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**INFLUENCE OF SLOVENIAN CULTURE AND MUSIC PEDAGOGY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO THROUGH WORK OF VIDA MATJAN**

*Kratki znanstveni prispevek / Short Scientific Article*

**Abstract**

The establishment of music schools in Montenegro after the Second World War takes place mainly on the initiative of foreigners - professional musicians. One Slovenian woman - Vida Matjan, especially attracted our attention and interest. As a music pedagogue, in 1945, she established the *Private Music School Vida Matjan* in Kotor. She was dealing with ethnomusicology, was an innovator in teaching solfeggio, and she composed several music fairytales. This paper gives an overview of the influence that the Slovenian cultural scene - music, literature and theatre - had on the development of music pedagogy in Montenegro, through the prism of the pedagogical and composing activities of Vida Matjan.

**Keywords:** music pedagogy, Vida Matjan, Slovenia, Montenegro, music fairytale.

**Izvleček**

**Vpliv slovenske kulture in glasbene pedagogike na razvoj glasbenega izobraževanja v Črni gori skozi delo Vide Matjan**

Po drugi svetovni vojni je do ustanovitve glasbenih šol v Črni gori prišlo predvsem na pobudo tujcev - profesionalnih glasbenikov. Našo pozornost je pritegnila Slovenka Vida Matjan. Kot glasbena pedagoginja je leta 1945 v Kotorju ustanovila "Zasebno glasbeno šolo Vida Matjan". Ukvarjala se je z etnomuzikologijo, bila je inovativna pri poučevanju solfeggia in napisala več glasbenih pravljic. V prispevku je narejen pregled vpliva slovenske kulturne scene - glasbe, literature in gledališča - na razvoj glasbene pedagogike v Črni gori skozi prizmo pedagoške in skladateljske dejavnosti Vide Matjan.

**Ključne besede:** glasbena pedagogika, Vida Matjan, Slovenija, Črna gora, glasbena pravljica.

## Introduction

Montenegro has not such a long tradition of music education as many European and neighboring countries. It was institutionalized only after the II World War, when first music schools were founded. The foundation of music schools in the war-ravaged country experiencing the lack of professional staff was mostly initiated by foreigners who at the time accidentally or deliberately happened to be in Montenegro. One of those foreigners was Vida Matjan – a Slovenian, who had great influence on the development of music education in Montenegro and whose character and work this paper is dedicated to. The spectrum of her activity is wide. As a music pedagogue, she founded a *Private Music School Vida Matjan* in Kotor in 1945. She dealt with ethnomusicology and was an innovator in solfeggio teaching while as a creator she composed a number of musical fairytales which performance was utterly adapted to children's performing abilities. To my knowledge, her work was not well-known in the country of her origin – Slovenia, so this may be an opportunity to pay her due respect in her homeland as well.

## Vida Matjan's Life Path

Vida Matjan, born Hribar, a Slovenian, was born in Ljubljana in 1896. Her father Franc was a graphic worker, her mother Antonia, born Učak, a musician who completed *Glasbena matica* and solo-singing in particular, thus having great influence on Vida's interests. Already in her earliest youth, she expressed her desire for music education, but her father opposed. Consequently, Vida became a gymnasium student. Having completed the third grade of gymnasium in 1911, Vida brought home a booklet with excellent grades. Asked by her parents what she wanted as reward for such success, she replied –piano studies only. Her father agreed and Vida started her studies at *Glasbena matica* with professor Vaclav Talich, Vida Prelesnik, Jaroslava Chlumecki and finally professor Anton Trost - in parallel to attending gymnasium. Wishing to compensate for the time lost, she initiated her studies with great enthusiasm and energy, owing to which she succeeded to skip two years of regular schooling at *Glasbena matica*. She was even exempt from paying tuition fee. In 1914 she received a scholarship for Vienna Music Academy, for which she was being prepared by the professor Trost.

At that time the significant influence on Vida Matjan interests was made by Marija Kmetova, a writer, who gathered children and staged performances in her home. It was where Vida Matjan gained first precious experiences in acting and directing which would prove important later on during her work in Music School in Kotor. In order to understand her versatile personality it is important to mention that she also took part in various sports – skating, swimming and hiking.

