

Article received on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020

Article accepted on November 30<sup>rd</sup> 2020

Original scientific paper

UDC: 781.1

78(497.1)

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**MUSICOLOGY AGAINST SILENCE.  
MEMORIES, MEANING, VALUE: THREE BRANCHES OF  
MUSICOLOGY AMID TWO TYPES OF ONE SILENCE**

**Abstract:** The text is a reflection on the status of musicology under the conditions of isolation imposed by the ongoing pandemic, from the perspective of my personal memories concerning the impact that the historical, analytical, and interpretative branches of musicology had on the formation of my musicological poetics as a student of musicology. Understood as a kind of social silence informing one's internal domain as an author, and in terms of the imposition of physical distancing, which is severely jeopardizing not only individual scholarly production, but entire professions as well, this isolation is forcing the study of music (as well as many other professions) to make significant changes to some of its key activities. This concerns the necessity of making a transition to distance working.

**Keywords:** musicology (historical/historiography, modernist/analysis, postmodernist/interpretation), new musicology, social silence

There are phrases that, however conventional and empty they might seem, are not mere platitudes devoid of meaning and drained of all emotion; cordial expressions of a distanced kind of politeness. These are not just verbal constructions that have become usual in certain contexts only because they are considered polite, but also because the pertinence of their condensed con-

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tents has established them, over time, as the only phrases one could possibly use on such occasions. That is why at this special time – for me, at least, as I am about to receive our newly established award for my work in musicology thus far – when I say that this prize, that is, a prize named after the musicologist and professor Stana Đurić-Klajn, a major professional award, is a great honour as well as obligation, I want my words to resonate with what they really mean and bear for me: multiple layers of memory, meaning, and value.

Therefore, I will direct the following discussion at some of those layers that made a decisive impact on my professional habitus and current reflections in musicology.

In my class, Professor Đurić-Klajn taught “Yugoslav Music History”, which at the time covered the area of national music history. Her lectures encompassed the history of music in the territories of former Yugoslavia from the dawn of music making in this part of the world all the way to its contemporary forms and tendencies, which were taught by Prof. Vlastimir Peričić in the final year of the programme. Stana Đurić-Klajn based her work in pedagogy on combining her teaching principles with her own scholarly practice, never failing to infect us with a certain feeling of pleasure in conducting scholarly research. This sense of pleasure would be expressed over a piece of data – as though we were discovering, together, there and then, a previously ‘unknown’ fact, or a systematized body of material – as if we were finding for it, together, at that very moment, its ideal place in its historical musical context; it could also concern cross-fertilizations of analytical, descriptive, and historical interpretations of musical facts and other relevant facts around them, grounded in historiography. Often, this pleasure also contained a performative layer. For, as a professional pianist as well,<sup>1</sup> Professor Đurić-Klajn often performed the pieces she discussed in class – especially piano works. But, whenever possible, she would include students in those little ‘concerts’ of hers. This generated a peculiar atmosphere in her classes, vividly evoked by Dušan Mihalek from his personal memories as her only student in his class, in “Последња лекција Стане Ђурић-Клајн” [The Final Lesson of Stana Đurić-Klajn], his contribution to an essay collection published by the Serbian

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see Драгољуб Катунaц [Dragoљub Katunac], “Пијанистичка делатност Стане Ђурић-Клајн” [Pianistic Activity of Stana Đurić-Klajn], in: др Мирјана Веселиновић-Хофман [Dr. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman] and др Мелита Милин [Dr. Melita Milin] (eds), *Стана Ђурић-Клајн и српска музикологија* [“Stana Đurić-Klajn and Serbian Musicology”], Belgrade, Serbian Musicological Society, 2010, 131–149.

