hej brigade* (Hey, Brigade), Kozina – *Padlim* (To the Fallen), *Ilova gora* (Mt Ilova), *S Titovimi brigadirji* (With Tito’s Brigadiers), Leskovic – *Domovina* (Homeland), etc.

(the Slovenian National Theatre, the academies, the Philharmonic, etc.), professional political evaluations, records of personnel undertaking training or schooling to fulfil staffing needs, etc. However, we have not succeeded, because the department has not completed all of these things, in spite of the fact that the department regards this kind of systematic work as necessary, and that it does not have all of this itself.¹²

Programme Guidelines of the Philharmonic at the Beginning of Škerjanc's Mandate

In 1950, when Agitprop, the Communist Party institution that controlled education, culture and sport, attempted to establish at least formal supervision of cultural-artistic institutions,¹³ the leadership of the Philharmonic was taken over by Lucijan Marija Škerjanc. Whereas it is not entirely clear who comprised the Artistic Board of the institution during the time of Kozina's leadership – whether it was the director, the conductors or both – there is no such dilemma regarding the time of Škerjanc's mandate. In addition to Škerjanc, the first Artistic Board of the institution comprised Valens Vodušek, Marjan Kozina and Marjan Lipovšek.¹⁴ During the time of Kozina's leadership, so-called regular symphonic concerts were established, and it was on this basis that the new director and Artistic Board began to construct the Philharmonic's programme policy.

In his first year of leadership, Škerjanc established guidelines for the work of the Slovenian Philharmonic: endeavouring to establish a completely independent orchestra (until that time, the operation of the artistic body was dependent on musicians from the opera), the performance of two concerts per month, and, based on the rehearsed repertoire, the formation of programmes for concerts for a broader public and for students, as well as for radio broadcasts and recordings.¹⁵

The method of programming (of the regular concerts) was such that the conductors for the period submitted a draft programme for subscription concerts approximately two months in advance. This programme was then confirmed or supplemented, and in rare cases rejected, by the Artistic Board. The dates of the subscription concerts were determined by the Artistic Board approximately two months in advance and the dates of guest appearances were determined on an ongoing basis (the programmes were also submitted by the conductors), while the programmes for celebrations were determined by the Artistic Board. From the records of the Artistic Board, it is clear that the director of the institution did not make leadership decisions regarding the Philharmonic alone, at least not on the formal level.

In addition to established 19th century repertoire, the programme policy of the

12 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 1589/III, *Centralni komitee Zveze komunistov Slovenije, Osmutek letnega poročila (kulturno prosvetne enote) z dne 3. 1. 1951* [Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, Draft of the Annual Report (Cultural-Educational Unit), 3 January, 1951], a.u. 378–522, no. 16.

13 Gabrič, *Agitpropovska kulturna politika* [Agitprop's Cultural Policy], 544–545.

14 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapiski Umetniškega sveta SF 1950, 1951* [Records of the Artistic Board of the Slovenian Philharmonic, 1950, 1951].

15 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapiski Umetniškega sveta SF z dne 20. 12. 1950* [Record of the Artistic Board of the Slovenian Philharmonic, 20 December, 1950].

Philharmonic included a small number of compositions from earlier periods, and occasionally even certain works by 20th century composers (Prokofiev, Britten, Bliss, Glière). In addition, almost all of the existing and emerging domestic symphonic and choral repertoire was taken into consideration.

The fact that decisions taken by the political authorities nonetheless disrupted the work of the Philharmonic in the first year of Škerjanc's leadership is evident from records of both the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia and the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic. The document entitled *Pete seje komisije za agitacijo in propagando pri CK KPS* (Fifth Meeting of the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia) states a demand for a review of the permanent orchestras. It continues with a resolution that the Opera and the Radio should have permanent orchestras, which should also organise public concerts, while the Philharmonic should "put together an orchestra, which is not permanent, from concert to concert".¹⁶ It is known that the Artistic Board sent a memorandum to the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda with regard to this resolution,¹⁷ but whether or not this memorandum had any influence on the Commission is not clear. In a later record, however, we can read that Marijan Kozina was the one who "spoke with the leading political factors about delicate matters regarding the Philharmonic".¹⁸

The Question of the Concert Office and the Slovenian Musicians' Society

The programme policy of the Philharmonic was overseen by the conductors and the Artistic Board of the institution, the latter being superior to the conductors. In addition, the Concert Office, which operated under the auspices of the Philharmonic, also had a very important role.¹⁹ The new Concert Office undertook the function of a concert agency, offering Slovenian artists and artists from the other republics of Yugoslavia to the Slovenian Philharmonic and to other music institutions, as well as organising concerts throughout Slovenia. Its supervisory body was the Yugoslav Concert Office (or Jugokonzert), which, as the central agency, was the only body that could cooperate with foreign music agencies throughout Europe and the world, offering foreign artists to inter-republic agencies. Jugokonzert was also the only agency "authorised" by the state to "sell" Yugoslavian musicians (performers) abroad.

