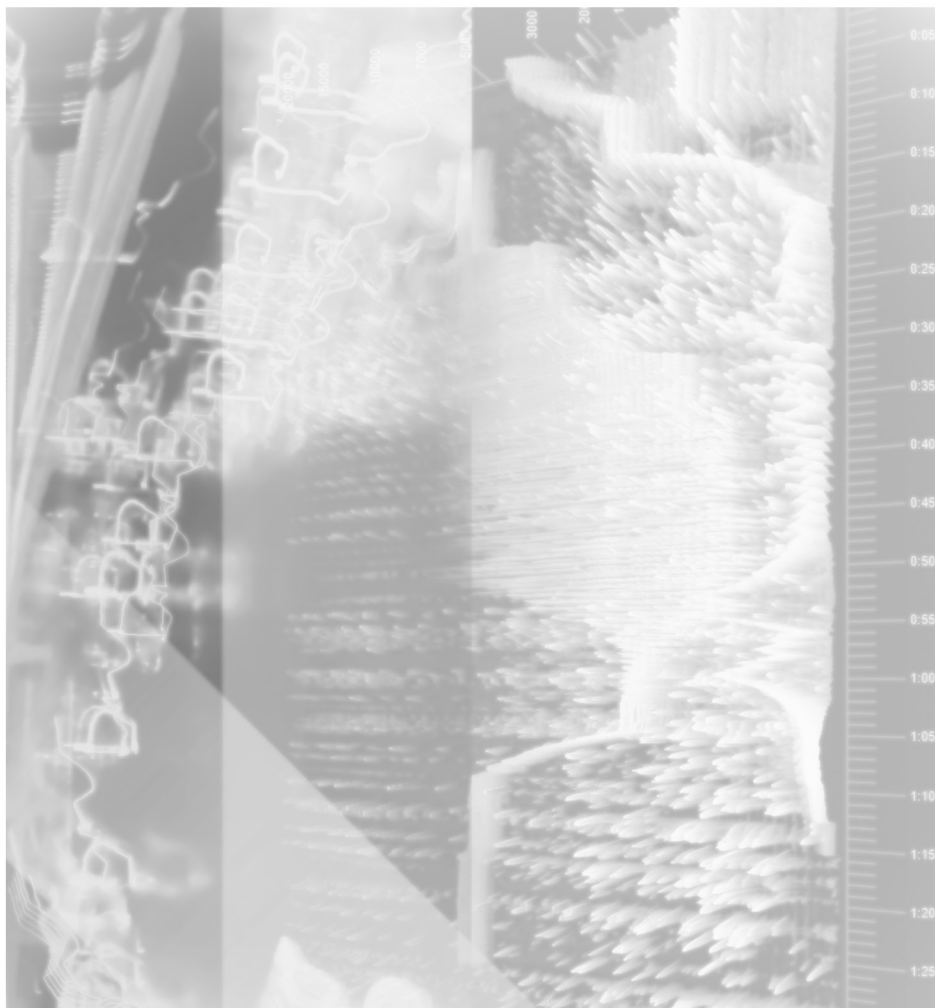


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From *Sound Workshop* to Radio Film: Tracing Serbian Radio Art History Backwards

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FROM SOUND WORKSHOP TO RADIO FILM: TRACING SERBIAN RADIO ART HISTORY BACKWARDS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse the Radio Belgrade’s *Sound Workshop* series and to shed light on the experimental trends that preceded it. In the first part, the author examines the reasons for establishing *Sound Workshop* at the beginning of 1985 and determines, from a chronological and conceptual point of view, its place among other European series of the same type. The second part of the paper explores the initial tendencies and early works of the acoustic art in Radio Belgrade, which preceded the founding of the *Sound Workshop* and became part of its reprise collection. The final part of the paper deals with the first appearance of the terms “radio art”, “radio film” and “bruitism” in the Belgrade cultural circles (early 1920s, zenithist Ljubomir Micić) and the realisations of the first radio collages in the country (late 1930s, writer and director of Radio Belgrade, Veljko Petrović).

Introduction

At the beginning of 1985, on January 6th, the Drama Program of Radio Belgrade launched a new series titled *Sound Workshop* [*Radionica zvuka*], which has brought a breath of fresh air, experimenting, and invention in the world of acoustic creativity for the past forty years. This series has combined an enthusiasm for a long and continuous quest, as old as the media itself, for the grail of a specific radiophonic expression, irreducible to anything else, alongside an effort to establish a unity of words, sounds, noises, and silences, the key elements of radio storytelling, following the creative principle of soundcollaging. The closest and somewhat alternative international terms for such sound creations would be “ars acustica” (Klaus Schöning 1970s) and “radio art” (Weill 1990). Radiophonic pieces are not performed from texts or musical scores, and they cannot be preserved in letters or notations (Trišić 1983, 138). Since they cannot be reconstructed from any written source, they exist as unique entities solely in the medium of sound.

In such a radio series that airs once a week on the Third Program of Radio Belgrade, on Sundays, featuring eight premieres a year, it is apparently not possible to constantly maintain a quality of pure experimentation, but its consistency of distinctly modern and avant-garde approach cannot be denied. At first, one could assume that the sound portraits of particular composers and musicologists offer the opportunity for huge respite, but the type and the very radicality of their style prove otherwise. They simply consist of more speech than some other pieces, but if we allow ourselves the freedom of analogy as listeners, they are more likely to bring to our mind the portraits of Ambroise Vollard, Gertrude Stein, and Juan Gris, rather than classical paintings.

Sound Workshop: Its Emergence and the Reasons Behind it

Radio Belgrade's series *Sound Workshop* was launched relatively early. Its great inspiring predecessors were *Atelier de création radiophonique* (Radio France) and *Studio Akustische Kunst* (WDR Köln) (Schöning 1991), the workspaces opened in 1969. In fact, many renowned experimental radio art series emerged only later – namely, Spanish *Ars Sonora* was launched on October 6th in 1985, Austrian *Kunstradio – Radiokunst* in 1987, *New American Radio* in 1987, Australian *Listening Room* in 1988, and Czech *Radioatelier* in 2003. When in 1989, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) established a network of editorial offices for radio art called *Ars Acustica Group* in Florence, Radio Belgrade joined it owing to *Sound Workshop*, soon getting an opportunity to participate in its activities and to exchange programs with other radio stations free of charge. Even though in the first year of *Sound Workshop*'s existence, two representative

foreign pieces from previous *Prix Italia* were presented to the listeners, *Ars Acustica Group* was a more reliable source which ensured a constant European component of its repertoire.

Preparations for the introduction of *Sound Workshop* were taking place, understandably, in the second half of 1984. After taking into consideration the current international tendencies, Belgrade's excellent experience in experimental sound pieces (resulting in receiving some of the world's prestigious awards), as well as the concept of radio art getting further away from the literary paradigm and closer to documentary drama and sound collage poetics, during one editorial meeting, while being the editor-in-chief of Radio Belgrade Drama Department, I presented an initiative for launching a series dedicated to sound essayism. (Back then we already had a documentary-drama program.) My idea was firmly supported by Neda Depolo, Ivana Stefanović, Slobodan Boda Marković, Miroslav Jokić, and Predrag D. Stamenković. But two types of criticism that were expressed on that occasion are also worth acknowledging, since they still have the power of occasional reemergence.

Convinced in defending the interests of their profession, the editors with backgrounds in literature emphasised that the Drama Program should deal with drama, and not music, since it was established for that, and got its name after it. I had already encountered this type of objection before, since right after I was appointed as the editor-in-chief I was presented with a dilemma: whether the piece *Little That I Remember* [*Ono malo čega se sećam*],¹ created by Ivana Trišić, director Darko Tatić, and sound engineer Marjan Radojčić, and already selected for *Prix Italia* festival, should be equipped and sent to the organiser, if necessary, by the Third Program of Radio Belgrade, or by the producer of this extraordinary achievement, the Drama Program itself, despite the previously taken position that it should not submit a work in the category of "radio music", which is a different type of production. I managed to solve the dilemma easily, which resulted in the 1983 *Prix Italia* Award, given to the real producer of this piece, the Drama Program of Radio Belgrade. I was also fully aware that the very concept "radio drama", or, even better, "radio play", creatively expanded in recent years and decades, encompassing some previously non-specific areas. Nevertheless, *The Little I Remember* was not a music piece, but rather a collage made of music, speech, and sounds, created according to the musical principle of unifying fragments into a new piece. Those kinds of sound workshop broadcasts were also created and sent to festivals by similar Drama programs abroad, since only them, just like in our case, had the most modern equipment and highly trained staff on their radio stations, which is a prerequisite for these sophisticated sound syntheses.