Musicological Society to mark the centenary of her birth.<sup>2</sup> “Ms. Đurić-Klajn”, Mihalek writes, “[would] include examples of live music performance in every class. The atmosphere was quite surreal, like in Fellini’s films: Ms. Klajn and I [...], enveloped by clouds of mint cigarette smoke, would play and sing together ‘Sve dok je tvoga blagog oka’ (For as Long as There Are Your Warm Eyes) ili ‘Rado ide Srbin u vojnike’ (A Happy Soldier is Every Serb)”, or “individual vocal parts from choral works”.<sup>3</sup>

The long-term purpose of studying Yugoslav music history for two years in Professor Đurić-Klajn’s class was to familiarize her students with the principles of historiography, or, rather, historical musicology in general, and to enable them to master those principles above all by working on their individual seminar papers. In concrete terms, the expectation was that every student should take responsibility for verifying the reliability of every piece of data cited in her paper and for interpreting it within its relevant historical context as well as its basis in notated music and recorded sound – of course, depending on the topic at stake, that is, the availability of notated sources and/or sound recordings.

The *historical orientation* of Stana Đurić-Klajn constituted one of the three fundamental directions that remain relevant in Serbian as well as international musicology, which were already at that time, at the very end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, clearly delineated and balanced in the teaching of music history as the main subject in higher education in Belgrade, although none of them had a meta-discourse in our musicology at the time. In the order of *my own* learning about those three orientations (I might even call them branches of musicology), the historical direction was followed by the analytical direction, while both were preceded and then accompanied by a sort of interpretative orientation.

Thus in the final year of our undergraduate programme, the historical musicological orientation in the teaching of national music history, pursued up to that point, was now supplemented with an analytical orientation, which informed the teaching of contemporary Yugoslav music. This tendency was firmly championed by Vlastimir Peričić. The key principles of his basically *modernist* theoretical-scholarly and pedagogical methodology were the following: giving primacy to analytical procedures, ensuring the reliability of

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<sup>2</sup> Душан Михалек [Dušan Mihalek], “Последња лекција Стане Ђурић-Клајн”, in: *ibid.*, 165–170.

<sup>3</sup> Михалек, *ibid.*, 167.

all analytical findings, and discussing them in terms of their corresponding stylistic contexts – musical and more broadly artistic. By implementing these principles in both areas of his own practice, research and teaching, and relying on his own impressive encyclopaedic knowledge, Peričić strongly argued for the necessity of studying domestic art music and forming a worthy body of musicological literature about it, as the paramount task of Yugoslav musicology. A body of literature that would ideally fulfil his almost Adorno-esque 'expectations' of music analysis and trust vested in it, becoming a sort of "verbal counterpart to the musical practice at its core".<sup>4</sup>

Of course, those expectations may not only relate to the logical and conceptual world of analysis and its stylistic 'capability', since they are, in principle, open to a wide array of contextual and interdisciplinary views. Which, after all, also applies to the results of historical analyses and articulations. That, however, certainly does not mean that historical and modernist efforts, as materialized in their authentic finalizations, are not entirely accomplished and adequately delineated in terms of genre, but it does mean that the results of both approaches – analytical and historical alike – are vital to any kind of constructive, interpretative-musicological consideration, both in terms of methodology and fact finding. These problems were put into sharp focus by Kofi Agawu, who, without meaning to deny the importance of individual orientations in musicology, or the need to connect what is ultimately its positivistic conception with its contextualist notion, but still in an almost brutally truthful way, reminded us that music theory and music history could survive without musicology, but that musicology could not survive without music theory and music history.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the historical and modernist approach to musicology forms the basis of the process of musicological contextualization and interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Мирјана Веселиновић-Хофман [Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman], "Литература о музици као музички медиј" [Music Literature as a Music Medium], in: Весна Микић [Vesna Mikić] and Тајјана Марковић [Tatjana Marković] (eds), *Музика и медију* [Music and Media], Belgrade, Faculty of Music, 2004, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kofi Agawu, "Does Music Theory Need Musicology?", *Current Musicology*, 53, 1993, 89–98.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this, see: Мирјана Веселиновић-Хофман [Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman], *Пред музичким делом. Оіпеди о међусобним пројекцијама естетике, поетике и стилстике музике 20. века: једна музиколошка визура* [Contemplating the Work of Music on Display. Essays on Mutual Projections of Aesthetics, Poetics, and Stylistics of 20th Century Music: A Musicological Viewpoint], Београд, Завод за уџбенике, 2007.