At the beginning of Škerjanc's mandate, just as in Kozina's time, Slovenian performers

16 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 1589/III, *Centralni komitee Zveze komunistov Slovenije, Zapisnik 5. seje Komisije za agitacijo in propagando pri CK KPS z dne 24. 2. 1951* [Central Committee of the Communist Party, Record of the Fifth Meeting of the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, 24 February, 1951] a.u. 733, no. 30.

17 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapisnik Umetniškega sveta SF z dne 5. 3. 1951* [Record of the Artistic Board of the Slovenian Philharmonic, 5 March, 1951].

18 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapisnik Umetniškega sveta SF z dne 30. 4. 1951* [Record of the Artistic Board of the Slovenian Philharmonic, 30 April, 1951].

19 Prior to the war, the Concert Office had been under the auspices of Glasbena matica (the Music Society), and in 1946 it resumed operation at the Academy of Music, but with the founding of the Slovenian Philharmonic it was annexed to the Philharmonic as the Office for Cultural-Artistic Events.

dominated. After the Informbiro dispute, however, when Yugoslavia began to cautiously and slowly open towards the West, we can observe a gradual increase in the number of foreign artists in the field of music.²⁰ Domestic soloists, and later foreign soloists, also had an influence on the programme of the Philharmonic. Although Jugokonzert attempted to select foreign artists on the basis of quality, the selection was often influenced primarily by financial constraints.

At a meeting of concert offices in Zagreb in 1951, Karel Mahkota, the longstanding director of the Concert Office, expressed a need for higher quality foreign artists.²¹ The record of the meeting reveals that the Slovenian Concert Office was largely dependent on the selection and decisions the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic, as the Philharmonic was the largest client of Jugokonzert. After Mahkota's death, in August 1951, agreements with Jugokonzert were made directly by the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic. The Slovenian Musicians' Society was one of the important "partners" of the Concert Office. It is therefore not surprising that in 1952 it launched an initiative with the Council for Education and Culture (of the People's Republic of Slovenia) to remove the Concert Office from the Philharmonic and annex it to the Slovenian Musicians' Society. Accusations that the Philharmonic managed the Concert Office "from the perspective of its own interests and needs" and that it disrupted concert life throughout Slovenia, solo concerts in Ljubljana and the inter-republic exchange of artists²² grew into a discussion that unfolded on the level of the Ministry or the Council for Education and Culture. The Slovenian Musicians' Society supported its arguments by pointing out that the concert offices in the other republics were under the auspices of the respective musicians' societies. With the support of the Yugoslavian Musicians' Society, the Slovenian Musicians' Society finally succeeded in establishing the Concert Office in Ljubljana as an independent body of the Council for Education and Culture of the People's Republic of Slovenia.²³

A review of the programmes for the 1951/52 season shows that the orchestra of the Philharmonic made only three guest appearances outside Ljubljana (in Celje, Trieste and Piran), which was significantly fewer than in any previous season. If we disregard formal celebrations and occasional concerts, it is clear that the Artistic Board focused primarily on symphonic concerts in Ljubljana, categorised either as subscription, exceptional or symphonic concerts.

20 In the 1950/51 season, the only foreign performers/soloists to appear were French cellist Pierre Fournier and British pianist Edgar Kendall Taylor.

21 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Poročilo o sestanku koncertnih poslovnic Beograda, Zagreba in Ljubljane ter zastopnikov glavnega odbora društva glasbenih umetnikov Jugoslavije z dne 7. 7. 1951* [Report on the Meeting of the Concert Offices of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, and Representatives of the Main Committee of the Yugoslavian Musicians' Society, 7 July, 1951]. Karel Mahkota also highlighted the problem that the Belgrade Concert Office gained too much funding at the expense of the concert offices in other republics.

22 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 249, *Svet za prosveto in kulturo 1952, Dopis Društva glasbenih umetnikov Slovenije Svetu za prosveto in kulturo LRS, odboru za umetnost, z dne 19. 3. 1952* [Council for Education and Culture, Report of the Slovenian Musicians' Society to the Council for Education and Culture of the People's Republic of Slovenia, Committee for the Arts, 19 March, 1952], part no. 1349, no. 37.

