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"Ladislav Burlas and the Slovak musical culture", Slávka Kopčáková (ed.), Prešov 2017 : [recenzja]

Ars inter Culturas nr 6, 323-325

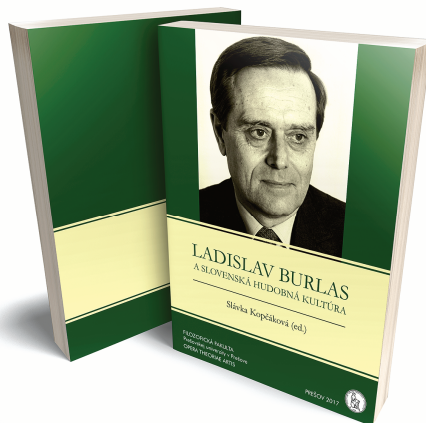
2017

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Slávka Kopčáková (ed.)
Ladislav Burlas
and the Slovak musical culture.
Prešov: Faculty of Arts
at University of Prešov, 2017,
239 p. ISBN 978-80-555-1780-3

On the occasion of an extraordinary jubilee – the 90th birth anniversary of an outstanding figure of the Slovak musical culture and musical science Ladislav Burlas – a unique publication in a form of editorial adaptation with a monographic text by musicologist and aesthetist Slávka Kopčáková has been written at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov. It is a book that combines the personal memories and views of this year's jubilee and the well-founded statements of the researcher in the field of the Slovak musical culture. Thanks to these characteristics, the book is a remarkable piece of writing that provides a view on the musical culture from the “inside” (through the perspective of a person who lives and composes in this environment for several decades) and from the “outside” (through a scientific immersion into the Slovak musical culture focusing primarily on its integral part – figure of Ladislav Burlas).



The publication is therefore composed of two parts. The first is named *Premeny života a tvorby Slovenského hudobníka Ladislava Burlasa* [The coordinates of my life] (pp. 9-130) and its author is Ladislav Burlas. The name of the second part is

Premeny života a tvorby Slovenského hudobníka Ladislava Burlasa [Transformation of life and compositions of Slovak musician Ladislav Burlas] (pp. 131-188) and it is from the pen of an editor Slávka Kopčáková. The part of a publication which is important and enriching for the field of musicology is named *Appendices* (pp. 194-222). It contains *Calendarium (Milestones and turning points in life of Ladislav Burlas)*, *Personal Bibliography (1952-2017)*, *Bibliography – The list of published works about Ladislav Burlas* and *The list of the musical compositions of Ladislav Burlas (1950-2005)*. All data are updated to April 2017, when Ladislav Burlas celebrated the 90th birthday. The extent of the last part suggests that the figure of Ladislav Burlas is (according to the editor's words) one of "the most talented and most complex figures of his generation" (p. 5).

The narrative of Ladislav Burlas included in the first part was created as an audio record in 1998. Slávka Kopčáková has transcribed this audio record into a literary text and she also added the explanatory notes to individual historical facts and events for a less-knowledgeable reader. In the process of transcribing, she took a very careful and considerate approach towards the author, preserving the authenticity and style of the narrative, so that its individuality was not lost, she arranged the text chronologically and divided it into logical units. However, she takes equally careful approach towards the readers when adding the aforementioned notes to statements through what her thorough and consistent work with the obtained material is reflected.

Even though some time has already passed by, we may, considering his age, view this testimony as an up-to-date and comprehensive account of the composer's life with a musical-historical value. It is unrealistic to consider testimony of one musician to be an objective view on the history of the musical culture in Slovakia, however, these memories bring valuable historical information from a personal perspective, individually experienced and emphasized meanings of small, at first glance inconspicuous events that led to the crucial moments in history. The composer in the testimony reveals to the readers the complicatedness and complexity of the history of the Slovak musical culture being hidden in personal relationships, in life stories of individuals, contacts and collaborations which naturally include personal tensions, disagreements or conflicts.

In his memoirs, Ladislav Burlas first starts talking about his origin which, as he himself says, shaped his personality and interests. Then he proceeds to his professional beginnings, after which he talks about the ups and downs and experiences that he, as a "beginner", went through. As the narrative continues, he describes the individual periods of his life, he does not leave out the important people he used to meet, who influenced him more or less, but also those who performed practices he did not approve of, while he does not mention those who he disagreed with but who favored him. He explains the reasons for recollection with a humble note: "I wanted to tell, in particular, how I experienced the decades in the musical culture in Slovakia and share what cannot be found in any chronicles and sources and what I still remember" (p. 121).

The author's extraordinary character stands out during the whole narrative. Ladislav Burlas was gifted not only with natural musicality and desire to pursue music but also with intellectual, verbal-linguistic, diplomatic, organizational skills or interpersonal intelligence, which contributed to the fact that throughout life he held im-

portant positions and at the same time greatly shaped the field of Slovak musical culture without being taken over by the pride in his achievements. The author's mental setup and conflict-freeness that is typical of him, both reflected in the narrated text, enabled him to deal diplomatically with individual life situations and to promote his views in a moderate, non-violent way. "Beaten and praised, it was my destiny. The worst is when a person has a determined opponent or opponents in life. Who did not have those? Sine curve – as a wave of successes, but also failures and individual mistakes – is very enlightening" (p. 53). Photographic annexes from the private archive of Ladislav Burlas are to be found at the end of the chapter.

In the second part *Premeny života a tvorby Slovenského hudobníka Ladislava Burlasa* [*Transformation of life and compositions of Slovak musician Ladislav Burlas*] (p. 131-188), the author, Slávka Kopčáková, presents the personal and professional profile of Ladislav Burlas. The monographic text consists of three parts in which she deals with individual aspects of this figure. In the first, she focuses on the life story and circumstances logically and inherently arranged in a coherent text written in a narrative style representing biographical facts as well as the scientific and organizational activities of Ladislav Burlas. The text is professionally supported by the individual bibliographic data, titles and years that the author gained through research and precisely recorded. The second part of the monographic text reflects the musical composition of Ladislav Burlas and the third reflects publishing activities in relation to his musical composition and scientific work. Both of them are also written in narrative style and have a form of clear and easy to read text. Despite the fact that the life story of Ladislav Burlas is not yet finished and still retains a certain movement, since he is still a creative person, it must be said that the author's summary is precisely and consistently drawn up and adapted. The author concludes with the idea that "the art of insisting on steady values and ethos that lasts from generation to generation but at the same time live until high age with the fingers of the pulse of the time – this is probably the secret of a successful and fulfilled life". And this is what an example of Ladislav Burlas teaches us.

To conclude, the publication dedicated to Ladislav Burlas, edited by Slávka Kopčáková, is a valuable contribution to the history of the Slovak musical culture, full of valuable historical and systematic information and knowledge, it does not only have a feature of retrospective remembrance of the past, but also reflects historical events and movements leading to the state of musical culture as we know it today. "A trouble-free world has never existed and does not exist. People's positives and negatives still dominate the world. Preference of positive thinking, the principle of creativity and artistic ethics has always broken through – if not now, then in the historical review of musical-cultural activities and creative acts in music", adds Ladislav Burlas (p. 122).

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