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Original scientific article

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN'S RECEPTION IN THE YUGOSLAV REGION

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ABSTRACT:

This study demonstrates how Frédéric Chopin's reception in the Yugoslav region can serve as a lens for understanding the intricate connections between music, cultural, and political tendencies in this geographically vast, historically complex, and culturally diverse part of Europe. In particular, Chopin's presence in the region reflects broader efforts toward European cultural integration and the development of a regional identity. Using Samson's model of national reception studies, the research adopts a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, organizing the material by countries to demonstrate how Chopin's music was interpreted in various historical and educational contexts. The study begins with the early reception of Chopin in Slovenia and Croatia, where cultural ties to Central Europe fostered initial interest through performances, compositions, and literary reflections. Conversely, eastern areas—Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia—experienced a slower reception due to Ottoman influence, limited institutional resources, and differing ideological goals. Through targeted analysis of local compositions, scholarly debates, and performance traditions, the research reveals evolving reception patterns, ranging from stylistic imitations in the 1800s to more innovative and pedagogically driven academic engagements in later centuries. Ultimately, this study highlights Chopin's enduring influence as a catalyst for intellectual, educational, and aesthetic debates in the region, thereby deepening our understanding of how music shapes national identity and cultural bonds.

KEYWORDS:

Chopin; Reception; Influences; Musical historiography; Regional identity; Integrations;

SAŽETAK:

Istražujući recepciju Frederika Šopena u jugoslovenskoj regiji, u ovoj studiji dolazimo do zaključka da ista može poslužiti kao okvir za razumijevanje delikatnih veza između muzičkih, kulturnih i političkih tendencija u ovom geografski prostranom, istorijski složenom i kulturno raznolikom dijelu Europe. Šopenovo prisustvo u regiji odražava šire napore usmjerene ka evropskoj kulturnoj integraciji i učvršćivanju regionalnog identiteta. Oslanjajući se na Samsonov model nacionalnih studija recepcije, ovo se istraživanje koristi komparativnim i interdisciplinarnim pristupom, te organizuje materijal po pojedinačnim zemljama kako bi se pokazalo kako su različiti istorijski i obrazovni konteksti vodili različitim interpretacijama Šopenove muzike. Rad, stoga, počinje ranom recepcijom Šopena u Sloveniji i Hrvatskoj, gdje su kulturne veze sa Srednjom Europom podsticale početni interes za Šopenovo stvaralaštvo kroz koncerte, kompozicije i književne refleksije. Nasuprot tome, istočna područja regiona – Srbija, Bosna i Hercegovina, Crna Gora i Sjeverna Makedonija – doživjela su sporiju recepciju usljed snažnog osmanskog uticaja, ograničenih institucionalnih resursa i različitih ideoloških ciljeva. Kroz ciljanu analizu lokalnih kompozicija, naučnih rasprava i tradicija izvođenja Šopenove muzike, istraživanje otkriva obrasce recepcije koji se razvijaju od stilskih imitacija u devetanestom vijeku do inovativnijih i pedagoški vođenih akademskih skorašnjih angažmana. Stoga se u ovom radu zaključuje o trajnosti interesovanja za Šopenovo stvaralaštvo, te se isto predstavlja kao katalizator intelektualnih, obrazovnih i estetskih rasprava u regionu, produbljujući time razumijevanje moći muzike da oblikuje nacionalni identitet i kulturne veze.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

Šopen; Recepcija; Uticaji; Muzička istoriografija; Regionalni identitet; Integracije;

INTRODUCTION

In 1948, a time when Yugoslavia rejected Eastern politics and advocated instead for the Non-Alignment Movement, Yugoslav Nobel Laureate in literature Ivo Andrić (1892–1975) wrote the travelogue *In Chopin's Birth House* describing a concert he attended at the composer's birth house in Żelazowa Wola.¹ For Andrić, the immortality of Chopin's music, which *no force can silence or suppress*,² symbolizes Poland's struggle for independence. Drawing parallels between Poland's historical resilience to both Russia and the Nazi oppression and Yugoslavia's assertion of sovereignty, Andrić identifies *Chopin's land* as his own distant homeland.³ Andrić's musing on the expansiveness of Chopin's music, which extends beyond the boundaries of one culture, develops into a global vision of the working people *striving for justice, peace, and freedom*.⁴

Andrić's reflections demonstrate the intertwinement of Chopin's reception and the cultural and political narratives of the Yugoslav region. Chopin's reception within this region has a long and diverse history, extending from the direct influence on regional composers to the composer's statutory presence in school curricula.⁵ However, despite his presence in scholarship, concerts, popular articles, translations, and literary reflections, no systematic overview of Chopin's reception in this region exists. This research aims to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive chronological analysis of Chopin's presence across the region while mapping national trends.