This contextual-interpretative aspect of doing work in musicology, as its purpose, was the bedrock of the musicological conception and activity of Professor Nikola Hercigonja, which he demonstrated throughout his years of teaching general music history (from its beginnings to its contemporary aspirations), as well as in supervising seminar papers. At the same time, he invariably relied on musical material that was *factual* in character – in terms of sound, analysis, and history. But this material served him only as a stimulus, basis, and source of argumentation for his unique interpretative perspectives on individual teaching topics, whereby Hercigonja critically and dialectically problematized the oeuvres of individual composers, musical phenomena concerning genres and styles, issues relating to their evolution and especially their social character in line with his personal views. They were richly associative, and, due to his inordinately broad erudition, in this associative quality they were rather mobile and penetrative in disciplinary terms and in that sense contextual.<sup>7</sup>

Although Nikola Hercigonja never sought to theorize his musicological principles, they were built into his pedagogical procedures and advice he gave to students. But even if he had provided them with a theoretical grounding, I believe he would not unreservedly label them “new musicological”, as a younger generation of American musicologists, led by Richard Taruskin, did in the early 1980s in line with their own principles, which were incidentally not unrelated to Hercigonja’s, by manifestly repudiating positivism (analytical and historical) as the only method and purpose of musicological creativity. Hercigonja would have probably found a more authentic expression for his positions than “new musicology”, since the general notion of collaboration among different disciplines, critical and contextual procedures in the domain of musicology, does have latent positions and proto-theses of its own.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Мирјана Веселиновић-Хофман [Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman], “Теорија у покрету: музиколошки критицизам Николе Херцигоње у његовим написима и педагогији” [Theory in Motion: The Musicological Criticism of Nikola Hercigonja in his Writings and Teaching], in: др Мирјана Веселиновић-Хофман [Dr. Mirjana Veselinović Hofman] and др Мелита Милин [Dr. Melita Milin] (eds), *Никола Херцигоња (1911–2000). Човек, дело, време. Поводом 100 година од његовој рођења* [Nikola Hercigonja (1911–2000): The Man, the Opus, Time – on the Occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Birth], Београд, Музиколошко друштво Србије, 2011, 45–60.

<sup>8</sup> In that regard, one should note that in the United States itself, as early as the mid 1960s, *new musicology* had already received a rough general sketch in Joseph Kerman’s “A Profile for American Musicology”, *Journal of American Musicological Society*, 18 (1), Spring

And although long anticipated by them, *new musicology* had to wait for the mega-culture of post-modernity as its natural 'habitat', that is, a conducive intellectual, social, and even professional-ethical context for its establishment, elaboration, and affirmation. And only in that respect, that is, as a conception of musicology elaborated and articulated in the spirit of the new, postmodern condition, may *new musicology* be viewed as new. For, had that new, postmodern context not hegemonized the domain of real and spiritual life, the existence of new musicology would probably still be confined to the sporadic quality of its anticipations.

That was precisely the case in Yugoslav musicology in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In it, the postmodern mega-culture was still only anticipated, meaning that its musical, theoretical, scholarly, and many other disciplinary manifestations were still mostly individual, inhabiting a space 'without a system'; more precisely, a space that had yet to be covered by the web of postmodernist terminology, postmodernist narratives, methods, tools, modalities... In that sense, Nikola Hercigonja's personal interdisciplinary-associative musicological and pedagogical practice likewise possessed the traits, meaning, and significance of an individual endeavour as a sort of postmodernist anticipation, stemming from his personal conception of the musicological profession. In other words, an endeavour confined to his personal radius, pursued outside the global context, in the quiet of his personal creativity and 'territory' of work; in a sort of *social silence*.