Another critical approach, adopted by some directors as well, dealt with good tradition. Since the Drama Program had previously had success in the genre of radiophonic compositions, most often created by Arsenije Jovanović, one should only continue embracing inventive ideas of promising and already accomplished authors when they sporadically appear. This correct statement could easily lead to the unfounded negation

1 More on this composition in Maglov 2025a.

of the need for the aforementioned genre to be supported and systematically nurtured within the framework of a new, special series, intended for the production of musical radiophonic collages and other types of sound research. In essence, it dealt with legitimising a prestigious radio artistic domain, a move that was about to raise the standard of the repertoire to a highly competitive level, both in Yugoslavia and abroad.

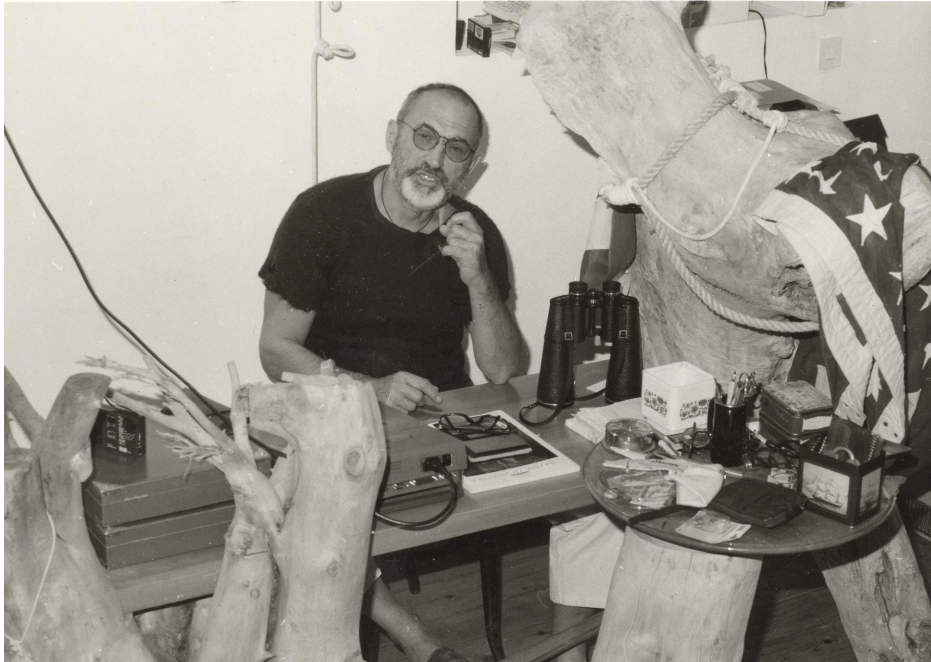


Figure 1. Arsenije Jovanović © RTS Program Archive.

The editorial discussion ended with my conclusion that the decision was a purely editorial matter and that I, as then-current editor, should take full responsibility. Even if there were any risks involved, they paid off very quickly in an undeniably excellent series that its first editor, Ivana Stefanović, named *Sound Workshop*, thus materializing it practically from one timely idea. The series soon became, and throughout time has only confirmed to be, the most representative one broadcast on Radio Belgrade. Consequently, in 2001, editors Predrag D. Stamenković and Miroslav Jokić established “Sound Workshop Days”, during which the most recent works from annual productions were presented and discussed by authors, radio critics, literary professionals, intellectuals, and other Radio Belgrade contributors. On the occasion of its 20th anniversary, in 2005, a compilation of *Sound Workshop* selected editions, coupled with some earlier pieces that preceded, was released.²

However, the most convincing evidence of the creative quality of *Sound Workshop* were the awards and recognitions in international competitions: *Prix Italia* (twice, one *special mention*); *Premios Ondas*, Barcelona (twice); *New York Radio Art Festival*

² 20th Anniversary of “*Sound Workshop of Drama Program*” Radio Belgrade, 2005. Belgrade: Radio Television of Serbia.

(twice); *Bienalderadio*, Mexico City (three times); *International Radio Festival*, Tehran (twice); *WDR Acustica International*, Cologne; *Palma Ars Acustica* (honourable mention), *Soundscape Festival*, Barcelona; *International Radio Festival in Rust*, and *Slabbesz Prize*, Austria. *Sound Workshop* was also awarded two Yugoslav prizes for best shows on *The Week of Radio* in Ohrid and four awards on FEDOR – regional Festival of Documentary Radiophony in Belgrade, which had its “music feature” category.

Some of the most prominent authors who have contributed to *Sound Workshop* in the previous 40 years were Arsenije Jovanović, Ivana Stefanović, Vladan Radovanović, Slobodan Boda Marković, Ivana Trišić, Darko Tatić, Olga Brajović, Aleksandar Protić, and Jovana Stefanović. All of them received international awards. Petar Teslić, Predrag D. Stamenković, Jasmina Zec, Bojana Žižić, and Ana Kotevska were also praised for their high level of engagement and creative achievement. In the genre of radiophonic compositions writers are not that common and prevailing, and the crucial *axis* turns to be *composer-director-sound engineer*. It is, therefore, essential to mention the most prestigious ones who belong to the third category: Zoran Jerković, Marjan Radojčić, and Petar Marić, as well as Slobodan Stanković, Aleksandar Stojković, Zoran Uzelac, and Milan Filipović, in the following generations.



Figure 2. Predrag Stamenković, Zvonimir Kostić i Boda Marković © RTS Program Archive.

In the circle of the aforementioned authors, Vladan Radovanović was recognized for his distinct aesthetic approach. As a composer and the head of the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade, founded in 1972, he embarked on the path of generating and processing sounds from their foundations, by assembling them from aliquot tones and disassembling them using filters, or by means of vocoder voice distortions etc. In a conversation with musicologist Marija Maglov, he confidently emphasised that *Sound Workshop* does not deserve that name, since its audio equipment, as opposed to one that the Electronic studio has at its disposal, cannot truly cultivate the sound, but rather

record existing noises and use ready-made effects (Maglov 2022, 269). However, his contribution to *Sound Workshop* is substantial and he even symbolically anticipated it, since in 1984, when there were ongoing discussions about it, he worked on *The Eternal Lake* [*Malo večno jezero*], employing incredibly long and complex montages, eventually winning *Gianfranco Zaffrani Prix Italia* in the category of "radio music". Other authors did not have such an exclusive approach, but all of them, like Radovanović, inclined to modern and avant-garde poetics, embracing the collage technique, radical montage, citations, juxtapositions, simultaneities, polyphonies, interruptions of suggestive narration, abruptness, sharp cuts and construction emphases.



Figure 3. Vladan Radovanović © RTS Program Archive.

Ivana Stefanović, the first music editor of *Sound Workshop* (1985–1990) understood that the series exceeded the laboratory framework and that it opened it up to poetic heights (cf. Stefanović 1985). As a professional composer, a skilful writer, and a good judge of reliable standards, she was building *Sound Workshop* from its very foundations, establishing a carefully selected but not too narrow circle of its contributors, characterised by a diversity of styles and signatures. It could be concluded that during her editorship, her credo was expressed in the idea that all elements of the *Workshop's* pieces – speech, music, noise, silence – are potentially equally important, and unified following certain musical compositional criteria.

In her book titled *Muzika od ma čega* [*Music Made of Anything*], Ivana Stefanović argued that all fragments of everyday life that have sound properties can make a composition (Stefanović 2010). Although this may sound like an inherently Cagean idea, this American composer actually proclaimed that music made of anything *could* be made by anyone. On the contrary, Ivana Stefanović maintained that music made of

anything could be made only by Someone – the more simplistic and rudimentary a fragment of the soundworld is, the more talented and masterful artist is required to transform it and turn it into Something. She preserved the notions of “art piece” and “intentionality”. In practice, as an editor, she sought and found radiophonic authors of great talent and virtuosity, driven by the desire to experiment, but also to make successful and well-rounded sound creations.