Although Yugoslavia was unified only between 1918 and 1992, the countries that constituted Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia) share numerous linguistic, historical, political, and economic ties, making a cohesive examination of Chopin's reception within the region possible both prior and after its unification. On the other hand, the influences from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the region's western part and the Ottoman Empire in the east created diverse cultural contexts that shaped the reception of Chopin differently across the region. Thus, Chopin's reception reflects both a shared appreciation for his music and the varying social and cultural contexts that have influenced the musical tastes in each country.

It is important to acknowledge that, coinciding with the decline of the Ottoman

Empire and the growth of the pan-Slavic Illyrian movement, Romanticism was the first classical music style widely accepted in the region. Its general liberal spirit and embracement of national motives aligned with the region's awakening political and national consciousness.⁶ Concurrently, Chopin's music—particularly his mazurkas and other characteristic piano genres—may have provided a model for local composers seeking to develop a refined and expressive piano style and secure national recognition. In this article, a comparative analysis is presented for one composer, whose works show the strongest formal and stylistic affinities with Chopin, while works by other composers are briefly surveyed. As a preliminary study based primarily on research conducted in national libraries, this paper does not attempt an exhaustive examination of all archival sources that may document Chopin's presence in the Yugoslav region—such as concert programs, manuscript collections, or music holdings preserved in local archives, including those of Kotor, Dubrovnik, and Split—but rather establishes a foundation for future research in this field. The study then turns to scholarship and popular literature addressing Chopin. Finally, after a chronological overview of his reception in each country, the article highlights the most prominent trends across different forms of reception in the region.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION: RECEPTION THEORY AND CHOPIN RECEPTION IN EUROPEAN CENTERS

Studying music reception is an interdisciplinary endeavor and involves broader historical, socio-political, and cultural approaches. As Jim Samson argues, the concept of reception applies to the history of social responses to art and the aesthetics that privilege those responses.⁷ It considers the reactions of the contemporary audience but also what Carl Dalhaus called the *after-life* of musical works.⁸ Listeners interpret music from their listening contexts, add meanings to a musical piece, and enable its continuation. Thus, Yugoslav responses to Chopin's music do not reflect only individual interpretations but also reveal underlying cultural and historical dynamics.

Reception theory draws from the relativistic and constructionist theories, which emphasize that individuals and groups are social constructs, that the human mind is intentional,⁹ as it projects itself in what it perceives, and that our knowledge is mediated by language.¹⁰ The meaning of the world per se is, therefore, unstable and depends on the means of human perception. On this basis, philosopher Hans Robert Jauss critiques positivist and empiricist art studies that neglect the instance of the recipient (reader, listener, or observer) as an active factor in constituting the meaning of artistic content. Recognizing three basic aesthetic practices—production (*poiesis*), reception (*aisthesis*), and communication (*katharsis*)—Jauss argues that it is through the mediation of the receiver that a work of art enters the changing experiential perspective of a continuity in which simple reception is constantly transposed into critical understanding, passive reception into active, recognized aesthetic norms into a new production that surpasses them.¹¹ Jauss's concept of the *horizon of expectations* understands that no work is entirely new at the time of its creation and that the audience receives it with existing knowledge acquired by *consuming* artistic works that predispose the audience to a specific way of reception.¹²

Studies in music reception equally rely on antipositivist analytical theories of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and semiotics,¹³ and approach musical works as a social construct with fluid semantic value. As musicologist Nicholas Cook

asserts, the critical question is not what music means but what it means here and now,¹⁴ putting the emphasis on the effect of music in context and not on music as a fixed entity that possesses specific unchanging characteristics. The art of music, therefore, is realized through production and post-production, i.e., its performative and changing appearance occurs in a series of mediated meanings related to specific figures, time, and place.¹⁵ While the term reception refers to the processes of receiving, perceiving, reading, analyzing, and experiencing music, the reception theory sets the goal of charting the history of the reception and effect of a work of art, author, or tendency in art on the recipient and the social or historical formation of the audience.¹⁶