23 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 249, *Svet za prosveto in kulturo 1952, Dopis Društva glasbenih umetnikov Svetu za prosveto in kulturo LRS z dne 9. 7. 1952* [Council for Education and Culture 1952, Report of the Slovenian Musicians' Society to the Council for Education and Culture of the People's Republic of Slovenia, 9 July, 1952], part no. 1139-1606, no. 37.

The Slovenian Philharmonic vs. the Society of Slovene Composers

The 1951/52 season was important not only due to the clarification of the position of the Concert Office, which the Philharmonic did not want to relinquish.²⁴ Even before the question of the Concert Office was (unwillingly) opened, a second peer front opened up, this time with the Society of Slovene Composers.

In spring of 1951, the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic issued a call to composers to submit works for inclusion in the programme of the 1951/52 season. At a meeting between the Artistic Board, conductors (of the Philharmonic) and a representative of the Society of Slovene Composers (Matija Bravničar), agreement was reached on the selection of new Slovenian works to be included in the following season's programme.²⁵ The commission was made up of the Artistic Board (Valens Vodušek, Marjan Kozina, Marjan Lipovšek, L. M. Škerjanc) and conductors (Jakov Cipci, Bogo Leskovic, Samo Hubad) of the Philharmonic, a representative of the orchestra (Ali Dremelj), representatives of the Society of Slovene Composers (Matija Bravničar, Danilo Švara, Ciril Cvetko, Radovan Gobec) and two representatives of Radio Slovenia (Uroš Krek, Marjan Vodopivec). At three meetings, the commission (each time in a somewhat different formation) assessed thirteen new of Slovenian works. Three were included in subscription concerts and three were performed at a symphonic concert of new works by contemporary Slovenian composers. Thus less than half of the new works submitted passed the "test".²⁶

Even before the commission met for the second time, an article by Matija Bravničar entitled *Programska politika Slovenske filharmonije* (The Programme Policy of the Slovenian Philharmonic) was published in the newspaper *Slovenski poročevalec* (The Slovenian Reporter).²⁷ The author focused his criticism on the subscription concerts, at which, in his opinion, the works of Slovenian composers received too little representation. "In view of the rich and diverse production of Slovenian symphonic works in recent decades, the Society of Slovene Composers once again suggests to the leadership of the Slovenian Philharmonic that at least one third of the programme of regular concerts be devoted to Slovenian compositions, as no one has more responsibility for disseminating Slovenian symphonic music than the Slovenian Philharmonic."

In the same breath, Bravničar acknowledges that the programme of the previous season "came very close to meeting the needs of our music culture".

Bravničar's taking issue with the programme policy of the Philharmonic was virtually the first public assessment the work of the institution. The Artistic Board defended

24 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 249, *Svet za prostvo in kulturo 1952, Dopis upravnika Filharmonije Pavlu Šivicu (tajniku društva Glasbenih umetnikov Slovenije) z dne 8. 3. 1952* [Council for Education and Culture 1952, Report of the Director of the Philharmonic to Pavel Šivic (the Secretary of the Slovenian Musicians' Society) 8 March, 1952], part no. 1139-1606, no. 37.

25 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapisnik Umetniškega sveta in dirigentov Filharmonije ter predstavnika DŠS Matije Bravničarja z dne 25. 6. 1951* [Record of the Artistic Board and Conductors of the Philharmonic and a Representative of the Society of Slovene Composers Matija Bravničar, 25 June, 1951].

26 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapisniki komisije za ocenjevanje del, ki so bila predložena za izvedbo v sezoni 1951/52 z datumi 13. 8. 1951, 19. 9. 1951 in 6. 10. 1951* [Records of the Commission for the Assessment of Works Submitted for Performance in the 1951/52 Season, 13 August, 1951, 19 September, 1951 and 6 October, 1951].

27 Matija Bravničar, "Programska politika Slovenske filharmonije" [The Programme Policy of the Slovenian Philharmonic], *Slovenski poročevalec*, 16 September, 1951, 5.

its programme policy in an extensive response, in which it explained the content and organisational decisions of the leadership of the Philharmonic.²⁸ Although on first view the polemics only expose the question of the programme policy of the central music institution, it indirectly prompted reflection: Had the work of the Philharmonic come under the supervision of the Society of Slovene Composers or its representatives? Did the Society of Slovene Composers regard itself as the regulator of the programme policy of the Philharmonic?