This is precisely the type of radiophonic compositions produced in *Sound Workshop* and awarded for their brilliance that Ivana Stefanović created herself: *Lingua/Phonia/Patria, Metropolita tišine – Stari Ras* ([*The Metropolis of Silence – Ancient Ras*], FEDOR award, Belgrade, 1991 and 1992), *Lacrimosa* (SLABBESZ Prize, Austria, 1993; FEDOR, 1993) and *Veliki Kamen* ([*A Large Stone*], *Prix Italia*, 2017).³ Her extraordinary skills employed in shaping and directing *Sound Workshop* positioned her side by side great producers such as Klaus Schöning (*Studio Akustische Kunst*), Heidi Grundmann (*Kunstradio – Radiokunst*), Pinotto Fava (*Audiobox*, Matera), Helen Thorington (*New American Radio*) and Neda Depolo.



Figure 4. Ivana Stefanović © RTS Program Archive.

The second editor of the series, from 1990 to 2001, was Slobodan Boda Marković, a director and author, who despite having graduated only from a music high school, had a rare and refined talent of recognising what was radiophonically appealing and new. He partly changed the principle of treating all the components of radiophonic expression equally, by switching the focus from music and noise to speech. In search of original

³ For further information on these compositions, see: Stefanović 2010, Veselinović-Hofman 2011, Medić 2012, Kotevska 2015, 2019.

ideas, drafts and synopses, he initiated a broader collaboration with people of letters. However, generally speaking, the tendency of musicalisation of the entire soundworld was preserved. An unwavering and inquisitive spirit, Marković constantly enriched his knowledge of traditional music. He would often bring various records and exclusive recordings of traditional music from faraway countries and cultures he visited, enthusiastically presenting them to listeners and friends. With surrealist sensibility and views as an editor, he privileged the direction of artistic exploration that used Serbian and world folklore and spiritual music heritage in a new, innovative, and surreal way, building fortresses in the air. With his creative engagement, together with writer Đorđe Lebović, he brought to the Drama Program *Prix Rai* from *Prix Italia* festival (*Traganje po pepelu* [*Searching in the Ashes*]) in 1985. As a creator of acoustic collages *Liturgija za jednu običnu ženu* [*A Liturgy For An Ordinary Woman*] and *Bečka grupa* [*Vienna Group*], he brought to *Sound Workshop* in 1989 the JRT *Zvonimir Bajsić Award* for new aesthetic breakthroughs in radiophony, on FEDOR.

Predrag D. Stamenković, a composer and a choirmaster, the founder of the *Choirs Among Frescoes* festival, attempted to achieve a conceptual synthesis of the previous two approaches during his editorship of *Sound Workshop* (2001–2022). Predrag D. Stamenković relied more on professional composers than Boda Marković did, and he drew slightly more from ethnological material and mythical sources of inspiration than Ivana Stefanović. He himself was deeply dedicated to spiritual music, but, just like his predecessors, he did not adjust the repertoire to his personal affinities – it was a matter of nuances among different paths and approaches. As an editor, he conceived a notable retrospective serial *Pioniri radiofonije* [*Pioneers of Radiophony*], in which he introduced the listeners to important early pieces of experimental orientation made in Belgrade, pointing specifically to a series *Ekspерimenti i ostvarenja* [*Experiments and Achievements*], as the *Sound Workshop*'s predecessor. He considered *Sound Workshop* to be in the range of “the most intriguing, the most renowned and the most awarded series of the Drama Program of Radio Belgrade in the world” (RTS – Radio televizija Srbije, 2013). Unlike his predecessors, he had one extra editorial obligation – to plan and produce the participation of *Sound Workshop* in a common European program, EBU *Art's Birthday*, which has been broadcast live since 2005, on January 17th, via satellite. Serbia was represented, among others, by Arsenije Jovanović, Ivana Stefanović, Anja Đorđević, Saša Latinović, Svetlana Maraš, Vladan Radovanović, and Ana Kotevska. Predrag D. Stamenković created several notable radiophonic compositions for *Sound Workshop*, some of which were *Pentominoe* [*Pentominoes*], *Zdravice* [*Toasts*], and *Izranjanje* [*The Emergence*].

Starting from 2022, the series was produced by Dragan Mitrić, a music editor with considerable experience, and a proven composer of special music for radio dramas. He would undoubtedly, had the conditions been better, further pursued a steady line of editorial policy, which had already proved its excellence. However, neither good editors, nor talented authors, with constantly renewing circles of contributors, not even the continuous flow of awards at international sound festivals, could resist the steady, now two-decades-long decline in culture funds, and the impact it had on the Drama

Program of Radio Belgrade. Paradoxically, it happened at the time when Radio Belgrade was being transformed into a public service, the aim of which should precisely be supporting and encouraging cultural, educational, scientific, drama, documentary, and musically artistic parts of programs! For instance, the number of *Workshop*'s premieres per year, namely, the new, original works, realised exclusively in the medium of sound, was initially eight, and then it dropped to five and less. "Sound Workshop Days" used to be organised once per year, then biennially, and it has been a long time since they have been organised at all. The legendary Studio 10, in which Radio Belgrade had produced demanding projects and organised mini-concerts even before the Second World War, was lost, and a newly built drama studio has slightly weaker equipment, which means that sometimes, even though rarely, additional equipment from Studio 6 is required. The series has, since its foundation, never had the possibility for commissions, nor foreign artists' guest appearances, and throughout time, trips to international festivals and conferences have been reduced, which has resulted in poorer opportunities for contacts and collaborations with radio colleagues from abroad.

In fact, the productions in the genre of *Ars Acustica* have always, regardless of time and place, required more money, more time, and more advanced studio equipment than any other type of production. This is probably one of the reasons why some of the globally best experimental series in this genre, as well as some of the previously mentioned ones, *Atelier de création radiophonique*, *Listening Room*, *New American Radio*, gradually ceased to exist. Belgrade *Sound Workshop* managed to endure, mainly due to the fact that since its beginnings it has operated in not so favourable conditions, constantly overcoming numerous obstacles and challenges.

Early Belgrade Sound Explorations

Sound Workshop emerged in continuity and in organic connection with early experimental tendencies that gained prominence on Radio Belgrade in the middle of the 1960s. The main representatives of these tendencies, then young artists, have for several decades brought an extraordinary quality to the repertoire of the Drama Program, and they also managed to leave a significant mark on *Sound Workshop*, during a slightly longer period than its first phase. Due to the fact that in the production of eleven other series of the Drama Program, a considerable number of radioart productions has been accumulated throughout time. In the very beginning *Sound Workshop* effortlessly occupied 44 yearly terms of program schemes with its quite adequate reprises. The continuity also dealt with the production framework: it was an ever-producing radio drama facility, to some extent divided in the 1960s and 1970s into different radio channels, implying that, for example, when one said that *Experiments and Achievements* was a Third Program series, it meant precisely that it was created by efforts of the not quite centralised drama editorial board, which, following the requirements of cultural and avant-garde concepts, aired it on the Third Program.

Formationally, radio drama artists had for a long time been distributed in specifically distinguished radio waves departments. For instance, Darko Tatić was placed among a group of directors of The Second Program of Radio Belgrade, together with Danilo Nikolić, an editor, a playwright, and later an eminent writer. They would work on the same project together with proofreaders, actors, and sound engineers, organising reading rehearsals and recordings in Studio 10. Another small group was formed on the First Program of Radio Belgrade, etc.

As a newly hired journalist on the Third program, I personally had a chance to witness how everything operated in the early 1970s. At the end of each year, a special editorial meeting would be organised with an agenda of discussing a selection of drama premieres for the upcoming year, previously printed in the form of around twenty brief synopses. During these meetings, some of the attendees would ask questions, or they would express certain objections and provide short suggestions or even sharp critiques. The epithet 'thirdprogramish' was the key one. The editorial boards tried to adjust the repertoire so that the radio dramas would be suitable for the conception of the program on which they would be broadcast. Radio artists kept this in mind, still creating following their intuition and aesthetic standards. The idea that centralisation was necessary to a certain degree is shown in the fact that, at the beginning of the 1960s, the works of drama were broadcast with a general program announcement: "Radio-Television Belgrade: Radio Drama Department." Although it had some persistent supporters, such as the tenacious Neda Depolo, the Drama Program as a consistent and separate project, which gathered many professionals required for radio drama production at one place, was only realised in 1976. Its first editor-in-chief was Gojko Miletić, and the new reorganisation contributed to new standards – professional editorial discussions about all listened premiers, a constant sharpening of criteria and an undeniably more advanced level of production.