Those were also the times when severe war events took place. The beginning of the I World War prevented her studies in Vienna. During the war, in 1917, she married Alojz Matjan, an engineering student and a good organist, pianist and amateur painter. It is particularly important to highlight that their house on the outskirts of Ljubljana was often visited by the company of the most significant names of Slovenian culture: the writer Ivan Cankar, the sculptor Lojze Dolinar, the painter Anton Gojmir Kos, the composer and pianist Lucijan Marija Škerjanc. There were discussions on different important topics

followed by endless music playing. It is not hard to imagine how those meetings looked like, in what kind of artistic atmosphere the conversations between people representing the Slovenian cultural scene at that time took place. The influence that her acquaintance with the above mentioned artists had on the development of Vida Matjan's personality is undoubtedly important. She often remembered those days later on, stating that those were the most pleasant and the most substantial life atmospheres she had ever felt.

In addition to music, Vida Matjan cherished great love for fine arts. Owing to Saša Šantel, an academic painter and violinist, whom she met in Ljubljana, from 1920 and 1930 Vida was actively using the technique of painting on silk, wood, porcelain and clay. As a result of such ability, she started to take orders by opera and fashion houses from Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb. For example, for the needs of Belgrade opera, she painted clothing details for *Carmen*, *Scheherazade* and *Hamlet* while upon the requirement of Ljubljana opera she painted for the opera *Prince Igor* and ballets *Mak* and *Manon Lescaut*.

December 1930 marked the movement of Matjan couple to Belgrade where they stayed for 11 years. At music school *Stanković* Vida Matjan enrolled higher degree course which would correspond to the rank of Music Academy if it existed at the time, in the class of professor Emil Hajek. She completed the course in 1935. At her graduation concert she played Chopin's Two Piano Concertos in E minor, which she performed with professor Hajek. After graduation, she dedicated herself to instrumental pedagogy: she had a large number of students whom she taught piano privately (Milošević, 1982).

At the same time, her husband paid a number of business visits to Kotor. Matjan couple got to like the climate, people and ambience of Boka Bay very much. After bombing of Belgrade in April 1941, when the house they lived in was partially destroyed, they decided to move to Kotor.

During the hard years of the II World War all music activities were suspended so the beginning of Vida Matjan's music activity is linked to 1945 and took place in her *Private Music School Vida Matjan*. With the consent of state authorities, the school was active until April 1, 1947 when it was merged with just founded *State Lower Music School* in Kotor.

Vida Matjan engaged in numerous activities. From 1946 already, she invested enormous amounts of energy and enthusiasm into organization and running of choir Women Antifascist Front of Kotor which had 32 members, Pioneer Choir of 105 members, folklore and drama groups. Simultaneously, she meticulously engaged in field work and interpretation of cultural heritage, especially folklore. Of particular importance in this area is her publication *Dances and Songs of Dobrota and Skaljari* where she elaborated on folk music tradition of Boka Bay. In addition to her extraordinary contribution in the area of music pedagogy development in Montenegro as well as ethnomusicology, Vida Matjan is also important as a composer: her opus comprises 1 children opera, 8 music fairytales, 33 instrumental compositions for piano and orchestra and 4 choral compositions (Dabižinović, 2018).

In 1949, Vida Matjan officially became a principal of *Music School* in Kotor, having remained at the position for 20 years - until her retirement in 1969. She taught solfeggio and piano to initial classes of lower music schools.

Vida Matjan paid special attention to working with the youngest in preparatory class. This class was based on creation of visual impressions by using cutout figures on flannelgraph as didactic tool and followed by specific music examples. This is how in 1962, in cooperation with Miloš Milošević, *Muzička početnica* – the first methodological handbook for music teachers in Montenegro was developed (Marković, Ćoso Pamer, 2017).

