Olena Kononova (Har’kiv/Ukraine)

On conferences in Barcelona and Belgrade (2013)

Last year I was lucky to participate in two International European Forums – in Barcelona and Belgrade. Very different in scope and range of issues under investigation, they opened prospects for cooperation, expanded information field for intensive intellectual activity, focused on the inextricable link between cultural heritage of the past and scientific research and achievements of the present.

The 12th “European Culture” Conference, organised by the Charlemagne Institute for European Studies (part of the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC)), went off well in Barcelona on 24–26 October 2013 and was regarded as a success. This traditional authoritative forum covered a wide variety of topics on European identity, public space, economy and crisis, cultural and social aspects of European integration, cultural heritage, language and translation, literature, cinema art, city culture formation and many other relevant issues.

225 speakers from 40 countries in Europe, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere shared their personal vision of the acute problems of modern science with the audience. Of course, it is impossible to cover all the variety of reports submitted, however, I will mention the ones I listened to. So, at the plenary session the coordinator of all the conferences “European Culture” Prof. Dr. Enrique Banús considered in his report “25 years of European Culture conferences” the stages of the significant and fruitful way of the conference, within which the leading scientists’ achievements were popularized, hot issues in many areas of scholarly endeavor were raised thereby promoting the implementation of new challenging projects and guiding the work of young researchers. The report of the Rector of the University Babes-Bolyai Cluj-Napoca, Acad. Prof. Ioan-Aurel Pop “Romania between Byzantine Orient and the Latin Occident” dealt with Romanian culture’s duality which is full of artifacts, carrying information about the Byzantine and Latin origin of the so-called “second nature”, “genetically” related to the habitat of the modern Romanian society.

At section sessions, there were presented two reports by Laura Corvera (Instituto Queretano de la Cultura y las Artes, Queretaro, Mexico), who studied the culture of Queretaro state in Central Mexico. The subject
of the first research “Iconografía Musical en Capillas Familiares de los Pueblos Otomíes-Chichimecas de Semidesierto Querétaro” [“Music Iconography in Family Chapels of the Otomí-Chichimecas peoples of Querétaro Semidesert”] is ancient iconography which decorated chapels (“iglesitas”) of native peoples of Querétaro Semidesert; the restoration work that has been undergoing there since 2009 serves the cause of preservation of old traditions and stimuli for the thorough study of the survived artifacts. The subject of the second paper “Programa cultural en plazas públicas como fortalecimiento de identidad, integración social y gobernanza” [“Cultural program on public squares as strengthening of identity, social integration and governance”] is closely connected with the present days of this state, cultural policy of Queretaro government aimed at initiative activation of various social strata in the sphere of music, theatre art and folk crafts which attract tourists and facilitate the development of spirituality in the modern Mexican society. Kharkov’s musical culture underlay the report by Olena Kononova (Kharkiv National I. P. Kotlyarevsky University of Arts, Ukraine) “The role of culture in the transition period of the new economic policy formation”. It traced the stages of musical culture development in the largest Ukrainian city, which coincided with the formation of a new economic policy in times of the Russian serfs’ emancipation (1861), the revolutionary events of 1917 and the dissolution of the USSR (1992). Considerable factual material became a convincing rationale for the significant role that music culture played in the times of global social changes.

Research interests of Judith García Martín (Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Spain) focused on the need for a careful and professional attitude toward priceless ancient music instruments. In her report, “La herencia de la organería romántica francesa en Castilla y León: fuentes para el estudio del órgano de la Purísima Concepción. Salamanca” [“The legacy of French romantic organ in Castile and León: sources for the study of the organ of the Immaculate Conception. Salamanca”] the researcher told about a unique symphonic organ (constructed by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll in 1862), which is located in one of the most monumental temples of Salamanca, the parish of the Immaculate Conception, and is in need of both restoration and study. The object of Marton Szegedi’s (Kunstuniversität Graz – Institut for Jazzforschung, Austria) study was guitar art. His paper “Hungarian influences in the music of jazz guitarist Gabor Szabo” is the result of a careful analysis of works of the noted Hungarian-born American guitarist. Making a subtle combination of jazz, rock, pop, Roma and Hun-
garian folklore as well as oriental music, G. Szabo (1936–1982) created his own style, which was rather future-oriented, than met the audience’s needs at that time. The speaker argued objectively the degree of Hungarian roots influence on the prominent jazz guitarist’s work. The research of Natalia Gubkina (University of Music and Performing Arts Graz – Institute for Jazz Research Austria-Russia) – “European Art Music as Archetype in the Music Industry of the USA (on the Example of Song Creating of Frank Sinatra)” was of great interest for the audience. The author analyzed a number of classical music pieces performed by the American singer either in their original form, or as jazz arrangements, as well as works that served as the impetus for the creation of new musical compositions. Using specific examples the researcher demonstrated the methods used by F. Sinatra’s arrangers to transform original European classical works into the product of music industry.