The series *Experiments and Achievements* and, the preceding one, *Drama posle ponoći* ([*Drama After Midnight*], The First Program), brought, together with a wider program selection, the early productions of Serbian radio art, and it would be worthwhile to delve into the period when they were made, approximately from 1961 to 1974. The authors represented in the series *Experiments and Achievements* were: theatre critic Vladimir Stamenković, editor-dramaturg Neda Depolo, editor and playwright Aleksandar Obrenović, writers Mirjana Stefanović, Gordana Boškov and Vida Ognjenović, directors Petar Teslić, Boda Marković, Arsenije Jovanović and Darko Tatić, composers Vojislav Voki Kostić, Srđan Barić, Dušan Radić, Enriko Josif, Zoran Hristić, among many others, and Vuk Vučo, a writer, and series producer, represented far more often than others.⁴

However, some of the stars that brought the brightest light to radiophonic art were soon recognised for their talent, perseverance, and aesthetic achievements. Summarising the 1960s, critic Đorđe Đurđević emphasised that there emerged a tendency of

4 A full list of works in the series is given in Donić and Rajić 2004, 97–106.

experimenting with the sound, supported by some unprecedented technical advancements – portable tape recorders, multi-channel mixers, stereophony – which enabled sophisticated sound explorations as well as complex, jump montages, concluding: “This distinctive approach is especially characteristic of a directorial trio made up by Boda Marković, Arsa Jovanović, and Darko Tatić” (Đurđević 1987, 10). Bearing in mind that Đurđević was by no means alone in his assessment, we could claim that 1961 was *annus mirabilis*, since in that year all these three exquisite artists started their prolific and long-lasting engagement in Radio Belgrade. Marković and Tatić were officially employed, whereas for constant success of Arsenije Jovanović, who was engaged outside of the editorial office of Drama Program, close collaboration with Neda Dapolo was of immense importance, since she was the editor who openly encouraged new radiophonic tendencies as well as sound experimenting. The series *Experiments and Achievements* indeed had an elitist, but a very demanding concept, so its repertoire only partly included the pieces which anticipated contemporary *Ars Acustica*. It further developed into three contemporary series that belonged to the Drama Program production: these are *Radio igra* [Radio Play], *Vrtovi poezije* [The Gardens of Poetry] and *Radionica zvuka* [Sound Workshop]. Understandably, each of these series could bring excellent results – it is only a matter of differences in terms of genre and the degree of musicalisation of all components of radio expression (cf. Ćirić 2015).

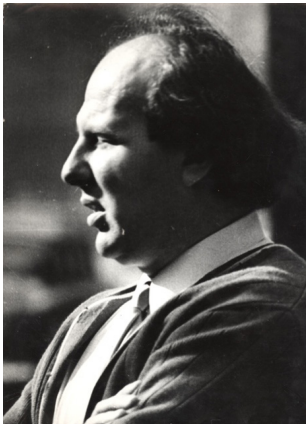


Figure 5. Darko Tatić © RTS Program Archive.

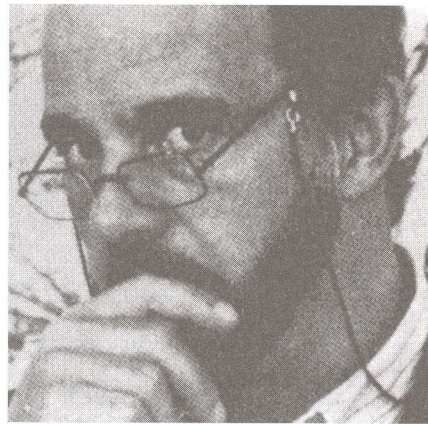


Figure 6. Vuk Vučo © RTS Program Archive.

To put it briefly, considering early radio plays, Vuk Vučo was our most prolific author, with his imaginative reworkings of foreign literature pieces and witty improvisations with groups of terms in Vuk Karadžić's *Dictionary*. The authorial creative contribution of Arsenije Jovanović should also be emphasised. In his piece, *Đavolov pečat* ([*The Devil's Stamp*], 1970) he made use of dark, sombre sounds, allusively creating the atmosphere of pogrom. The documentary basis of it consisted of the medieval chronicles of witch trials coupled with records of dogmatic debates concerning casting spells, demons and signs of being possessed by an evil force. Another supreme contribution

was made by Petar Teslić, who, in 1970 and 1971 put in the ether all four radio plays by Peter Handke, among which the fourth one, *The Wind and the Sea*, dealt with nature phonography, as if to express the author's fascination by the world of sounds and noises, similar to that of John Cage. All these four neo-avant-garde texts were presented almost right after their publication, owing to the Third Program's modernist orientation and the enthusiasm of Petar Teslić, partly rooted in the German language and culture.

Another type of works, released in *Experiments and Achievements*, dealt with transforming poetry into a radiophonic act and event. A part of Serbian early sound experiments consisted of innovative artists' attempts to create new radiophonic poetry by introducing and using all powers of inspiration and technology, discovering previously unknown order of lines, recomposing their rhythm and melody, and forming different shapes of acoustic reliefs by means of stereophonic placements of different plans. Boda Marković was the first to embark in the open and, in October 1961, he directed *Orfejev put ka svetlosti* [*Orpheus Path to Light*], his own adaptation of Dušan Matic's work. Arsenije (during that period and longer: Arsa) Jovanović had another poetry-related adaptation of one Matic's work – *Laža i paralaza noći* ([*The Liar and Arch-Liar of the Night*], dramatization of Neda Depolo), as well as in the series *Drama posle ponoći* ([*Drama After Midnight*], The First Program, 1964). In 1962, Darko Tatić was given a very demanding project of dramatisation and direction of Assyrian and Babylonian *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, whose place in the history of world literature was guaranteed long ago, and the realisation was an example of his early brilliant mastery. Marković, Jovanović, and Tatić, always balancing between being at poetry's service and using poetry at their own service, were coming back, without longer breaks, to this genre, assisting it with their talent of providing sound to poetry lines, to touch cosmic strings and transcend toward metaphysical and otherworldly. Interestingly, all three of them dedicated most of their experimental strivings in the field of radiophonic expression to the poetry of Vasko Popa and Dušan Matic. A great deal of other artists, especially after the series *The Gardens of Poetry* was launched, left their own mark in this genre, often with quite satisfying, but never outstanding results. The biggest breakthrough, however, was made, if we take a little glimpse into the future, by Olga Brajović, an experienced director of great skills and masterful perfection, with a slightly more traditional signature, who in 1985, during the very first year of *Sound Workshop*, astonished everyone with the innovative piece *Ulrik* [*The Howl*], based on Alen Ginsberg's poetry. The *Premio Ondas* prize given to that amazing, dramatically-orchestrated piece, crowned the previous Belgrade's quest for a perfect synthesis of poetry and radiophony.

The third type of production, which was employed in a series *Experiments and Achievements*, was investigative-essayism. It preceded *Sound Workshop* and partly fitted into its reprise collection. However, among the production pieces that we can consider an anticipation, there are only a few that can be claimed to belong to the series repertoire and to *Drama After Midnight*, so the perception gets inevitably broader. *Divinus Circulus* (July, 1966) a piece by Vuk Vučo, editor of *Experiments and Achievements*, is an early example of a sound play which eliminates the verbal element at the account of

combining music and different noises. Despite reducing himself to non-verbal means, he is trying to tell a story – the one about the human life cycle, an eternal cycle of birth and death. Therefore, these important 19 minutes of Serbian radiophony start with water drops, choir music, a thunderstorm and a baby crying, and they end with a clock striking, drawing water from a well, a woman's croak and a baby crying. The proof of how serious the approach was in order to realise this not-so-original, radiophonic idea, is the very team selection, which consisted of composer Vojislav Voki Kostić, sound engineer Milosav Mitrović and, a foley artist with a special mission, Milorad Radulaški.