In celebration of 60 years of the foundation of Kotor's School for Elementary and Secondary Music Education, it was decided that the school be named after her. In this way the town of Kotor and the community of music pedagogues paid due respect to the pedagogue who dedicated almost entire of her life to music life and culture of Kotor.

Vida Matjan received numerous awards and honors during her life. She died in 1993, aged 96 and was buried in Kotor.

### **Music Fairytales**

In addition to her pedagogical work, Vida Matjan created music. While working with children of different age, she felt that dealing with music exclusively through playing a certain instrument did not entirely correspond to development of children's imagination and psyche, so she started to seek new solutions. That is how she came to an idea to create music fairytales – musical-stage pieces to be performed by students, which comprised playing, singing, acting and dancing. Technical requirements in terms of performance were entirely adapted to students' performing abilities. The performing of these fairytales affected the emotional experience of different music content which was ultimately Vida Matjan's objective. We know today how very important is to link singing and playing with body movements in music pedagogy, which tells us that Vida Matjan was a visionary who more than 50 years ago employed such an innovative approach in music education. Reflecting on her pedagogical approach and the ways she designed lessons, Vida herself said:

*I started with education lessons, age-adapted, covering the topics such as: house, school, street, relations with friends, relations with parents. I dealt with nature and animals, travels, personal hygiene (...) I was doing it gradually often making the accompanying drawings. Lectures were followed by learning of nice walk. I focused on rhythmic games, small-scale recitals that were often followed by music and acting. Frequent contacts with parents and teachers and my everlasting work with children enabled me to get a clear picture on how to compose for children. It was a beginning of my personal development phase too which brought me to this point of dealing with this kind of education work (Matjan, 1993, according to Debižanović, 2018, p. 67).*

Already from the school year 1948/49 Vida Matjan began her work on musical stage adaptations. First in line was a musical fairytale *Forest Fairytale. Images from Children's Stories* was created in the school year 1950/51 followed by *Hedgehog's Cottage* in 1951/52 based on Branko Ćopić's verses. In the school year 1952/53 *Little Castle* was created based on a one-act drama by S. Marshak and followed by piano while in 1966 it was orchestrated. Finally, in the school year 1955/56, Vida Matjan's workshop produced dolls and staged a puppet show *Straw Runt*, based on Ivan Minatti's work, focusing on

music elements. In the initial phase of her musical-stage work for children, Vida Matjan used popular works of music literature, linking them with her compositions (*Forest Fairytale* and *Images from Children's Stories*). Later on, she composed, designed and created scenography, directed while closely cooperating with colleagues and insisting on children as performers. It is worth mentioning that she conducted each of the performances herself.

The line of music fairytales continued with creation of new ones: in 1967 *Dolls Clinique* was created, based on Jovan Aleksić's text followed by music fairytale *Little Wolf* based on the text by Vojmil Rabadan in 1968. Vida Matjan was also the author of children's opera *To Meet the Fish* created in 1989. Each of the works listed is kept in the State Archives of Montenegro and the Historical Archives of Kotor. These are all manuscripts.

### **Music fairytale *Sleepless Night in the Woods***

The greatest success and probably the most mature piece of Vida Matjan's work is a musical fairytale *Sleepless Night in the Woods* created in 1963 based on the text by Miloš Milošević. The performance of this work involves instruments of the Orff approach, guitar, piano, vocal soloist, choir and ballet. The fairytale takes place in the woods where dwarfs and forest animals all play, sing and dance together, in peace and friendship, conveying the messages of love. Currently available is only the version of Vida Matjan's original manuscript, 111 pages long. The work definitely deserves to be published in order to be made more available to interested teachers and their students.

At the time it was created the fairytale was performed in Kotor, across the Republic of Montenegro and even in the former common state of Yugoslavia. Its performance at Music Pedagogues' Congress on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1964 attracted a lot of attention. The authors of this musical-scene work were awarded the Republic of Montenegro's Trinaestojulska Award. Critics were extremely positive. In the magazine *Music and School no.1*, in 1965, Bojana Dunderski, a participant of the above mentioned Congress, wrote: "This performance has showed that nice results can be achieved in minimal conditions, if music school does not confine itself only to the use of classical instruments and if it finds the right place in its surroundings."

