

Jelena Jovanović-Nikolić*

Montenegrin Music Center, Podgorica, Montenegro

Book Review: Slobodan Jerkov, *Crnogorske narodne pjesme* [Montenegrin Folk Songs]. Podgorica: Muzički centar Crne Gore [Podgorica: Montenegrin Music Centre], 2015, 320 pp., ISBN 978-9940-538-10-1

Montenegrin Folk Songs is the title of the publication of the Montenegrin Music Centre by author Slobodan Jerkov, Doctor of Ethnological Sciences and an eminent educational supervisor for music culture, former music teacher and versatile culture worker. A first glimpse at his career and the writings about him as the author of the book *Music Heritage and Talent for Music of Montenegrins*,¹ plus a large number of professional articles and the co-authoring of three textbooks² reveals his rich experience both in the area of pedagogy and in the area of organization of cultural events in Montenegro.

The long ethno musicological selection process of ample folk songs material that the author had collected for years has been sublimated in the book *Montenegrin Folk Songs*. This study, precious for the preservation of Montenegrin music tradition, through the collected scores provides an overview of 250 songs from throughout Montenegro³. In the introduction the author theoretically defines the subject matter of the research using functional geographic maps and charts.⁴ He emphasizes the territorial division of Montenegrin folk songs as an important discourse, familiarizing the readers with the manner of collection, analysis, metro-rhythmic types, scale patterns and melody models of Montenegrin folk songs. Thus the initial part of the book discusses in the ethno musicological manner the analysis procedures, as well as the characteristics of the collected and analyzed material. In addition to providing important overviews of the territorial divisions of Montenegro into 'singing areas' by Miodrag A. Vasiljević and

¹ Jerkov, Slobodan, *Muzičko nasleđe i muzikalnost Crnogoraca* [Music Heritage and Talent for Music of Montenegrins] (Podgorica: Pobjeda, 2006).

² *Muzika – udžbenik za srednje stručne škole*, [Music – Textbook for Secondary Vocational Schools], (Podgorica: Centar za stručno obrazovanje, 2006); *Klavir knjiga*, [Piano book], (Podgorica: IP Nova Škola, 2008); *Crna Gora moja postojbina – udžbenik za crnogorsku dijasporu*, [Montenegro – My Native Land – textbook for Montenegrin Diaspora], (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2011).

³ In the original selection – the author had 463 chants. After the introduction follows the chapters: "Recording in the Field and Melographic Recording", "List of places, performers, authors of recordings, year of recording and numbers of songs", "Metro-rhythmic types", "Scale patterns", "Melody Models", "Montenegrin Folk Songs", "Texts of Montenegrin Songs" and "Alphabet Register and Ordinal Number of Examples".

⁴ Graphic charts and graphs for the book were prepared by Jovan Jerkov.

Jerko Bezić, the author introduces his own division, emphasizing the principle of work: “using the method of moving from general to the specific, Montenegrin songs were divided to singing areas by merging the examples of the same type to larger groups with common characteristics.” (11) The proposed division of the author himself refers to five singing areas: Northern Montenegro, Eastern Montenegro, Western Montenegro, the Montenegrin seaside, and Central Montenegro. Interestingly enough, the songs transcribed by melograph from the aforementioned areas originate from three authors of recordings, the first of whom is most probably unknown, the second is Milun Tadić and the third is Slobodan Jerkov.⁵ For better familiarization with the original melodies and their music characteristics the book offers a list of places, performers, authors of recordings, years of recording and ordinal numbers of songs, which make the entire collection complete and well laid-out, before the central part of the book with examples of songs.

The central part of the book includes songs with scores and verses. They are classified as follows: **one-part female singing** (songs of older village tradition, shepherds’ songs, lullabies, dirges, songs accompanying dances, wedding songs, Christmas songs, songs of newer village tradition), **two-part female singing** (songs of older village tradition, shepherds’ songs, songs accompanying dances, wedding songs, Partisan songs, songs of newer village tradition), **one-part male singing** (songs of older village tradition, shepherds’ songs, songs accompanying dances, wedding songs, songs for Saints’ days, songs of newer village tradition), **two-part male singing** (songs of older village tradition, shepherds’ songs, songs accompanying dances, wedding songs, songs of newer village tradition) and **two-part mixed, female-male singing** (songs of older village tradition, shepherd’s songs, songs accompanying dance, wedding songs, Partisans’ songs, songs of newer village tradition). When writing the melodies, Slobodan Jerkov relied upon the chant reduction principle characteristic of Mokranjac, thus it could be concluded that this study is the result of longstanding singing work and outstanding knowledge of diverse and rich Montenegrin tradition which, in addition to the author himself, professor Dr. Sonja Marinković and professor Žarko Mirković spoke about at the book promotion (held as part of the XIV International Music Festival *A tempo*, in April 2015, at Podgorica). It should be noted that, according to the author, approximately 85 percent of the book’s 250 examples are absolutely new. In addition to the authentic melodies and characteristic, recognizable elements of Montenegrin folklore, the different kinds of folk songs that can be found in the book were, in literary terms, written by autochthonous folk language with very frequently rich, hidden meanings in particular verses.

The interest in traditional folk music as expressed through writings about it, its music notation and studies like this pave the way for the preservation of the music tradition of our spaces. In this sense, *Montenegrin Folk Songs* at present time represents a rare and precious example dedicated to folk music in Montenegro that familiarizes us with the fertile music tradition from all areas of Montenegro. Through classification, geographic charts and grouping of particular songs according to geographic designations, the author also provides a good base for further research of this area in our spaces.

⁵ The recorders are according to the author: the first one most probably not known – 13 songs, Milun Tadić – 39 songs and Slobodan Jerkov – 198 songs.