

OD USHIĆENJA DO PROFESIONALNOG USPEHA

From Exhilaration to Expertise

U aprilu je beogradska publika imala priliku da vidi Aleksandra Damjanovića, direktora pariskog Konzervatorijuma „Hektor Berlioz“, kao dirigenta, a pariska je u junu slušala njegovu kompoziciju „Iskušenje svetog Antonija“.

In April, a Belgrade audience had the opportunity to see Aleksandar Damjanović, director of the Paris Hector Berlioz Conservatoire, perform as conductor, while a Paris audience heard his composition “The Temptation of St. Anthony” in June.

By Spomenka Jelić

Interesovanje za klasičnu muziku Aleksandra Damjanovića (1958, Beograd), sadašnjeg direktora pariskog Konzervatorijuma „Hektor Berlioz“, počelo je kod njega da se razvija još u ranom detinjstvu. Otac, koji je bio krojač, neobično je voleo klasičnu muziku, a, kako danas priča njegov sin Aleksandar, tu ljubav je stekao Kikindi, u vreme kada je učio krojački zanat, i kad je, među ostalim, naučio tečno da govori nemački i mađarski, što ga je prilično zbližilo s kulturom Zapadne Evrope i muzikom, posebno simfonijskom.

Očev san bio je da se njegovi sinovi bave muzikom i taj sam san ispunio ja - kaže Aleksandar Damjanović. Moj stariji brat Slobodan Damjanović je pisac (završio je filozofiju) i podsetiće da je njegov poslednji roman „Crni zmaj“ u izdanju Srpske knjige, objavljen pre dve godine. I mene i brata roditelji su ohrabivali u svemu što pripada svetu umetnosti. Moje obrazovanje je počelo u beogradskoj muzičkoj školi „Vatroslav Lisinski“, gde sam učeći sviranje na klaviru, napi-

An interest in music was extant in the family of Aleksandar Damjanović (born in Belgrade in 1958), now director of the Paris-based Hector Berlioz Conservatoire, from his early childhood. His father, who was a tailor, had a deep love of classical music, and, as his son Aleksandar set out, this love emerged when he was learning his trade in Kikinda, where among other things, he learned German and Hungarian, which, in turn, brought him closer to the music of western Europe, especially symphony music.

It was father's dream that his sons should have something to do with music and I have fulfilled his dream, says Aleksandar Damjanović. My older brother, Slobodan Damjanović, is a writer (he completed his studies in philosophy) and his latest novel “Crni Zmaj” (Black Dragon) was published by Srpska Knjiga two years ago. My parents encouraged both me and my brother to take up activities belonging to the world of music.

My education began at Belgrade's Vatroslav Lisinski music school, where I studied piano playing and where I wrote my first compositions. Unfortunately, I lost them, but I did keep those I wrote at the Josip Slavenski secondary music school. I was so enthusiastic about music that I proceeded to write compositions similar to those I was playing at the time. This was the primary motive for my opting to study composition later on.

His exhilaration - and fascination with music - brought Aleksandar Damjanović to Paris, where he entered the composition department in 1979 at the Conservatoire and graduated with honors in 1983 - Premier Prix ? l'unanimité. At the time, he was the first Serb to complete composition studies at the Paris Conservatoire (others before him had gone there for post graduate and graduate studies).

But, before that, Aleksandar had completed parallel studies at two different departments at the Belgrade Music Academy - composition under Professor Vasilije Mokranjac and conducting under maestro Živojin Zdravković. It so happened that about that time he became one of the music editors of the Students' Cultural Center program and then joined a group that studied the Vienna manner of conducting under maestro Borislav Pašćan. It was then that he joined the orche-

Zdravkovića. Nekako istovremeno dogodilo se da postane jedan od muzičkih urednika programa Studentskog kulturnog centra, zatim i da se priključi grupi koja je sa maestrom Borislavom Pašćanom izučavala „becki metod“ dirigovanja te je tada formiran i orkestar Mladi filharmoničari Beograda (koja danas nosi Pašćanovo ime). Ipak, željan proširivanja svojih muzičkih vidika, Aleksandar je sve to napustio i krenuo u Pariz.

Prijemni je bio prilično težak i te je godine prošlo samo nas četvoro - jedna Japanka, Italijan, Amerikanac i ja. Još za vreme studija napisao sam više kompozicija koje su izvedene, snimljene i emitovane na Francuskom radiju, priča Damjanović. Kasnije, moja dela su počela da se izvode i izvan Francuske, u Italiji i Engleskoj. Veliko ohrabrenje osetio sam kad sam prvi put pobedio na jednom takmičenju. Bilo je to na Međunarodnom konkursu kompozitora Andrea Žolive održanom u Parizu 1987. godine. Jedanaest godina kasnije osvojio sam specijalnu nagradu na takmičenju ARTAMA u Češkoj za kompoziciju „Christmas Carol“.