Worth mentioning is the statement by professor Branko Pivnički, a President of Coordination Board of Yugoslav Composers Association, published in daily newspapers *Pobjeda* no. 2336 on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1964: "This fairytale performed by Kotor music school students has impressed me and entirely won me over. When it is known that all authors come from Kotor, the term "own power" get special weight and seriousness. Performers did their poetic and stage tasks spontaneously and gleefully which inevitably transmitted to listeners and viewers filling them with tenderness and joy of children's play".

Recently the fairytale has been performed in celebration of 70 years of the foundation of music school in Kotor.

Figure 1: Concert Invitation<sup>1</sup>



To my knowledge, this fairytale has never been performed in Slovenia, so it would certainly be interesting to consider the cooperation between different institutions in Slovenia and Montenegro: music schools, music academies, dramatic arts academies, theatres, Ministry of Culture in order to have this work presented to Slovenian public.

## Conclusion

Considering diverse activities Vida Matjan was engaged in and having in mind the knowledge and various experiences she passed on from Slovenia to Montenegro, it is clear that Slovenian music pedagogy and cultural scene influenced the creation of music pedagogy in Montenegro, firstly through founding of music school in Kotor and then through designing different activities in Kotor's music school. No similar activities took place in other music schools of that time – the performance of children musical fairytales, written by Vida Matjan in a way to allow children to perform them, represents a unique approach in our music pedagogy. Contemplating on that approach in an interview published in the daily newspaper *Pobjeda* on 28-30 November 1975, Vida Matjan said: “You know, I haven't limited my activity to school but instead I wanted and managed to make my students take part in public life, to develop their sense of responsibility towards themselves and others so that they feel the joy of the real applause and in order to stimulate them to create.”

Even in contemporary times, examples of school concerts engaging students in a similar way are rare. On the other hand, the impact of participation in performance of one such work on the development of child's musical abilities is undeniable. Playing, singing and

<sup>1</sup> Portal Montenegrina. *Kotorska koncertna sezona – Proslava 70. godina postojanja i rada ŠOSMO “Vida Matjan”*. 9.3.2017. <https://montenegrina.net/fokus/kotorska-koncertna-sezona-proslava-70-godina-postojanja-i-rada-sosmo-vida-matjan/>



dancing on a stage contribute to the development of an entire music character so they should be more represented in music education. In Vida Matjan's character and work Montenegro had an outstanding music pedagogue and creator who left a deep mark on music education in Montenegro.

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## Povzetek

Po drugi svetovni vojni so se številni tuji glasbeniki slučajno ali namerno znašli v Črni gori, kjer so nadaljevali svoje delo in spodbudili ustanovitev glasbenih šol. Med njimi je izstopala Slovenka Vida Matjan. Leta 1945 je kot glasbena pedagoginja v Kotorju ustanovila »Zasebno glasbeno šolo Vida Matjan«. Ukvarjala se je z etnomuzikologijo, poučevala solfeggio in pri tem uporabljala nove metode ter zraven komponirala. Ustvarila je več glasbenih pravljič, ki so bile izvedbeno prilagojene uprizoritvenim sposobnostim otrok. Bile so uprizorjene v Črni gori, nikoli pa ni prišlo do njihovih uprizoritev v Sloveniji. Še vedno so zanimive za postavitev na oder, kar odpira prostor za potencialno sodelovanje med različnimi institucijami: glasbenimi šolami, glasbenimi akademijami, fakultetami dramske umetnosti in gledališči iz Črne gore in Slovenije.

V prispevku je predstavljen vpliv slovenske kulturne scene - glasbe, literature in gledališča - na razvoj glasbene pedagogike v Črni gori skozi prizmo pedagoške in skladateljske dejavnosti Vide Matjan. Predstavljena so tudi njena metodična razmišljanja in smernice za obravnavo produktivnega in kreativnega dela, ki so še vedno uporabne v sodobni pedagoški praksi tako v Črni gori kot tudi drugje.