

ON THE BRINK OF MODERNISM LUCIJAN MARIJA ŠKERJANC'S (FIRST) VIOLIN CONCERTO

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Izyleček: Lucijan Marija Škerjanc je s svojim (Prvim) violinskim koncertom, napisanim v času študija v Parizu med letoma 1924 in 1927, prišel na rob evropskega glasbenega modernizma, ki pa se mu je kasneje skoraj popolnoma odpovedal. Analiza koncerta razkriva, da delo ni zavezano povsem svobodni improvizacijski logiki in da gre za variacije na ljudsko temo južnoslovanskega izvora. Analiza kaže, da delo vsebuje različne slogovne sledi (bujna orkestrska zvočnost Stravinskega, Bartókov tip folklorizma, glasba strojev, neobarok), ki pa jih ne gre razumeti le v eklektičnem smislu, temveč kot dejavno skladateljevo iskanje novega.

Gljučne besede: slovenska glasba, glasba 20. stoletja, Lucijan Marija Škerjanc, violinski koncert, glasba strojev

Abstract: With his (First) Violin Concerto, written in the time of his studies in Paris between 1924 and 1927, Lucijan Marija Škerjanc arrived at the brink of European Modernism, although he later quickly abandoned this path. An analysis of the concerto reveals that it is written not in a free improvisatory vein, but rather in the form of variations on a folk theme of South Slavonic origin. The analysis reveals various stylistic strands (the opulent orchestral sound of Stravinsky, Bartók-like folklorism, machine music, Neo-Baroque). Rather than being understood in an eclectic sense, these strands should be viewed as an active search for the new by this composer.

Keywords: Slovenian music, twentieth-century music, Lucijan Marija Škerjanc, violin concerto, machine music

Lucijan Marija Škerjanc (1900–1973) is today considered to be a typical traditional composer, meaning that he followed the aesthetic and compositional-technical traits of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries even after the advent of a radical Modernism after the Second World War. Škerjanc himself confirmed his traditional stance in several autopoetic statements. He claimed, for example, that “so far, not even one percent of all possible sound combinations has been exploited, [therefore] there is no need for new tonal systems”.¹ Škerjanc’s indebtedness to traditional solutions is tied to his core belief about the subjectivity of artistic creation as the outcome of the strong emotions of the author.

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¹ Škerjanc, “Vrednotenja”, 57.

He was convinced that “music is individually and massively adaptable, and therefore convenient for illustrations of a great variety of emotions,”² and that the convincingness of an artwork is “the function of the inner ecstasy that overwhelmed the artist-creator at the time of his work, the reflection of which he was – more or less perfectly – able to put into the artwork itself.”³ The artwork bears all the characteristics of the creative subject; therefore, it is not an object but an artistic subject:⁴ “The only motto that is possible and justified in art is sincerity.”⁵

Škerjanc emphasised subjectivity, emotions and sincerity. These are all features of the Romantic *Zeitgeist*, which is in stark contrast with the Modernist logic of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, during the brief period 1926–1927 Škerjanc created works that came close to Expressionism, and are even full of experimental “joy”. This suggests that Škerjanc was not entirely convinced by his own aesthetic postulates: that he experienced doubt and was eager to try out new solutions. Slovenian musicology has already discovered this interesting period in Škerjanc’s development. Danilo Pokorn described the five years that followed Škerjanc’s employment as a teacher at the conservatoire of Glasbena matica in 1923 as “a period of crossing over from Romanticism to contemporary expression, a time of serious experimentation with modern means on both instrumental and stylistic levels, following the models of Szymanowski and moderate Schoenberg”,⁶ while Ivan Klemenčič pointed out that Škerjanc “went intensely through Expressionism”.⁷ Speaking of his studies in Vienna (1922–1924) with Joseph Marx (1882–1964), Škerjanc himself admitted in an interview at the time that he had learned about Schoenberg, and that he had “composed a lot in this style, but later I turned away from it because I found it too intellectual, not sufficiently primarily musical, elemental”.⁸ In Škerjanc’s oeuvre we find no such compositions originating from his Viennese period (he adopted a kind of dodecaphony in 1958 and 1959),⁹ so he must have been referring to the years 1926 and 1927, when he wrote those pieces that can be labelled experimental: *Štiri klavirske skladbe* (Four Piano Pieces, 1925), Concerto for Orchestra (Koncert za orkester, 1926), the piano variations *Pro memoria 13. II.* (1927), Violin Concerto (1927), *Tri pesmi po Alojzu Gradniku* (Three Songs after Alojz Gradnik, 1927) and *Franciscae meae laudes* (after Charles Baudelaire, 1929).