That is why from today's perspective I would say that as students, and perhaps even for years thereafter, we were unaware that we were already venturing into the problematic of the postmodernist creative conception of/and

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1965, 61–69, while in European music scholarship the first hints about linking musicology with other scholarly disciplines were already made in its inaugural 'act' in 1885, that is, in Guido Adler's "Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft", *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 1885, 5–20. One should also remember many other, earlier attempts at classification and systematization in the musical sphere, as well as reflections on music that sought to tie its existence and meaning with various non-musical disciplines. Cf. Nicolas-Étienne Framery, "Tableau de la musique et de ses branches", *Journal de musique*, 1770, cited in Philippe Vendrix, "Musique, théorie et philosophie: le nouvel élan de Rameau", in: Jean Duron (ed.), *Regards sur la musique au temps de Louis XV*, Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, Wavre, Éditions Mardaga, 2007, 78; Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Über die Theorie der Musik, insofern sie Liebhabern und Kennern notwendig und nützlich ist: eine Einladungsschrift zu musikalischen Vorlesungen*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck, 1777; *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, Leipzig, Schwickert Verlag, 1788 / Laaber, Laaber Verlag, 2005, etc.

*new musicology*, at a time when it was still not labelled as such or existed as a movement – therefore, at a time when terms such as interdisciplinarity, interpretation, criticism, or context, for example, had yet to attain the role and “status” of keywords in postmodernism. That time and the moment when those words did attain that role and status were separated by some ten years; and roughly the same amount of time passed between that moment and my own engagement not only with *musical* postmodernism, but also with the largely analogous postulates of *musicological* postmodernism, stimulated by the already rising tide of postmodernist compositional imagination and the compositional procedures it employed. And it was only then, that is, belatedly, observed from the perspective of my own musicological and pedagogical methodology, that I identified some of the main structural concepts and directions of that movement in the accumulated layers of my university education in musicology.

Thus they lay dormant in those sediments, ‘unnamed’ in that environment of *social silence*, but with far-reaching effects. In the context of our musicological activities today, that phenomenon of *social silence* has become current in a different way. Its meaning – not only from the perspective of our profession! – is changing significantly in relation to what I metaphorically referred to when I used that phrase: in relation to the solitary nature of individually pursued research and its methods of anticipation. That is, in relation to silence in terms of an internal, autonomously delineated creative space that engenders ideas, dilemmas, positions, “struggles with the material” and debates with oneself, where solutions are found and creative edifices constructed... In other words, silence as a natural part of every creative process – artistic and scientific – silence, which, however restive and noisy due to the internal tumult that inhabits it,<sup>9</sup> remains inaudible in social terms. However, the same fate can befall the creative *products* of that silence, unless they are grasped and valued accordingly in ‘their own’ professional and social environments. Much for the same reasons, the same kind of neglect and social silence may shroud entire professions, even multiple professions in the domains of certain disciplines – for example, artistic or scholarly. Like it happened to a certain degree in this year’s global everyday life, substantively changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by the isolation we had

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<sup>9</sup> An especially symptomatic example in that sense is the title of a piece by Miloš Zatkalik, *Бука у унутрашњој тишини* (“Noise amid Internal Silence”) for flute, oboe, clarinet, percussion, and piano (2015).

to endure during those several difficult weeks, acting according to the rules of quarantining that were imposed upon us. On this occasion, I shall refrain from discussing the 'hot-headedness' and ruthlessness with which they were enforced in our country and their effect of a political drill, which, like a magnifying glass placed at "the distance of clear vision", shone a clear light, in the terrifying capacity of its negative impulses and 'stimuli', on our attitude to professionalism, to *schooling* in general, understood in all its aspects and levels of education it offers, knowledge, creativity, behaviour, institutions, conditions of work, moral criteria, and systems of value.