However, in early explorations that led to *Sound Workshop*, and later systematically developed and spread under its wing, Arsenije Jovanović was undoubtedly the first and the most important figure (cf. Maglov 2025b). He appeared in the early 1960s as the director of Becket's plays: radio drama *Everything That Falls* was broadcast on November 6, in 1961 as a part of *Drama After Midnight* (First Program, Monday, 00.05), and *Reči i muzika* [*Words and Sounds*] was aired on the first day the Third Program of Radio Belgrade was launched, on November 10, in 1965, and it had a character of editorial manifesto. Initially, Jovanović applied his skills as a director to radio drama as a literary form, favouring the avant-garde approach, the one that breaks with the conventions of a traditional "invisible theatre". In the second phase, however, Jovanović composed his own authentic radiophonic pieces, in which his concept is more dominant than any type of materials and backgrounds, organised as music structures. In 1967, with *Igra za jednu Galiolu* [*A Play for One Galiola*], Jovanović became the founder of the genre of radiophonic compositions in Serbian culture, as well as a relentless autochthonous radio art researcher, who would become internationally renowned, receiving a great number of festival awards and a very good reputation of his works in the whole world. In his early collage compositions *Galilej potok* [*Galilei's Stream*, 1970], *Vilini vetrovi* ([*The Fairies' Winds*], 1971), and *Krajputaši* ([*Roadside Tombstones*], 1971), he made his creations of music-sound-speech, based on folklore – curses, spells, lyrical poems, and epitaphs on roadside tombstones, drawing from that material arche-sounds of an eerie, mystical, and metaphysical quality. This will occasionally still remain the source of his inspiration, but in Jovanović's thematic opus there are also purely urban, natural, and faunophonic motifs. In *Resavska pećina* ([*Resava Cave*], 1977) he lured music from stalactites and stalagmites that had been formed by the patient work of nature for more than thousands of years. Everything he incorporated into his new sound workshop pieces – whether natural and artificially produced sound, or an authentic documentary recording, highly important in some of his works, or music, literary fragments – was merely some material for free rhythmic metamorphoses, and not a source, prototype or work model. Of all Serbian radiophony masters, with the exception of professional composers, he most closely followed the compositional principle of integrating elements into a whole, and came closest to the forms and parameters of music as such. Jovanović contributed immensely to the creation of history of radio art in the 1970s, receiving two *Prix Italia* awards for his extraordinary work (*Roadside Tombstones*, *Resava Cave*) as well as two *Premios Ondas* (*Resava Cave* and *Duž duge, duge ulice* [*Along*

the Long Long Street). The latter was the only one that he gave the subtitle “radiophonic composition” to, probably because it was based on Wolfgang Borchert’s novel, which made it more necessary to precisely define his true nature of a radical researcher in the field of sound expression (1979). Jovanović would continue for decades on, until the end of his life in 2025, to create radiophonic compositions (80 in total), bringing to the Drama Program awards from newly-established festivals all around the world, but the significance of his work could no longer historically be the same.

The early opus of Vladan Radovanović includes a radio drama *Odlazak* ([*Departure*], 1966–1973). Radovanović arranged the text for this piece as a score, treating words like notes. Six voices were positioned right opposite the audience, and they occasionally interrupted the succession of musical dissonances by uttering insignificant things, creating the absurd atmosphere. The voices, manipulated by filters and exposed to electronic transformations, were marked for the intrusion time, the approximate duration, dynamics and spatial displacements. The ambience was stereophonically shaped as “a hemisphere, a starry dome replica, and a space for dream visions” (Tatić 1978, 48). Fading into depths symbolised real departure and vanishing. This piece certainly marks the history of Belgrade’s experimental tendencies, but the key radiophonic piece is *The Eternal Lake*, with its working title *Snevač* [*A Dreamer*], that Radovanović created later in 1984, the year when *Sound Workshop* was conceived.⁵

The emergence of Serbian *Ars Acustica* was certainly influenced by knowledge of avant-garde tendencies worldwide, such as the emergence of *musique concrète* in Radio France (1948) as well as electronic music in Radio Cologne (1951). It was also influenced by John Cage, the Vienna Group, a German new radio drama (*Neue Hörspiel*), etc. In his book *Ispreturana autobiografija* [*A Jumbled Autobiography*], Arsenije Jovanović emphasised the influence of a book by Pierre Schaeffer, the founder of research studio *Club d’Essai* and a developer of *musique concrète*, the school of thinking and composing that utilised radio and a magnetic tape, a great technical invention of the 1940s, treating them as instruments (Jovanović 2025). To such music, composed of recorded sounds from nature, belongs the radiophonic work *Poslanica ptica* [*The Epistle of Birds*] by Ivana Stefanović, which was awarded the *Jean Antoine-Triomphe Prize* in 1974 in Monte Carlo. The exclusive material of this radiophonic composition consists of a bird song, arranged into a rounded music collage piece, by means of complex and finely crafted editing (by sound engineer Marjan Radojičić), which could not have been possible to make at that time outside of a radio studio due to its sophisticated technique. The composition allows for not only a nice but also a powerful aesthetic experience, since it is rich in tensions and resolutions, and it resists relying on the appealing effect provoked by these “dear creatures”. This was a magnificent start for Ivana Stefanović, whose most prominent and most successful radiophonic pieces would be produced within the coming years and decades.

⁵ More about *The Eternal Lake* see in: Veselinović 1991, Srećković 2011b, Neimarević 2012, Maglov 2020, 2022, Emmery 2021.

The two out of three aforementioned great experimenters and artists, Darko Tatić and Boda Marković, also emerged as the authors of sound collage creations, though they did not belong to this particular period of 1961–1974, Tatić with his pieces *Hydrodialectica alias aque rondo* (1977) and *Metastaza* ([*Metastasis*], 1987), and Marković with *Dozivanja* ([*Calling*], 1980), *A Liturgy for an Ordinary Woman* (1989) and *Vienna Group* (1989). These authors were primarily dedicated to radical changes and transformation of the very form of radio drama, achieving amazing success and recognition with that artistic engagement.

From “Radio Film” to the First Serbian Sound Workshop

Looking back, we slowly approach the inter-war period and all those still insufficiently known and researched phenomena that had anticipated Serbian *Ars Acustica*, even though they are not directly related to the history of this movement. For instance, a key text by Ljubomir Micić *Šimi na groblju latinske četvrti – Zenitistički Radio-Film od 17 sočinenija* [*Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Cemetery – a Zenithist Radio-Film in 17 Pieces*] has been analysed in literature and art studies exclusively as a narrative literary structure, and not as a template for radio performance, which is the perspective that opens up not only due to its title, but due to its inherent properties as well. Micić’s terminology, which made him, clearly without his intention, relevant in today’s discussions about the concepts of “radio art” and “radio film”, together with the constitutiveness of noise (*bruit*) for the genre of radiophonic compositions, has not contributed to general emergence of topics such as “Micić and radio” or “Zenithism and radio”. Similarly, the pioneering radiophonic collages by writer Veljko Petrović were not even by association linked to anything contemporary, which is why there remains a complete discontinuity between them and the real boom of radioartistic experiments during the 1960s. The first radio art experiments between the wars therefore require even more thorough exploration and their introduction into the field of dialogue and interconnections.

The beginning of the 1920s was the time of Zenithism, an avant-garde movement founded and led by poet Ljubomir Micić, who deserves our attention, among other things, because of his undeniable leadership in the field of discovering, celebrating, and understanding the artistic radiophony. The striking dates would make any researcher afraid of possible exaggeration and not seeing things clearly. Namely, the Dutch radio station PCGG was the first to start its regular broadcasting schedule, in November 1919, whereas the American broadcaster KDKA (Pittsburgh) announced itself in November 1920, by reporting on the presidential elections. BBC was launched in November 1922. The Belgrade-Rakovica radio station was among the earliest in Europe, officially starting on October 2, 1924.

However, Ljubomir Micić published his first texts on radio art in 1921, whereas his fiction piece *Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Cemetery – a Zenithist Radio-Film in 17 Pieces* was released in March, 1922 (Micić 1922a, 13–15). At that time, in Serbia and in most of Europe, there were neither radio stations nor receivers. There were only



ПРЕТЕЧА РАДИО БЕОГРАДА: ИНЖЕЊЕР МИХАИЛО СИМИЋ ПОДЕШАВА УРЕЂАЈЕ ПРЕДАЈНИКА У РАКОВИЦИ ПРВЕ РАДИО ТЕЛЕГРАФСКЕ СТАНИЦЕ 1924. ГОДИНЕ

Figure 7. Engineer Mihailo Simić adjusting the transmitter equipment at the first radio telegraph station in Rakovica, 1924. © RTS Program Archive.

terms of “radio art” and “radio film”. It is widely accepted that the first term was coined and introduced into wider use by Kurt Weill in 1925, in his text *Possibilities for Absolute Radio Art* (Weill 1925/1990). It might have been so, but Micić, in his part of the triptych titled *The Manifesto of Zenithism* (coauthored by Ivan Gol and Boško Tokin), signed on June 12th, 1921, insisted, in the apodictic manner of avant-garde proclamations, that the zenithist word that he equated with the art, must borrow from modern communications medium, the radio, its attributes of magic, electrification and telegraphic conciseness:

Zenithist magical word = Radio Station A
Man’s fluid feeling and twitch = Radio Station B
Zenithist word must be electrification
Zenithist work must be a radiogram. (Micić, Gol, Tokin 1921, 14).