The most adventurous of these compositions seems to be the Violin Concerto,¹⁰ which was described by Pokorn as “Škerjanc’s most extreme piece”,¹¹ while Andrej Rijavec, probably referring to Škerjanc’s interview and his allegedly Schoenbergian compositions, was

² Škerjanc, “Apologia musicae artis”, 172.

³ Ibid., 178.

⁴ Škerjanc, “Moji umetnostni nazori”, 204.

⁵ Škerjanc, “Vrednotenja”, 58.

⁶ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 19.

⁷ Klemenčič, *Slovenski glasbeni ekspresionizem od začetkov do druge vojne*, 81.

⁸ Grabnar, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc o svoji glasbi”, 6.

⁹ Pompe, “Slovenian Twelve-Tone Music”.

¹⁰ Škerjanc’s (First) Violin Concerto survives in manuscript held by the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

¹¹ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 19.

convinced that it “is written using an atonal-dodecaphonic technique”.¹² The manuscript score bears the date 13 November 1927, so the concerto must have been written during the time of Škerjanc’s studies with Vincent d’Indy¹³ (1851–1931) at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, which is somewhat surprising. With his traditional outlook, d’Indy resembled Marx, espousing viewpoints that were later also accepted by Škerjanc. However, in view of d’Indy’s fixation with Beethoven and Franck, whose symphonic structures “were held to embody eternal humanistic and ethical values, a bulwark against the formal flux and harmonic sensationalism of Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Strauss’s expressionistic anarchy in *Salome* and *Elektra*,”¹⁴ it is unlikely that Škerjanc’s Violin Concerto was written under d’Indy’s mentorship. Matjaž Barbo has already questioned Škerjanc’s studies in Paris in his article on Škerjanc’s Violin Concerto,¹⁵ referring to Pokorn’s notion that Škerjanc was “from 1923 onwards uninterruptedly a teacher, whether as a professor at the conservatoire of the Glasbena matica, at the state conservatoire, or at the Music Secondary School in Ljubljana”.¹⁶ The question therefore arises how he was able to pursue his studies in Paris while at the same time teaching regularly in Ljubljana. Part of the answer was provided by Pokorn, who claims that Škerjanc was “not very prepared to be contained within the confines of school lessons”.¹⁷ Barbo, however, discovered data relating to Škerjanc’s studies at the Schola Cantorum as late as 1939¹⁸ which suggested that his studies were slow and not very concentrated. This explains why he did not strictly follow d’Indy’s doctrine, instead assimilating influences from different, even disparate sources. As our analysis will show, the Violin Concerto can be understood as a product of exactly such an “eclectic” and non-dogmatic engagement with experimentation and various stylistic and compositional-technical strands that are limited in Škerjanc’s oeuvre to precisely the two years that coincide with his studies in, and visits to, Paris. Our starting hypothesis could therefore be that one can read Škerjanc’s concerto as a kind of journal of Parisian musical life in the mid-1920s.

Leaving aside a short description by Pokorn, who emphasised the “formal looseness, total abandoning of the tonal ground, complex textures and frequent rhythmic changes”¹⁹ as the most significant traits of the concerto, the first thorough analysis of the work was undertaken by Barbo. The latter claims that Škerjanc’s piece is a “pure concerto” without any extra-musical significance,²⁰ and that the formal procedure is characterised above all by the logic of improvisation, a trait also typical of Škerjanc’s solo piano pieces. Barbo finds no logical motivic work or thematic homogeneity: just a series of sections, each of which brings new material.²¹ The composer eschews traditional tonality and approaches

¹² Rijavec, *Slovenska glasbena dela*, 306.

¹³ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 18.

¹⁴ Labelle, “Roussel, Albert”.

¹⁵ Barbo, “Prvi koncert za violino in orkester (1927) L. M. Škerjanca”, 37.