To the contrary, I will only look at the fate that befell the study of music amidst the isolation of this pandemic, as a *globally* specific problem and manifestation of *social silence*. As early as April this year, shortly after the onset of the new corona virus's European onslaught, looking at this problem got a stimulus from Daniel K. L. Chua when he asked what kind of music one should listen to, play, and think about in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, given that amidst the isolation that came to dominate our lives, "we need music not just as a music to entertain us and humour us, but a music that resonates with this crisis".<sup>10</sup> He responded to his question with a brilliant lecture – a wide-ranging interpretative-analytical musicological probing of Schubert's Impromptu in C minor, D 899, Op. 90 (1827), a work that he, like Schubert's late works in general, views as music that is pertinent to the present circumstances, because it is a music that is "equally lonely and isolated" but at the same time "deeply consoling" in its confrontation with tragedy.<sup>11</sup>

Chua's presentation certainly inspires one to ask analogous questions of musicology: for instance, what kind of music scholarship we need in this life shaped by a pandemic, whether it should perhaps aim its analytics and hermeneutics at tragic narratives and their latencies in works of music, at corresponding musical contents or composers' destinies, for instance, as sources of wisdom and strength for confronting the tragedy of our ongoing pandemic experience – with death, solitude, the devouring fear, void, and devastating silence of loss. Although an affirmative answer to these questions might actually be arguable in a certain way, on this occasion I think a more important issue one could link to Chua's presentation would be to highlight its mul-

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Daniel K. L. Chua, "Impromptu in the Key of COVID-19", *IMS Musicological Brainfood*, Vol. 4, No. 1, YouTube, First posted on April 21, 2020; last updated June 22, 2020, acc. September 13, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*



tilayered significance regarding our current life in musicology. Not only on account of the topic he addressed and the methods he used, but also due to the environment *in which* he did it and the way *in which* he made his work available.

On the one hand, Chua implicitly argues for the importance of the universal human need for listening to music as a type of content that can fill the void of isolation, as well as his conviction, somewhat coloured by his critical-theory leanings, that really effective is that kind of music that resonates with the burning social issues of the day. Also, he highlights the necessity of direct contact with the sound of the music one is studying – a contact that is, in his case, also performative – as well as the nature of his internal creative silence, where his scholarly-interpretative procedures and utterances are set in motion by his personal experience of music and are shaped accordingly. On the other hand, with the way he chose to make his work available, Chua suggests that, without this new form of communication – I shall call it *close communication at a distance* – public presentation of his (or anyone else’s!) musicological discourse, which is, as we know, a common segment in the activities of a musicologist, might in the present conditions of isolation remain stuck in the “black hole” of social silence, in other words, beyond the reach of his target audience. Therefore, Chua recorded his presentation in the socially isolated ambiance of his study, rendered meaningful by the quiet internal space of his mental activities and a lecture performance intended for a physically invisible listener; silent, but *fictively* present before his eyes. That said, in that solitude of his creativity and presentation, Chua (or any other musicologist in an analogous situation) may also remain solitary if his potential listeners fail to use the technologically provided option of “sharing” with him the offered content of their – our shared! – lived isolation. That is, *if they do not ‘really appear’ as fictive in the environment where the lecture is actually taking place.*

Chua thus demonstrates a way to negotiate the danger that musicological life, due to the restrictions imposed on physical movement, might also imperceptibly ‘slip’ into a life that would be creatively restricted, too; that it might close off and, in some respects, lapse into the silence of oblivion.