Not least, several composers were actually amongst the leadership of the Philharmonic (Škerjanc, Lipovšek and Kozina), all peers and members of the Society of Slovene Composers, while Lipovšek, together with Bravničar, was the editor of the bulletin DSS Slovenska glasbena revija (The Slovene Music Review of the Society of Slovene Composers).

To return to the commission for assessing new Slovenian works, the second meeting (19 September 1951) was of particular interest. At this meeting, Radovan Gobec, a representative of the Society of Slovene Composers, stated that he “did not want to give an opinion because Slovenian compositions were removed from the regular concerts. [...] The Society of Slovene Composers cannot vote, as all of its members are equally important to it. The selection of compositions is an internal matter of the Slovenian Philharmonic.”²⁹

The record confirms the assumption that there were clear divisions between peers, who covertly exploited the operation of the institution for retribution.

In order to better understand the method of working of the assessment commission, we present an excerpt from the record of the second meeting of the commission (19 September 1952) regarding Šivic's *Divertimento* for Piano and Orchestra.³⁰

Pavel Šivic – *Divertimento* for Piano and Orchestra

Cipci: The tempi are not interrelated and the theme does not come to expression, but the main problem is the deficient instrumentation. The work does not belong in the regular programme.

Leskovic agrees.

Lipovšek adds that even the rhythm and melody are audible in all of the movements.

Dr Vodušek: The composer has not mastered the orchestral part, the structure is bad, like a kind of ornament, and the last two movements lack genuine contrast. The composition as a whole is of a lighter genre, and is acceptable for the radio and the public.

Hubad establishes that he gained the same impression as with Ramovš [that the work did not have enough contrast].

28 Artistic Board of the Slovenian Philharmonic, “Programska politika Slovenske filharmonije” [The Programme Policy of the Slovenian Philharmonic], *Slovenski poročevalec*, 23 September, 1951, 6.

29 Archive of the Slovenian Philharmonic, *Zapiski komisije za ocenjevanje del, prijavljenih za izvedbo v sezoni 1951/52 in poskusno izvajanih z dne 19. 9. 1951* [Record of the Commission for the Assessment of Works Submitted for Performance in the 1951/52 Season and Given a Trial Performance, 19 September, 1951].

30 The commission was made up of nine members: a representative of the Society of Slovene Composers (Radovan Gobec), two representatives of Radio Slovenia (Uroš Krek, Marjan Vodopivec), two representatives of the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic (Vodušek, Lipovšek), three conductors (Cipci, Leskovic, Hubad) and a representative of the orchestra (Ali Dremelj).

Gobec notes that he was not clear about the role of the piano in relation to the orchestra – inappropriate instrumentation.

The director of the Slovenian Philharmonic, L. M. Škerjanc, emphasises that we cannot give the composer official advice, we can only bring the deficiencies to his attention.

Vodopivec: Radio Slovenia accepts the composition for one broadcast.

Resolution of the commission: The composition can be considered for a particular occasion.

Vote: 8 + 2 /orchestra/ for

The records of the commission for the selection of Slovenian works are a valuable document of the institution and the time. They are an expression of a desire for professionalism, but at the same time demonstrate that the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic was most likely reluctant to become involved alone in polemics regarding Slovenian composing, and consequently with the Society of Slovene Composers. It seems that the discord between composers, which also resounded at the level of the political elite,³¹ was more a consequence of the personal beliefs (and resentments) of individuals – such as can easily flare up in a provincial and local cultural environment – rather than actual musical-aesthetic and ideological differences between peers.

The fact that the Philharmonic, or its leadership, did not want to defy the Society of Slovene Composers is also evident from an analysis of the following season (1952/53), in which almost all of the foreseen domestic works were programmed in regular concerts, with Slovenian compositions being presented in ten of the twelve subscription concerts.

Sociopolitical Changes and the Financial Difficulties of the Institution

In the new season, 1952/53, the Philharmonic underwent major changes caused by sociopolitical events of the time. Due to austerity measures, the Ministry or the Council for Education and Culture, ceased financing the Philharmonic's Artistic Board. The latter continued to operate until the end of the 1951/52 season, and then was dissolved by the management.³²

After 1952, the post-war system of rationed supplies and countertrade resulted in a reduction in the free flow of money, which consequently gained a greater value for consumers. As the average consumer began to make purchases and spend money more

31 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 1589/III, *Centralni komitee Zveze komunistov Slovenije, Zapisnik 2. redne seje Agitprop komisije pri CK KPS z dne 20. 12. 1950* [Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, Record of the Second Regular Meeting of the Agitprop Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, 20 December, 1950], a.u. 730, no. 30.