¹⁶ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Barbo, “Prvi koncert za violino in orkester (1927) L. M. Škerjanca”, 37.

¹⁹ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 19.

²⁰ Barbo, “Prvi koncert za violino in orkester (1927) L. M. Škerjanca”, 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

the use of the whole-tone scale (the wind passages at the beginning of the concerto) or even a kind of twelve-tone series: not in the form of dodecaphony, but more as a means for employing the chromatic total.²² The lack of stable tonality is balanced by the frequent use of a regular rhythmic pulse.²³

However, Barbo overlooked an important detail linked to the motivic material of the concerto. Pokorn had already commented that in places the motivic material resembles folk songs.²⁴ Even more telling is a short remark made by Stanko Vurnik in his review of musical life in Slovenia in the 1927/28 concert season, where we learn that “Professor Škerjanc has also finished a concerto for violin and orchestra in one movement with partial use of Yugoslav motifs”.²⁵ This scrap of information forces us to rethink the idea that the formal logic of the concerto is freely improvisatory without any clear motivic foundation. With the aid of a fair copy of the composer’s manuscript and a recording (the concerto was first performed on 23 March 2017 as part of the festival The Slovenian Music Days) it is made easier to accept that Škerjanc’s composition demonstrates more formal discipline than was previously claimed by Pokorn and Barbo. The concerto in one movement is conceived in the form of variations on a folk theme of South Slavonic origin (see tables 1 and 2 and example 1), while the entire composition is characterised by homogenous thematic material (theme) in the special motif X, which is developed from the theme (see example 2).

The form even bears traces of symmetrical design: the long introduction is balanced by a short coda; the 1st variation, written for orchestra alone, is balanced by the solo violin cadenza; and the rhythmic ostinato of the 3rd variation returns in the 6th variation. However, the borders between the formal segments are not straightforward; the musical flow remains fluent, while the individual sections are distinguished by frequent changes of tempo (as many as eight in the introduction alone; see table 2) and metre, the relationship between the soloist and the orchestra and the metamorphosis of the basic material. Clear recognition of the formal edges is obscured by the constant anticipations and recurrences of material, which give the impression of a free improvisatory logic, as described by Barbo and Pokorn (“formal looseness”): directly prior to the first full statement of the theme the first trumpet prefigures it with a melodic shape that comes close to its basic motif (bars 6–7); at the end of the 1st variation the solo violin states a fragment from the theme (bars 79–81) that will be developed further in the 2nd variation; two bars before the 3rd variation the clarinets (bars 95–96) hint at the ostinato rhythm of the next variation; the 4th variation begins with the ostinato rhythmic model from the 3rd variation, slowly fading out (bars 119–120); the 5th variation begins in a similar way with the thematic metamorphosis of the preceding variation (bars 171–174); the 6th variation is conceived as a kind of recapitulation of the 3rd variation; finally, the short coda builds on a variation of the main theme, as developed in the cadenza (7th variation). A similar function of obscuring the clear-edged formal shapes can be attributed to motif

²² *Ibid.*, 42.

²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴ Pokorn, “Lucijan Marija Škerjanc”, 19.

²⁵ Vurnik, “Glasbeno življenje v Sloveniji v letu 1927/28”, 192.

Table 1
The form of the Violin Concerto

Introduction with the presentation of the theme	1st variation (orchestra)	2nd variation	3rd variation	4th variation	5th variation	6th variation = 3rd variation	7th variation = cadenza (solo violin)	Coda
Bars 1–50 <i>Vivace</i>	Bars 51–80 <i>Subito vivace</i>	Bars 81–96 <i>Poco meno mosso</i>	Bars 97–118 <i>Tempo maestoso, marciale</i>	Bars 119–170	Bars 171–190 A <i>Misterioso</i> (bb, 184–190) <i>tempo</i> (bb, 171–183)	Bars 191–211 <i>Tempo f°</i>	Bars 212–220 <i>Recitativo</i> (bb, 212–216) <i>Cadenza</i> (bb, 217–220)	Bars 221–224
See table 2	Motivic material from the accompaniment, concluding with clear recourse to the theme		Ostinato rhythmic model	Constant movement in quavers		Ostinato rhythmic model, return of motif X		