The following year, on July 14th, 1922, a special issue of the magazine *Zenit* [*Zenith*], printed on a single sheet, was published in Munich. It consisted, among other things, of a printed text by Micić, titled *Drugi proboj Varvara* ([*The Second Attack of the Bar-*

radio amateurs who passionately listened to the sounds coming across the ocean and from the north of the continent, although only occasionally due to the brevity of programs and the weak signals. Considering the motif of radio found in other writers, Micić could have heard only some metaphors here and there – Mari-netti for instance, coined a word “wire-less imagination” in 1912, and there were some similar hints in lines of Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, and Vicente Huidobro. It was only Khlebnikov who wrote a whole text in 1921, or rather, an outstanding poem called *The Radio of the Future*, which remained unpublished, due to circumstances, until 1927. (Khlebnikov 1921/1927, 392–396).

Should we even consider the literary perspectives of Ljubomir Micić when we discuss experimental radio art, if at the time of publishing his pioneering texts the radio was only emerging, and the experiments were not even on the horizon? The answer is: yes, indeed, at least when dealing with issues such as, for example, establishing the history of today’s relevant

barians], Micić 1922b). One of the constant elements of Micić's program was, evidently, that he was on the side of the barbarianism, which he considered pure, uncorrupted by civilisation and creatively potent. From that point of view, he sought the balkanisation of the supposedly worn out, decadent, and sterile Europe. (Similarly, Miguel de Unamuno advocated the hispanisation of Europe.) With a slogan "No more art", the Serbian zenithist claimed with his raised finger:

Nikola Tesla beat Michelangelo, Kandinski, and Picasso. It was a Serbian genius from the Balkan who discovered wireless telegraphy for humanity. Not Marconi!
Radio = new art! Everything else = lemonade with ice! (ibid.)⁶

Micić further elaborated that Zenithism was a new kind of art that broke with tradition and sentimentality, precisely the kind of art that we need nowadays. Representing the very centre of communication among European avant-garde movements, *Zenit* soon found itself in a position to convey the enthusiastic reaction of the Italian paper *Bullettino quindicinale di Roma* to the aforementioned Micić's words: "RADIO = Arte nuova! RADIO = Arte nuova! Ogni extra non e che limonata al ghiaccio. (The statement by a Serbian poet, Ljubomir Micić, that we want to spread.)" (Micić 1922b, 14).

This does not mean that these quotes serve to transfer the authorship of the term "radio art" from Weill to Micić. They only serve as an indication that such variations of the term emerged since the very beginnings of this new mass media, at least in *Zenit*. Moreover, it should be noted that Micić literally and even graphically equated radio and art, which is close to McLuhan's thesis that the entire medium is a singular message (McLuhan 1971, 41), whereas Marinetti's concept of "Radia" and Weill's "Radiokunst" clearly did not apply to any radio program, but exclusively to the artistic one. However, it is true that in the beginning of any medium, and Micić speaks out precisely at that period, everything that becomes a part of the program provokes an unusually powerful effect, as well as the excitement similar to the aesthetic one.

A metaphor of "radio film" is quite the same. It is hard to find the use of that term in literature, to denote a genre that would precede the one appearing in the title of Micić's text *Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Cemetery – a Zenithist Radio-Film in 17 Pieces* (to put it again: March, 1922). The formal definition of the word was given by Alfred Braun, the director of Radio Berlin, a station that, in the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, had the boldest and the highest quality radioartistic production: "Acoustic film was a term we used in Berlin... for a radio play through its dreamlike, quickly moving sequence of images gliding, jumping, overlapping each other, alternating between close-ups and distance shots blending in and out deliberately transferred the techniques of moving pictures to radio" (as quoted in Schöning 1991, 316). This is precisely the meaning of the term that Ljubomir Micić had in mind. Like other avant-gardists, he accepted the idea of "radiogenicity", defined by a set of specific properties that separate

6 "Radio = Neue Kunst! Alles andere = Limonade mit Eis!"

radio from literature and theatre, providing it the artistic practice *sui generis*. However, he did not show concern that such autonomy could be threatened by the influence of film, since it was by definition an avant-garde medium, an ally in gaining more independence from classical aesthetic norms, and a driving force of modernity. Micić's radio poetics is therefore cinematic, that is, montage-like. In a text with a graphically ambiguous title *Radio film i zenitistička okomica duha* [*Radio film and the Zenithist Vertical of the Spirit*], also made in 1922, Micić posed a rhetorical question: "Can the existence of radiotelegraphy, radio film, radio concert, and radio news be secondary for new poets?" to which he replied: "A radio-film-zenithist vertical of the Spirit is required." (Micić 1923).

In its original meaning, the term "radio film" referred to the procedures of montage, simultaneity, revealing the construction etc., characteristic for (avant-garde) film, applied to the radio artistic domain. However, some of the theoreticians, following production trends, have shifted the meaning of the term towards documentarism and sound recording *en plain air*, outside of studios, in the field, and optically, on film tape, which was technically feasible already at the end of the 1920s. This shift ensured the possibility of editing and the creation of radiophonic documentaries (Dziga Vertov, Walter Ruttmann). However, even the studies whose goal, evident from the titles, is to problematise the history of the term "radio film", do not mention any earlier instance of its use, that would precede Micić's usage (Hourahan 2013, Dotto 2016, Madsen 2018, Dolotova 2025).

Apparently, there is no older text written for radio play than the aforementioned *Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Cemetery*, written at a time when the area of Yugoslavia and much of Europe was yet uninhabited by the sound from the ether. (Time has irrevocably confirmed that it was Micić's crucial work.) With all due caution, it could be stated that Micić created "a radio on the radio" play model, which in the middle and by the end of the 1920s brought many other experiments, both on paper and on radio waves, by Hans Flesch (*Zauberei auf dem Sender*, Flesch 1924), Bertolt Brecht (*Der Lindberghflug*, 1929, see Brecht 1997), and Vladimir Mayakovsky (*Radio-October*, 1935). It is clear that *Shimmy*, essentially, does not conceptually correspond to a type of classical radio drama, whose first example in Europe was *A Comedy of Danger* by Richard Hughes (BBC), performed in 1924. However, its text definitely corresponds well with radio plays *Magic on the Air* by Hans Flesch and *Hello, Here Is Frequency Earth* by Friedrich Bischoff, also from 1924–1928 (according to Born 2015). Avant-garde radio art was apparently not established as a polemic reaction to the classical radio art, but they both emerged and developed simultaneously for a time.

Based on the principle of simultaneity, which Micić considered crucial both for film and radio, *Shimmy* has a collage structure: it is made up of reporters from all the main radio stations in the world, who, one after another – which is "the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" by Ernst Bloch (1932, 8) – report to the central radio station built on top of the Tatlin's Tower, located in the field near Petrograd. Those "reporters" are mostly prominent avant-garde artists of that epoch – Mayakovsky reporting from

Moscow, Karel Teige from Prague, Yvan Gol from Paris, Vladimir Tatlin from Petrograd, Ljubomir Micić from Zagreb, Filippo T. Marinetti from Milan, Valery Polyansky from Warsaw. All of them spread news of the success of Zenithism and new art, they report on famine in Russia, the power and beauty of aeroplanes, the triumphs of Charlie Chaplin, the shimmy as a symbol of an exhausted Europe, the breakthroughs of jazz etc. – unfortunately with some allusions and hints that are not very easy to decipher for modern readers. *Shimmy* had not had its sound realisation for a long time, all the way until the mid-1980s, as was the case with Marinetti's extraordinary acoustic assemblages that he called "radiophonic syntheses" (*sintesi radiofoniche*). We can use Pavle Levi's term "written film" (Levi 2013, 77), to name Micić's piece "a written radio", which did not become a radiophonic radio only due to circumstances.