An extremely topical issue was raised by Joanna Mysona Byrska (Pontifical University John Paul II in Cracovia, Poland). The report “Werte der magischen Konsumwelt” [“Values of the magical world of consumption”] highlighted a conflict between spiritual and material values, the latter of which is becoming more of a priority in broad social circles of many countries. Consumer world, based on the power of money, capturing the mind and devastating the soul of modern man, becomes a kind of religion that seeks to supplant “The Ten Commandments”. However, not everything is sold in this world, as the speaker stressed. And one hardly disagrees with her, because freedom, bought in Konsumwelt, differs significantly from the true freedom of thought, expression, defending one’s own scientific position that was demonstrated by the International Conference “European Culture”. Active promotion of spiritual values is now one of the major tasks faced by the world’s intellectual elite.

The 16th Pedagogical Forum of Performing Arts, hosted by the Faculty of Musical Art, Belgrade University of Arts (13–15 December, 2013), highlighted a great variety of topics compliant with the specificity of the university. Scientists from Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine and Poland presented (to the listeners interested) the results of their scientific research within the subject matter of the Forum – Sociological and aspects of pedagogy and performing arts. The introductory lectures included reports dealing with common social issues: cultural history (speaker – Drenka Dobrosavlevic); centenary of the Opera of the National Theatre in Belgrade (speaker – Nadežda Mosusova); Kharkiv music culture traditions continued in many
year’s fruitful work of Ilya Slatin’s (the head of Kharkiv branch of Russian Musical Society) three sons in Belgrade (speaker – Olena Kononova). There was also a presentation of published orchestral suites from the ballet “The Legend of Ohrid” (Ohridska legenda) by Stevan Hristić (speaker – Mirjana Živković).

The problems of performing arts, music education and performance were considered from the perspective of sociology. Tatyana Popovic in her report discussed the performing art of the interbellum period (1918–1941) in Novi Sad; Diamanda Galás’s unique creative work became the subject of Andrea Zivkovic-Muskinja’s research; and new horizons of musical and artistic expression, which help the listener to reveal himself as an artist, were presented in the collective work of Mirjana Matinic, Vanjushka Martinovic and Sonja Kalaic. Especially interesting were the workshops of Anna Galikowska-Gajewska and Gabriela Karin Konkol on personal liberation through harmonious rhythmical movements with music accompaniment. The work of Vesna Opsenica, who studied movement as a means of solo singers’ communication, can be considered as a continuation of the theme, only with strictly focused orientation.

Musical performance has found its reflection in the research of Tijana Mirovic and Blanca Bogunović, who submitted their vision of musical performance psychology to the audience’s approval. The perception of Morton Feldman’s creative work in the New York Times was highlighted by Dina Vojvodić, and Svetlana Kalaba considered sociological aspects of Arvo Pärt’s creative work. Pedagogical issues were raised in the report of Ivana Hrpka, who had comprehended the phenomenon of fairy tales in the context of formation of elementary musical concepts in the Russian solfeggio school.

The highest priority at the Forum was given to the problems of music education: music as a means of socialization of preschool children was analyzed in the co-work of Ljiljana Voikic and Elena Dublevic; the strategy of music teaching in primary schools was discussed by Slavica Stefanovic. Milena Petrovic, Vera Milankovic and Gordana Acic became the authors of deep and uncompromising research – “Bureaucracy in music – music curriculum based on the military organization of command and control”.

Themes associated with the psychological aspects of music study found their place in the Forum program, too. The phenomenon of recognition as an important factor of music (classical music) preference was discussed in the research of Golubovic Maria, Anastasia Milin and Vladeta Milin.
The relevant research of Gordana Acic helps secondary music school pupils to solve the perennial problem of stage fright. Especially noteworthy are the issues raised by Vedran Markovic about the role of music in visually impaired children’s socialization, and by Miodrag Kastratovic who works on the problem of improving the moving abilities of handicapped persons through simple dance and musical exercises ("pictures"), which he introduced at the workshop.

Pedagogical Forum is included into the program of continuous education of primary and secondary teachers in Serbia, promoting direct communication between teachers and students. This prevents the separation of theory from practice, facilitates intensive dissemination of scientific information and the latest bibliography, strengthens internal and external professional relationships and demonstrates the role and place of the Serbian pedagogy in the music world of Europe.

Both International Conferences promoted fruitful dialogue between the venerable professors and young scientists, as there were many graduate students among the participants. Their professional interest in issues of culture and music art, the results of their research, recognized by demanding audience, confirm efficiency of the continuity of intellectual activity and inspire confidence in the future of Science.