Table 2
Segmentation of the “introduction with the presentation of the theme”

<i>Vivace</i>	<i>Poco sost.</i>	<i>Largo</i>	<i>Più vivo</i>	<i>Grazioso</i>	<i>Vivo</i>	<i>Tranquillo</i>	<i>Cominciando da nuovo, Maestoso</i>
Bars 1–4	Bars 5–7	Bars 8–13	Bars 14–18	Bars 19–26	Bars 27–39	Bars 40–44	Bars 45–50
“Chaos” of texture, motif X	The “curtain” lifts slowly; the trumpet announces the theme	Presentation of the folk theme	Motif X	Variant of the theme	Theme	New variant of the theme	The theme in the solo violin, imitation of the theme in other voices

X, which recurs at some of the most important structural points: at the beginning of the concerto (bars 1–2: first horn and clarinets), after the first statement of the theme (bars 14–15: bass clarinet, saxophones and first trombone) and just before the cadenza (bars 207–208: oboes, clarinets, bass clarinet and horns). These seemingly random incursions of motif X could be understood as an improvisatory device; however, it turns out that motif X is a derivative of the main theme: it should be understood as a permutation of the basic four-note motif of the main theme (see example 2). Similar permutations constitute the basic procedure of the motivic work in the cadenza (see example 3), so the last occurrence of motif X can perhaps be understood as yet another anticipation. Although motif X fulfils an important formal function in the concerto, it remains for the composer more or less a hidden symbol: it might be interpreted as an Expressionist variant (with wide, dissonant leaps) of the simple folk motif, which remains concealed, largely on account of the strange (perhaps even clumsy) orchestration. It is impossible to discern the first appearance of motif X at the beginning of the concerto amid the thick orchestral rumble: despite being marked *fortissimo*, the first horn and the clarinets have almost no chance of being discerned within the texture, which is filled out by the entire augmented orchestra (six horns, additional alto and tenor saxophone). This is precisely why I have labelled this motif with the letter X: it seems that its importance was deliberately kept indistinct by the composer.

Example 1

Main theme of the concerto and its segmentation into sub-motifs



Example 2

Motif X and its derivation from the first motif of the theme



Example 3

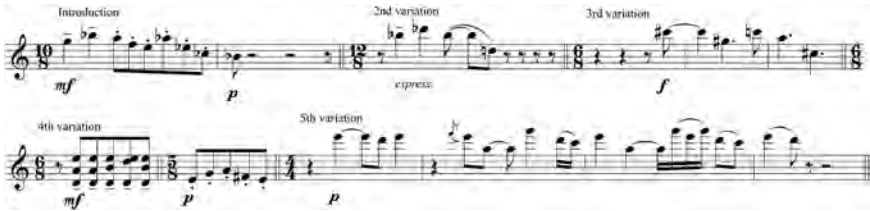
Motivic permutation of the material of the cadenza



However, the strong motivic connection of the theme and motif X already suggests that the whole composition was unified by its motivic work. Although it seems that each new segment, marked off by a specific tempo and/or metre, brings new material, Škerjanc is in fact merely developing different variants or metamorphoses of the main theme, taking into consideration the diastematic shape of the motifs, the rhythmic pulse (the constant flow of quavers), and the motivic segmentation of the main theme. With regard to the latter, it is possible to discern three submotivic segments in the main theme: a, b and c (see example 1), b being in a sequential relationship to a. Škerjanc's metamorphoses can sometimes digress significantly from the main theme (see example 4), but the composer preserves the basic tripartite form of the theme (see example 5), thus further supporting a belief that he relies heavily on motivic work.

Example 4

Variants of the main theme



Example 5

Tripartite form of the theme in the 3rd variation



The most striking moment of the concerto is its opening, where the composer's attention is seemingly devoted above all to the texture, which is thick and polyrhythmic. In terms of tonality, it comes close to employing the chromatic total despite beginning with some whole-tone series. This texture, in which each instrumental group plays seemingly independent material, covers the first occurrence of motif X and serves as a kind of thick sound fog that gradually disperses, revealing the main theme. It seems that, at the opening of the concerto Škerjanc's attention is focused less on the presentation of the motivic material than on the thickening and thinning of the orchestral texture – an approach that was genuinely novel in the mid-1920s. In addition to the elevated importance of the orchestral texture, the concerto is characterised by its fragmented metre (often changing, employing