Serbia did have, in the inter-war period, a meander of acoustic experiments and montages of radiophonic creations of speech, noise and music, existing only in sound. The most deserving for this is Veljko Petrović, a writer who became the program director of Radio Belgrade by the end of the 1930s and, instead of sitting peacefully in his armchair, went down to directors and actors, further turning even to field recording and dramaturgy. He later recounted that even while he was a ministerial official for years, he was secretly tormented by passion for media engagement (he had the press in his mind) and that his imagination was particularly sparked by radio, from the very beginnings, at a time when one would listen to various reports with headphones, with only few hints of something artistically fresh. He collected literature and enthusiastically read foreign, especially German, studies on radiophony, which introduced him to a distinct world of "audible play", how he translated the German term *Hörspiel*. However, he was particularly into "radio montages", a form of combining previously recorded segments of speech, music, and noises into whole pieces that had to be given a specific melody and a leading theme.

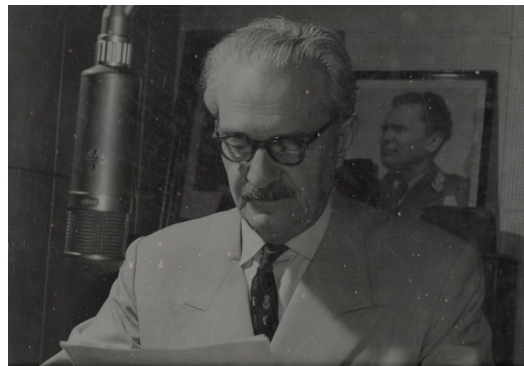


Figure 8. Veljko Petrović © RTS Program Archive.

Veljko Petrović was a rather traditional poet whose work was referred to by zenithist Ljubomir Micić as "a thin deal" (Micić 1921, 11). However, in the field of radiophony, guided by intuition and passion for technological innovation, Petrović displayed an avant-garde spirit, magnetically drawn to "a particular type of radio drama that is on the horizon", "something entirely authentic" that radiophonic authors would "compose solely for", and something that all the elements of radiophonic narration "combines past all temporal and strictly logical, rational or, even stylistic distances" (Petrović 2024a, 66). Petrović had the only chance to hear that type of "radio film" on German radio stations, the most developed radio broadcasting in the world back then, thus embracing the term "radio montage" and undoubtedly anticipating the direction of development

that would lead contemporary European and Belgrade authors to the genre now widely accepted as *Ars Acustica*.

Moreover, it could be said that Veljko Petrović, due to his own interest and radio research, as well as his genuine enthusiasm for radio, his cultural openness, huge creative energy and, certainly, his position as a director, established the first *Serbian sound workshop* at the end of the 1930s. As far as it is known, three pieces emerged from it: *Vršidba* [*Harvest*], *Proboj solunskog fronta* [*Breakthrough of the Salonika Front*], and *Prolećna simfonija* [*Spring Symphony*]. The Drama Program of Radio Belgrade mainly aired adaptations of foreign works of literature and theatre pieces, staged and acted out, which is why Petrović's montages probably looked like sensations coming from the future.

In order for sound to be treated as an object, and for fluid acoustic material to be manipulated by cutting, omitting, transferring, inserting, and pasting, it was necessary to first freeze sound in time, that is, to record it, either optically on film tape, or by engraving it on a phonograph record. The choice of method affected the quality of the editing, since the sound film was much more flexible and it allowed the author's intention to be realised with significant precision; the recording could be replayed afterwards, and the work result itself could be refined and perfected to finesse by editing and mixing. The records, however, provided a very short recording time (less than five minutes per disc), and the possibility of playback was limited to only a few times. The type of recording determined its durability, and Petrović's montages were gramophone-like. The excerpts from newspaper articles and radio conversations with Veljko Petrović, as well as short press fragments and announcements – radio criticism was not established back then, and we no longer have it nowadays – are now the only, and therefore, a primary source of knowledge about his sound workshop achievements.

Radio montage *Harvest*, which the author called an "audible play", was premiered on July 22nd, 1938. It presented documentary sound images, recorded in the countryside, and then collaged with thoughtfully selected music, passages from Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* and Gotovac's orchestral piece *Kolo*, along with spoken sections from reporters and participants in the performance. The goal was to convey the atmosphere, so to speak, a "harvest symphony" (we would nowadays say) by means of O-Ton, sounds, voices, and songs of those gathered, as well as music from the gramophone records (*Radio Belgrade* 29, 1938, 7). Veljko Petrović was clearly aware that this was an important milestone for Serbian radiophony and the birth of a new genre in our country. The *Radio Belgrade* magazine announced it as "the first attempt of its kind" (*ibid.*). And, indeed, objectively speaking, during the inter-war period, radio montages were still a rarity, even on programs of the largest European stations, simply because they were complex and expensive. Above all, they required extraordinary efforts of a large team of people, at the time when there were no easily portable sound recording devices, nor sophisticated mixing machines, necessary for a thematic field recording of certain material, which would then be brought into a desired harmony with music and words in the studio, and thus integrated into a layered radio piece. In other words, radio montages required the technology of the future, that became available in the 1950s

and 1960s. Twenty years later, in a conversation with journalist Saša Marković, Veljko Petrović tried, although he was not specifically asked about it, to look back and reflect on that event as well:

At this moment I must remember some of our radio-scenes, such as the harvest scene. We wrote the lyrics together, composed it, and with all the props, we brought to life all sounds, we were singing, crowing, chirping, barking, mooing, simulating the sound of rain and thunder, using various machines and wheels, and all of it in such a way that people wanted us to repeat it several times (Petrović 2024b, 434).

Reruns were broadcast on the program of a shortwave radio station (Belgrade 2). As for the effects, Veljko Petrović perhaps used his authority to purchase as many of them as possible, because at the end of 1940s an article was released on Radio Belgrade claiming that the station possessed two and a half thousand records; among which, “a very important place is occupied by records that are used for radio montages, on which the sounds of thunder, storm, wind, whistling, train movement, water, animal calls etc. were recorded” (“2500 gramophone records”, *Radio Belgrade* 1940, 5).

There is no sufficient data on *The Breakthrough of the Salonika Front*, and regarding the sound collage *Spring Symphony*, or *Spring* – both titles are found in the press – it was definitely broadcast on April 28th, 1939, and the newspapers defined it as “a gram-ophonic radio-montage” which required a lot of effort and discovered new possibilities of radio expression. An article in *Vreme* [*Time*] announced the event ten days earlier:

On April 28 at 8 PM, Radio Belgrade will broadcast a very interesting program. On that occasion, a radio-montage called *Spring* will be broadcast. Radio-montages are very popular on international stations. Here, they have still been pretty rare but successful. Last summer, we listened to the radio-montage *Harvest*, and the montage *The Breakthrough of the Salonika Front* was also successful. (“Radio Announcement”, *Vreme* 1939).

The main characteristics of these Serbian “radio films” are identical to the global ones. Namely, there is no plot, nor causality of the scenes, so fragments are organised into separate units thematically: harvest, the breakthrough of the Salonika front, spring. The title *Spring Symphony* and the phrase “harvest symphony” explicitly refer to a music constructivist principle. In his seminal work *Radio*, Rudolf Arnheim claimed: “The rediscovery of the musical note in sound and speech, the welding of music, sound and speech into a single material, is one of the greatest artistic tasks of the wireless” (Arnheim 1936, 30). For Petrović’s “interweaving of sound and music” the following passage is indicative: “Within certain period of time there are not only successive, but also parallel representations; our ear is capable of distinguishing several simultaneous sounds” (ibid, 24).

Petrović’s noticeable insistence on the importance of the original acoustic document, which is achieved by special recordings of sound events and the accompany-

ing noises, is in concordance with European experiences. Petrović sought poetry in the combination of “sounds from nature, the košava, the Senj storm, and the Velebit blizzard” and instructed the radio poet to record the immediate, unforced voices of “farmers and workers, their worries and songs, the screeching of wheels and the sound of hand tools, the host’s advice, the granny’s admonition with thumping on the loom in the background, the sound of belts and machine chains”, since the audible play, just like real life, is made up of “sounds, songs, instruments, and a set of everyday objects with which we live in the community” (Petrović 2024b, 435).

Thinking about the sounds in parallel, it is regrettable that we can only imagine how Ljubomir Micić, had it only been historically possible, would have sonically realised his *Shimmy*, in whose sixteenth fragment there is a hint of “36 syphon bottle – bruit”. It is not by chance that this sixteenth radio live streaming, as a part of the central radio program of Petrograd, is attributed to a Dadaist poet, Dragan Aleksić, who, in the third issue of *Zenit*, briefly defined bruitism: “The music from anything for the meaning of Everything” (Aleksić 1921, 5). Veljko Petrović, averse to literary avant-garde experiments and proclamations, seemed to unconsciously or tacitly accept the consequences of Aleksić’s definition, of which he was probably not even aware, by composing radiophonic works from everything, including the once ignored, noisy components of everyday life.