32 Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 249, *Svet za prosveto in kulturo 1952, Dopis upravi Filharmonije o prenehanju financiranja Umetniškega sveta Filharmonije z dne 18. 3. 1952* [Committee for Education and Culture 1952, Memorandum to the Management of the Philharmonic about Ceasing Financing the Artistic Board of the Philharmonic, 18 March, 1952], a.u. 1331, no. 37.

judiciously, there was less chance of money being spent on concerts. In the new season, the Philharmonic thus began to face the question of the number of concertgoers. The combination of austerity measures and a decline in audience numbers pushed the institution to the brink of collapse. The first consequences of the sociopolitical changes were felt in the 1953/54 season: the number of concerts was reduced by almost a third compared to the previous season and the choir barely performed at all, while the institution abandoned guest performances, neglected the archive and had less money for the purchase of printed performance materials.

The financial crisis coincided with a reorganisation of the institution. In January 1953, when the principle of self-management began to be applied to the educational, cultural and the social fields, the leadership of the institution was taken over by an Administrative Board. Elected by the workers' collective, the Administrative Board became the supervisory body of the Artistic Board and the management of the Philharmonic. After the reorganisation of the institution, the new Artistic Board was made up of conductors, the director and a representative of both ensembles. The new social order thus placed the organisation and hierarchy of the Philharmonic in a situation where the Artistic Board was formally subordinated to collective decision making. However, Škerjanc and the new Artistic Board soon reinstated the former hierarchy, in terms of both substance and form. At the end of the 1953/54 season, the Artistic Board accepted new proposals: the majority of the programme would be made up of works from the standard repertoire (the ratio between standard repertoire and "other" works being 60 minutes to 20 minutes), the concerts would take place within the framework of three new subscription series, and the selection of domestic works would be left entirely to the conductors. Škerjanc presented the new programme policies in the daily newspaper as many as three times. He attributed the greatest part of the blame for the fall in the number of subscribers to overly long and poorly conceived programmes, as well as to "experimentation" in contemporary music.

It seems that, at the end of the 1953/54 season, Škerjanc found himself in a position where he began to intensively ask himself where and how the artistic leadership of the institution should develop. He found the solution in the tried and true model of European symphonic orchestras, with a focus on works from the established repertoire, performed in concert programmes determined a year in advance. With the programme and organisational vision of the Philharmonic clear to him, Škerjanc was undoubtedly prepared for public confrontation. This, however, never eventuated.

POVZETEK

Razprava odpira vprašanja, povezana z delovanjem Slovenske filharmonije v prvih letih od ustanovitve po drugi svetovni vojni, in sicer vprašanja njene kulturne politike in poslanstva, ki ju je uresničevala v povojnem času. Delovanje te inštitucije je po eni strani predstavljalo nadaljevanje tistih glasbenoestetskih izhodišč, ki so se izoblikovala v drugi polovici 30. in v začetku 40. let prejšnjega stoletja,

obenem pa so jo zaznamovale nove družbeno-politične okoliščine, v katerih je bila ne nazadnje ustanovljena. V prvih letih delovanja Slovenska filharmonija ni kazala izoblikovanih umetnostnih in organizacijskih smernic. Idejo kolektivizma, ki je prežemala vse pore takratnega družbenega in kulturnega življenja, je bilo mogoče močno čutiti tudi v njenem delovanju. Prvi upravitelj (Kozina) je krmaril med pričakovanim in hotenim, drugi (Škerjanc) pa je imel odločujočo vlogo pri obli-

kovanju programskih smernic inštitucije. V času Škerjančevega delovanja v vlogi upravitelja, ko je vodstvo iskalo strategije programske politike, so se vzporedno odpirala vprašanja vpliva, interesov in razprtij med stanovskimi društvi in Filharmonijo. Načlenjala so tako organizacijska vprašanja Zavoda (pričakovanja Društva glasbenih umetnikov Slovenije so se uresničila z odcepitvijo Koncertne

poslovalnice od Filharmonije) kot programske politike (Društvo slovenskih skladateljev je želelo oz. skušalo vplivati na program oz. delež del slovenskih skladateljev, ki naj bi jih Filharmonija vključevala v svoje sporede). Tako se izkaže, da so bolj kot nove družbeno-politične okoliščine, v katerih je Filharmonija nastala, v ozadju njenega delovanja odmevala vprašanja stanovskih interesov.