compound metres) and form (rapid changes of tempo, occasional “hidden” motivic logic). This shattering of periodic, clear-cut form is then balanced by the frequent employment of a regular pulse (a constant flow of quavers) and even ostinato patterns (3rd and 6th variations). Similarly to the handling of the texture, the harmony is also torn between utilisation of the chromatic total and clear tonal centres of mainly modal origin, while, at the level of the relationship between the soloist and the orchestra, Škerjanc completely avoids the typical Romantic “struggle” between the soloist (individualism) and orchestra (collectivism): the soloist is no longer the highlighted subject, the heroic virtuoso, becoming instead a more or less equal partner for the orchestra.

Bearing in mind all of these specific features of the concerto, especially the innovations, one is inclined to pose the question of stylistic influences, particularly in connection with Škerjanc’s studies in Paris. The concerto seems to absorb myriad stylistic trends, which somehow become homogenised through use of variation form. The prominent function of the orchestral textures and consecutive orchestral colours seems to stem from Stravinsky, especially the ballets he wrote for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. At the time of Škerjanc’s residence in Paris, however, Stravinsky was already into his Neoclassical phase. The special handling of the folk material – which is not treated in the nineteenth-century manner as some kind of exotic matter that can enrich the colourfulness and character of the piece but rather as material that is equal to art-music procedures – might bear traces of the music of Bartók (who wrote his *Dance Suite* in 1924). However, it seems that Škerjanc probably borrowed this idea from Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), who “spent part of each year from 1922 to 1926 in Paris” and by the mid 1920s was “increasingly recognized on the international stage, thanks to major performances of works such as the First Violin Concerto and Third Symphony.”²⁶ The often pulsating texture could be associated with the “machine imitation” that was fashionable at the time, not only in music but also in the visual arts.²⁷ The flood of music that tried to imitate the sounds of machines was triggered by Arthur Honegger’s very successful symphonic movement *Pacific 231* (1923), which depicted the acceleration and subsequent deceleration of a locomotive. Probably with Honegger’s piece in mind, Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953) wrote his Second Symphony (1925), a symphony “of iron and steel” where the first movement relies on a strong pulse and heavy, consistently loud sounds that resemble the rumble of factory machines. According to that composer, the symphony “was in part inspired by the atmosphere of Paris”.²⁸ It was premiered there in 1925, so it is possible that Škerjanc actually heard it. The same is true of Prokofiev’s ballet *Stal'noy skok* or *Le pas d'acier* (The Steel Step, 1926, premiered 1927), which was written for Diaghilev’s company after the composer completed the symphony. The ballet once again exploited the tradition of Soviet Futurism and early Constructivism: instead of a genuine plot, “hammers large and small, transmission shafts turning and flywheels, as well as flashing coloured light signals, were shown on stage”.²⁹ However, the composition that comes closest to Škerjanc’s concerto in exploiting textures (it is instructive to

²⁶ Samson, “Szymanowski, Karol”.

²⁷ Broeckmann, *Machine Art in the Twentieth Century*, 9.

²⁸ Redepinning, “Prokofiev, Sergey”.

²⁹ Ibid.

compare the openings of the two compositions) is *Zavod*, op. 19 (The Foundry, 1926–27) by Aleksandr Mosolov (1900–1973; the years of birth and death are the same as those of Škerjanc), which was in fact an episode from his ballet *Stal'* (Steel, 1927), today lost. However, the first performance of Mosolov's work was given in Moscow on 6 December 1927, three weeks after Škerjanc completed his score. We cannot, therefore, speak of influences, but more of a common *Zeitgeist*. Listening to Škerjanc's concerto, one can also discern some characteristics of the music of Albert Roussel (1869–1937) and especially of his Third Symphony, which mixes the pounding rhythmic ostinato of machine music with the harmonic sensibility of Impressionism. There are in fact some important links between Roussel and Škerjanc: Roussel likewise studied with d'Indy and later even taught counterpoint at the Schola Cantorum. Although this did not occur during the time of Škerjanc's studies there,³⁰ the two composers knew one other, as is confirmed by two extant letters by Roussel addressed to Škerjanc; these date from 1937 and are preserved at the National and University Library in Ljubljana. However, Roussel's Third Symphony was written in 1930, later than Škerjanc's concerto; Škerjanc's source of inspiration could therefore have been Roussel's Second Symphony (1922), which, although free of allusions to machine music, is marked by more pronounced "chromaticism, the use of bitonality in more ample forms and a more complex harmonic language".³¹