Generally speaking, one of the biggest innovations of the twentieth century was precisely the legitimization of noise in art. Previously avoided as an accidental and unwanted phenomenon, during the avant-garde period it gained a fundamentally equal significance for the creation of innovative, collage sound structures, just like words, music, and silence. The common interpretation is that this discovery of the value of sound from irregular vibrations partially arose from the development of music itself, which, at the end of the nineteenth century, experienced a certain exhaustion of tonal harmony and the emancipation of dissonance. Among the first researchers of the integration of music with a concrete reality of noise, as a means of its renewal, were the composers Luigi Russolo, Eric Satie, Arseny Avraamov, Edgar Varèse, Kurt Weil, George Antheil. However, while noise later emerges stylistically pronounced only in certain music genres and some composers’ work, for example, Cage, Stockhausen, Kagel, in the genre of radio compositions and collages, it has become a constitutive and essential component. Two pioneers of the genre, Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann, emphasised the same programmatic principle. Vertov wrote: “I decided to include the whole soundworld in the concept of Listening” (according to Bulgakowa 2008, 145), whereas Ruttmann wrote: “Everything audible in the world becomes material.” (Goeren 1994, 25–26).⁷ This is the path that Veljko Petrović took, and the path that today’s authors of sound workshop take, utilising once unimaginably perfect technical means to create innovative works from any given component of the soundworld.

⁷ Ruttmann’s text was originally published under the title “Neue Gestaltung von Tonfilm und Funk. Programm einer photographischen Hörkunst” in *Film-Kurier* 255 (26.10.1929) (cf. Goergen 1994, 25–26).

It is reasonable to pose a question as to whether it is even possible to meaningfully talk about *Harvest* or *Spring Symphony* without a direct experience of these pieces, in the absence of the primary source material, just like all other destroyed and lost creative syntheses that were uniquely radiophonic and could not have existed outside of their sound form. The answer would be that the researchers of these sunken worlds cannot form an aesthetic experience or aesthetic judgement of them. But then the entire world history of radio art in the 1920s and partly in the 1930s would remain in the dark, with only a few pillars of light, if at least what can be said based on the available documentations is omitted. Indeed, the extent of material decay was enormous. Among the achievements of that period, only those printed on film tape avoided decay. *Wochenende* [Weekend] by Walter Ruttmann, which was recorded and broadcast for the first time in 1930, is considered to be the first preserved work of radio art. Most radio dramas have survived, but only in the form of text, which can always revive through new performances. However, this also means that the fate of documentary creations and radiophonic compositions and collages, inevitably linked exclusively to the sound recording, was the most problematic.

Since only the conceptual aspects of the lost broadcasts managed to be transmitted throughout time, the history of inter-war radio art is mostly the history of ideas. With them, it is possible to reconstruct, using documents, the appearance, structure, significance, and historical context of radioart projects and fill in the gap, made evident after the disappearance of some valuable product. A certain consolation can be found in the fact that, in the era of art reinvention, during the first decades of the twentieth century the freshness and originality of ideas were of almost equal significance like their realisations themselves, so the concepts, sometimes, served not only as the sole, but the primary source of knowledge about the vanished artifacts as well. What we know about the enthusiasm and trailblazing breakthroughs of Veljko Petrović and his collaborators is enough to describe the works, to outline the silhouette, and to present the concept of the first Serbian sound workshop. Without even knowing about it, the foundations of the second sound workshop began to be established during the 1960s and early 1970s, by the incredibly talented professionals in the field of radiophony, whom this text was dedicated to. From the perspective of the new generation of innovators, all of them will become a part of an integrated tradition as well as great figures that the art of radio composition and radio collage would further develop from.

Conclusion

British radio historian, Tim Crook, wrote: "Most early radio plays created by the BBC and other international broadcasting organisations have not survived as mechanical records" (Crook 1999, 7). Without a permanent recording, he believed, a radiophonic piece remained an extremely ephemeral, "vanishing" form – but in his comprehensive, historical overview of the radio drama development, a chapter on the early

forms and trends was nonetheless included, with the help of accompanying documents and press releases. Deprived of the direct and immediate experience of the work, in the complete absence of the aesthetic object, we can similarly, when it comes to *Harvest* and *Spring Symphony*, resort to secondary sources, bearing in mind the context of the condition of a national radio drama as a literary work during the given period. And it barely existed back then. At the end of 1930s, writer Stanislav Vinaver humbly referred to his educational synopses for audio portraits of historical figures and events, which were gladly revealed to the wider public about ten years ago, as “radio montages” and “radio presentations”, avoiding the term “radio drama”, the specific genre in which Germany, Great Britain, and France, for example, had already made considerable progress (Vinaver 2015). Judging by this analogy, and by the slow and gradual progress of our inter-war radio condition in general, it would be an exaggeration to imagine the radio collages created by Veljko Petrović and his collaborators could be measured with the globally most renowned ones – but the very knowledge that we, too, had certain early pieces in such a complex, experimental form, almost exclusively reserved for a developed radiophonic world, can fill us with satisfaction.

Owing to, above all, the exquisite generation of creative directors, editors, and sound engineers, since the early 1960s, and especially during the “golden age of the Belgrade radio school”, 1971–1991, an extraordinary rise and international impact of Serbian radio art was accomplished. It can be stated without any exaggeration, since we participated in the events, and international competitions on major world stages, and received many accolades. At the end of *Radio Week [Nedelja radija]* in Ohrid, in 1988, Paul von Martens, editor of Swedish program in Finland, stated: “There are three world centers today where authentic radio dramas are created, Belgrade, Berlin, and Paris, all of them with long tradition in this field” (as quoted in Savićević 2004, 167). Indeed, even then, during that successful period, as is tangibly shown by international awards, the greatest contributions were made in the field of radio art. Today, Belgrade’s high position among other radio stations in the world is largely preserved owing to pieces produced by *Sound Workshop*.

Translated by Ivana Maksić

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FROM SOUND WORKSHOP TO RADIO FILM: TRACING SERBIAN RADIO ART HISTORY BACKWARDS (summary)

The aim of this paper is to analyse Radio Belgrade's *Sound Workshop* series and to shed light on the experimental trends that preceded it. In the first part, the author examines the reasons for establishing *Sound Workshop* at the beginning of 1985 and determines, from a chronological and conceptual point of view, its place among other European series of the same type. Special importance is attached to its association with the international network of radio art editorial boards – Ars Acustica Group – which was

formed by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in 1989. The author points to certain differences in the editing styles of the series among Ivana Stefanović, Slobodan Boda Marković, Predrag D. Stamenković, and Dragan Mitrić, who nevertheless all followed common general principles and supported the tendency to musicalize the entire soundworld, including speech and noise. It is estimated that over the past 40 years, the series has had a high-quality repertoire and introduced authors whose works have brought to Serbian radio numerous awards from the most prestigious international festivals. The second part of the paper explores the original tendencies and early works of the acoustic art in Radio Belgrade, which preceded the founding of the *Sound Workshop* and became part of its reprise collection. The breakthroughs of Serbian creators in this domain from the beginning of the 1960s were influenced by avant-garde trends in the world, for example, by concrete music in Radio France (1948) and electronic music at Radio Cologne (1951), the activities of John Cage, the Vienna Group and German New Radio Play (*Neue Hörspiel*). The series with an avant-garde orientation were *Drama after Midnight* (First Program) and *Experiments and achievements* (Third Program) and among the authors of musical-speech-noise collages, united by musical principle, the most prominent were Arsenije Jovanović, Vladan Radovanović, Ivana Stefanović, and Vuk Vučo. (Darko Tatić and Boda Marković are also worth mentioning, even though they were more oriented towards new forms of radio drama.) The author argues that Arsenije Jovanović is the founder of this genre in Serbian culture (since 1967) and the figure whose works will significantly mark the *Sound Workshop* too. The final part of the paper deals with the first appearance of the terms "radio art", "radio film" and "bruitism" in the Belgrade cultural circles (early 1920s, zenithist Ljubomir Micić) and the first realisations of the radio collages in the country (late 1930s, writer and director of Radio Belgrade, Veljko Petrović). These isolated attempts are not sufficiently researched and known and did not influence the later trends of radio art, but they are an important part of Belgrade's achievement, which belongs to the pioneering era of radio in the world.