Ni svoje dirigentsko iskustvo, koje je još u Beogradu započeo, Aleksandar Damjanović nije napuštao, naprotiv, stalno ga je nadograđivao novim saznanjima. Već po završetku Konzervatorijuma 1983. dobio je mesto dirigenta hora Opere u Renu, a paralelno je dirigovao i Orkestrom grada Rena (kasnije Orkestrom pokrajine Bretanje) kao glavni gostujući dirigent. Beogradska publika imala je priliku da ga vidi upravo kao dirigenta u aprilu ove godine, u predvečerje Uskrsa, kada je u sali Kolarčeve zadužbine orkestrom Gudači svetog Đorda izveo delo Jozefa Hajdna „Sedam reči Hristovih“. Neko vreme se zadržao u svom rodnom gradu, gde, kako kaže, uvek uživa u druženju sa prijateljima i rođacima, a zatim se vratio pariskim direktorskim dužnostima. U junu dirigent madam Rut Šrajner sa svojim je orkestrom pred pariskom publikom izvela njegovu kompoziciju „Iskušenje svetog Antonija“.

of Young Philharmonics of Belgrade (the orchestra now bears Pašćan's name). Nevertheless, desiring to broaden his musical horizons, Aleksandar left everything and went to Paris.

The entrance exam was rather difficult and only four of us passed that year - a Japanese girl, one Italian, one American and I. I wrote several compositions during my studies that were recorded and broadcast on French radio, recalls Damjanović. Later, my works began to be performed outside France - in Italy and England. I felt great encouragement after I won my first competition. This was the International Competition of Composer André Jolivet in Paris in 1987. Eleven years later, I won the special prize for my composition “Christmas Carol” at the ARTAMA competition in the Czech Republic.

Composer and conductor Aleksandar Damjanović expresses his love of music also by starting or founding new festivals and orchestras in France. Thus, in 1993, he founded the ARSIS music society - a vocal theater - with which he performs medieval music on stage. Serbian and Byzantine music figure high on the repertoire. When he was the Saint Gregoire School principal in Bretagne in 1994, in addition to launching a music season there, he founded the La Camerata Gregoriana chamber orchestra as well as the Festival des Arts. Later in 2001, he started another international festival in France called Voix Melées (Mixed Voices), at which performers from Serbia participate on a regular basis.

Aleksandar Damjanović did not relinquish his conducting, which he had begun in Belgrade. Quite the contrary, he continued to improve it with the new knowledge he was acquiring. Upon completion of his studies at the Conservatoire in 1983, he was appointed conductor of the Rennes Opera choir and parallel to this he conducted the city of Rennes orchestra (later the orchestra of the province of Bretagne) as the chief visiting conductor.

The Belgrade audience had the opportunity to see him perform precisely in this capacity in April this year on the eve of Easter Sunday, as he conducted Joseph Haydn's “The Seven Words of Christ” with the stringed instruments of the St. George orchestra.

For a time, he remained in his native city, where, as he said, he enjoyed being with friends and relatives, and then returned to his duties as conductor in Paris.

In June, conductor Ruth Schreiner performed his composition entitled “The Temptation of St. Anthony” with her orchestra in Paris.

Aleksandar Damjanović



sao i prve kompozicije, Nisam ih nažalost sačuvala, međutim one iz srednje škole („Josip Slavenski“) jesam. Ushićenje muzikom bilo je toliko da sam želeo i sam da napišem nešto poput kompozicija koje sam svirao. To je bio pravi motiv zašto sam kasnije odabrao da studiram kompoziciju.

Ushićenje i fascinacija muzikom doveli su Aleksandra Damjanovića do Pariza, gde je na Konzervatorijumu 1979. upisao kompoziciju i diplomirao s najvišom ocenom 1983. godine - Premier Prix a l'unanimité. Bio je u to vreme prvi Srbin koji je završio kompoziciju na pariskom Konzervatorijumu (drugi su tamo odlazili na postdiplomske studije i usavršavanje). Ali pre toga, Aleksandar je godinu dana studirao na beogradskoj Muzičkoj akademiji dva odelaka - kompoziciju u klasi profesora Vasilija Mokranjca i dirigovanje u klasi maestra Živojina