When speaking of different stylistic threads in Škerjanc's Violin Concerto, one cannot overlook the specific relationship between the soloist and the orchestra, as well as the fact that the concerto is written in one movement. Nicolas Medtner (1880–1951) wrote his First Piano Concerto (1918) in one movement. Although Škerjanc could have been familiar with this work, his formal design was nevertheless fairly novel. More plausible is that the characteristic role of the soloist as the first among equals was influenced by the *Kammermusik* series of Paul Hindemith (1895–1963), written between 1924 and 1927. Unlike Hindemith, Škerjanc employed large orchestral forces, but he did eliminate similarly the heroic role of the virtuoso. Yet another feature indicates that Škerjanc might have known Hindemith's music from the mid- 1920s: with its two-part counterpoint, the cadenza alludes to the Baroque musical language of sonatas and partitas, albeit one "rendered alien" by the novel use of harmony and the lack of formal periodicity, features that respectively reveal the strong influence of the New Objectivity and the Neo-Baroque.

This list of influences found in Škerjanc's Violin Concerto bears witness to the fact that, in the mid-1920s he was stylistically aligned with other, leading European composers and also that he was not satisfied with the simple accumulation of influences but was experimenting with material and form on his own (his concerto predates Roussel's symphony and was written without knowledge of Mosolov's piece). In touch with the broad and colourful musical life of Paris, Škerjanc obviously became eager to experiment and was led to question his traditional aesthetic positions. However, this period of "doubt" was short lived; as early as in 1927 he went on to complete his *Lirična uvertura* (Lyrical Overture), which reveals all the typical features that mark out Škerjanc's music: its predominant character is naturally lyrical; there is almost no contrast; the entire composition seems like

³⁰ Orledge and Thomson, "Indy, Vincent d'".

³¹ Labelle, "Roussel, Albert".

a long “eternal melody” embedded in typical seventh chords without resolutions. The fact that this overture was written in 1923 as an overture to the unfinished opera *Mlada Breda* (Young Breda) can be understood either as the insignificant gesture of merely rescuing the orchestral part of an unfinished work or, in contrast, as an aesthetic statement that turns its back on the experimental pleasures of Parisian musical life. Whatever the case, from this time onwards the majority of Škerjanc’s works were written in this stylistic blend of Impressionist and late-Romantic gestures, starting with his First Symphony (1931) and ending four decades later with *Zarje večerne* (Evening Dawns, 1971). Over these years there were certain periods when he once again experimented with new techniques, but never as radically as he had done between 1925 and 1927. In the 1930s Škerjanc wrote some pieces marked by overt references to the Baroque and to Classicism, testifying to his assimilation of Neoclassical/Neo-Baroque procedures. This was probably a reaction to the important role of Slavko Osterc (1895–1941), who had studied in Prague under Alois Hába and was at that time in Ljubljana, disseminating his doctrines on new music, especially those concerning the New Objectivity. Škerjanc’s Prelude, Aria and Finale for strings (1933) already introduces Neo-Baroque monothematic motoric impulses and counterpoint, suggesting the influence of Hindemith; *Suita v starem slogu* (Suite in an Old Style, 1934) is conceived as a kind of concerto grosso (a string quartet as *concertino* vs. a string orchestra as *ripieno*); while the substantial sonatas for cello (1935) and viola (1936), with their succession of Baroque forms, could be understood as an homage to Bach’s partitas. Subsequently, in the late 1950s, Škerjanc experimented with dodecaphony: in 1958 he wrote his *Sedem dvanajsttonskih fragmentov* (Seven Twelve-Tone Fragments), where he made use of a twelve-note series. However, his use of tone-rows was not dogmatic, thus more or less confirming his basic indebtedness to improvisatory solutions and obligatory emotionality as vehicles for the expression of the subject. The fact that the experimentation of his Parisian years proved more or less a cul-de-sac for the composer is confirmed by his Second Violin Concerto of 1944. In the manuscript of this work we can still discern the title “Second Violin Concerto”, but when the score was finally published the composer decided to drop the number and employ the simple title “Violin Concerto”, which suggests that he was trying to forget the first-born concerto, with its experimental status and Modernist gestures. Predictably, the (Second) Violin Concerto is tonally anchored and written in traditional forms (an opening movement in sonata form, a bipartite *marcia funebre* and a final rondo).