Having said that, even though distance working technology is not unfamiliar to us, since we are already adapting to it in every sphere of life, and although – as Chua demonstrated – musicology can use it to manage a transition of its key forms of activity whilst remaining faithful to itself in all three of its elementary branches discussed above, faced with the silence of the pandemic, musicology must still confront the problems that affect some forms

of musical life that are necessary to practising musicology. On this occasion, I will only mention the institution of the public concert, which has changed, under the restrictions of quarantining and the somewhat more relaxed provisions that came in its wake, its 'habitat', forced to move online. Mirroring the changed relationship between the musicologist and her auditorium, they have also changed the relationship between the performer and her audience. That relationship has become virtual, with "likes" taking the place of clapping and the experience of performing live – especially in premières – losing the magic of immediacy and uncertainty. Moreover, likewise gone is that 'chronicling', informative role of all forms of live concert events, which every musicologist needs, especially if she is historically oriented. The disappearance of that role – which will go on until it finally fulfils its transformation to "distance working" – is a major threat to the 'visibility', even existence, of some segments of musicology. Here I particularly mean the absence of live concert première performances of recent works that have yet to be recorded and that entail performing forces of any kind of complexity. Namely, their absence has forcibly separated those of us working on musicological projects focused on current musical creativity from their object of research. And thus forcibly silenced, this kind of work has to endure some serious consequences: research is cut short, prolonged, or, at best, considerably slowed down. For, without live performances, new works exist in no other way than the silence of their notated texts. Of course, depending on the type and precision of their notation, such works may be presented analytically using notation alone, but the absence of audio perception means that no theoretical or musicologically interpretative discourse concerning such pieces can be authentic or grounded in sound.

To resist the silence of isolation that symbolizes our new lived reality, isolation in physically real and psychological terms, literal and figurative silence, musicology must face up to the necessity of embracing all kinds of "distance" working, which would allow it *both to retain and develop* its principles and extend the scope of its scholarly activities.

Like a concept that is both remembered and anticipated.

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## Summary

It was inevitable that my acceptance speech at the presentation ceremony of the “Stana Đurić-Klajn” Award for overall contribution to Serbian musicology would inevitably feature some autobiographical moments, since I was a student of Prof. Đurić-Klajn in the first two years of her course in “Yugoslav Music History”, covering everything up until contemporary musical creativity. This text therefore stems primarily from my memories of those two years, as well as, inseparably, the entire conception of studying the history of music as the main subject. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it envisaged a differentiated implementation of three basic musicological approaches, with each one of them making deep furrows in my personal musicological poetics, informing its basic traits. In specific terms, Stana Đurić-Klajn, as a historical musicologist, championed in her teaching a historical conception of the study of music; Vlastimir Peričić, a composer, music theorist, and musicologist, based his approach to contemporary Yugoslav music on modernist analytical grounds; while Nikola Hercigonja, from his perspective of a musicologist and composer, sought in his “General Music History” course to combine those two approaches, enlisting them into the service of scholarly interpretation. At the time, this approach was still not called “postmodern”, although it did anticipate some of its salient features.

The circumstances surrounding my evocation of these memories today, as well as the inaugural presentation of the “Stana Đurić-Klajn” Awards, constitute a confusing and threatening moment in our civilization. Marked overall by isolation as a way of life, the social environment and atmosphere shaped by the presently raging COVID-19 pandemic, this moment presents a potent actualization of the problematic of silence, in broad terms ranging from its purely human to its professional meanings, forms, and consequences. Since the phenomenon of silence – musical silence, of course! – has occupied my attention for many years now, in my efforts to fathom its physical and psychological phenomenal forms, literal and figurative meanings, on this occasion I chose to highlight the problem of silence in terms of social separation, marginalization, and isolation. More precisely, in its guise as a kind of social silence and its repercussions on the status of the study of music.

Therefore, I highlighted two types of social silence affecting the three orientations in musicology listed above, its three ‘branches’. One of those two types is understood in terms of an undeniably personal, creatively fulfilled and stimulating internal silence, that is, the solitary nature of conducting individual research, which predates this pandemic crisis but has been intensified by it. The other type concerns the social neglect facing the products of that creative silence, the fact that the restriction of direct, non-distanced communication between people is having an adverse effect on musicology as well as many other scholarly and artistic professions. This type of social silence is suppressing various kinds of musicological activities into the stillness of inaction, which, consequently, leads to a marginalization of the entire profession. That is why it is necessary for musicology to perform its transition to distance working in many of its activities, especially those that are public in character.