Škerjanc’s First Violin Concerto demonstrates that the composer stood on the brink of Modernism in the mid 1920s: he possessed the talent and knowledge to engage in a struggle that eventually led to the renovation of an outworn musical language. At the same time, however, he must have felt the burden of the domestic tradition, or rather the lack of a domestic tradition. Thus instead of becoming one of the leading renovators of European music in the twentieth century, he decided to fill important gaps in the development of Slovenian music: in the 1930s he began his “project” of writing symphonies, concertos, string quartets and even a cantata (*Ujedinjenje*, 1936) – all “large-scale” genres that were almost absent from the history of Slovenian music at that time. In some respects, Škerjanc therefore performed a pioneering role in Slovenian music at the price of excluding himself from the main flow of history. This reveals what must be one of

the main characteristics of Škerjanc's personality: he preferred more secure solutions to the unknown risk of the new.

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NA ROBU MODERNIZMA: (PRVI) VIOLINSKI KONCERT
LUCIJANA MARIJE ŠKERJANCA

Povzetek

Med letoma 1924 in 1927 naj bi se Lucijan Marija Škerjanc kompozicijsko izpopolnjeval na ustanovi Schola cantorum v Parizu. V tem času je napisal nekaj kompozicij, v katerih se je najbolj približal takrat živemu evropskemu modernizmu. Med temi deli je po svoji zvočni podobi in kompozicijskih rešitvah najbolj radikalen (Prvi) violinski koncert, končan leta 1927. Nanj sta v svojih člankih že opozorila Danilo Pokorn in Matjaž Barbo, ki sta v prvi plan postavljala predvsem ohlapno formalno strukturo oz. prevladujočo improvizacijsko logiko, ki je značilna tudi za druga Škerjančeva dela. Toda bolj temeljita analiza izdaja, da je forma dela vendarle bolj trdno zasidrana in da imamo opravka z variacijami na ljudsko melodijo južnoslovanskega porekla. Hkrati se pokaže, da je Škerjanc močno zaupal motivično-tematskemu delu, toda v takšno tradicionalno obliko in kompozicijsko logiko je vendarle vpel dovolj novih postopkov, da skladba v celoti zveni fragmentirano in izrazito zvočno orientirano. Zato se članek v nadaljevanju ukvarja z možnimi impulzi, ki bi jih Škerjanc lahko prejel sredi dvajsetih let v Parizu. Pri tem se izkaže, da bi nanj lahko deloma vplivala bujna orkestracijska logika Igorja Stravinskega, ki se je v dvajsetih letih sicer že skoraj v celoti zavezal neoklasicizmu, najti pa je lahko tudi prefunkcionaliziran tip Bartókovega folklorizma, ki bi ga Škerjanc lahko povzel po Karolu Szymanowskem. V koncertu odmeva tudi takrat modna glasba strojev, kakršno je Sergej Prokofjev uresničil v svoji Drugi simfoniji in Aleksander Mosolov v simfoničnem stavku *Livarna*, ki pa je nastal kasneje kot Škerjančevo delo. Podobno velja tudi za Tretjo simfonijo Alberta Roussela, kar pomeni, da je bil Škerjanc sredi dvajsetih let povsem v stiku z evropskimi najsodobnejšimi glasbenimi tokovi in da jih je kratek čas tudi sam skušal aktivno preoblikovati. Toda že istega leta je končal tudi Lirično uverturo, s katero se je zavezal svojemu značilnemu liričnemu tipu impresionistične akordike. Zdi se, da Škerjančevi osebnosti ni bilo blizu tveganje in iskanje, čeprav je imel dovolj znanj, zato se je raje zavezal prvenstveni vlogi znotraj zgodovine slovenske glasbe.