The intertwinement of culture and reception is evident in the way Chopin's music was viewed across different European centers. Samson notes that nineteenth-century French critics, particularly in the *Revue et Gazette musical*, portrayed Chopin as delicate and suitable for intimate salon performances, presenting him as a continuation of the French harpsichordist tradition and a precursor to later French composers, such as Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel.¹⁷ In doing so, they used Chopin's image to assert French cultural identity in opposition to the growing influence of German music in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ In Victorian England, Chopin's music was associated with drawing-room entertainment for middle-class audiences. While its melodic beauty was admired, its harmonic innovations were misunderstood, and his music was criticized for lacking structural grandeur.¹⁹ Thus, Chopin was appreciated mainly for the ability of his salon pieces to fit into the Victorian philistine culture.²⁰ Samson adds that Chopin's music was often published in collections of *drawing-room trifles*, and his most technically demanding works were simplified, leading to a loss of their original artistic value.²¹ Chopin's reception by Victorian salon composers also shows superficial imitation of the composer's style, particularly of his melodic and rhythmic patterns, and of his use of ornamentation.²²

Whereas in France, Chopin was seen as a salon composer, and in England, his music was brought into the drawing rooms, in Germany, serious engagement with Chopin's music was initially limited by its association with the superficial social pleasures of the salon—a French cultural construct incompatible with

German artistic values.²³ Samson notes²⁴ that it was the Breitkopf & Härtel collected edition (1878–80) of Chopin's music that elevated his status in the canon repertoire, adopting him into the German tradition and distancing him from the label of salon music. Additionally, Heinrich Schenker integrated Chopin as the only non-German composer into his canon of masterworks. As Samson highlights, this event reflects Germany's aspiration for musical excellence, embodied in Schenker's assertion that *for the profundity with which nature has endowed him, Chopin belongs more to Germany than to Poland*.²⁵

By contrast, further east, in his home country, Poland, Chopin's music was predominantly appreciated for his pieces with a nationalistic quality symbolic of resilience.²⁶ Polish criticism fostered what Zofia Chechlińska refers to as a *cult* of Chopin because, even when not adequately understood, his compositions were held in high esteem due to the composer's status as a national figure.²⁷ Chopin's influence on Polish composers largely manifested in imitation of genres often associated with him, such as mazurkas, nocturnes, and waltzes, and in superficial replicas of his extended ornaments, irregular rhythmic divisions, and chromaticism. However, Chopin harshly criticized these imitative efforts, seeing them as lacking an understanding of his style.²⁸

Russia, which occupied Poland several times in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, readily appropriated Chopin's music, seeing his mazurkas as embodying a true Slavic spirit.²⁹ Yet, Chopin's reception in Russia was not simple. Slavophiles, like other musicologists of the time, equally saw him as a modernist and admired his introspective style, which contrasted the *showy Western virtuosity* of composers like Thalberg and Dreyschock.³⁰ Samson notes that some features of Chopin's music, such as modality, chromatic symmetry, and melodic decoration and variation, were adopted by Russian composers as alternatives to Austro-German methods that often emphasized dissection and development—processes centered on manipulation and transformation of thematic or motivic material.³¹ Thinking of Chopin not merely as a Romantic but as a radical composer combining folk traditions with advanced techniques of European art music, Slavic nationalists aligned him with their cultural and political goals.³²

CHOPIN RECEPTION IN YUGOSLAVIA: CONTEXTUALLY TAILORED METHODOLOGY

Studying Chopin's reception in the Yugoslav region provides a unique perspective on the relationship between music, culture, and politics in a geographically massive, historically rich, and nationally and denominationally diverse part of Europe. The fact that the region still aspires for a fuller cultural and educational integration with Western Europe makes this research a valuable contribution to a broader understanding of the role of music in directing social narratives. Generally speaking, Chopin's presence in the regional discourse for a long time reflected these countries' aspirations to become recognized European Slavic countries. Still, although Yugoslav Chopin's reception encompasses various forms—such as works by local composers, scholarly and popular literature, and performances—the overall corpus is much smaller than in any individual European center.

Romanticism appeared on the music scene at a turbulent political moment in the region when Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian reigns were declining, and the six countries sought to affirm their sovereignty among the European states. Chopin, who came from a country that stood centuries-long oppression and who intertwined European art music with Slavic motives, may have appeared to the region as symbolic of their own resilience. However, when these countries were formally recognized at the Berlin Congress in 1878, the region was already split into two cultural zones. By 1878, the predominantly Catholic, western and coastal areas, until then the Habsburg colonies, had developed economic and cultural exchanges with the surrounding Western countries, and their courts, towns, and manors hosted numerous performances of classical music.³³ It is, therefore, anticipated that in Slovenia and Croatia, Chopin's presence manifested early and influenced contemporary composers.

On the other hand, the eastern nations that had been under Ottoman rule for centuries (Serbia, Bosnia, and Macedonia) or were under threat (Montenegro) remained economically poor agrarian societies, almost completely missing the nineteenth century's industrial developments, while their education was most-

ly linked to monasteries. These countries lacked any traces of European high art, appearing culturally empty and uninviting to the West.³⁴ As such, the region sought shelter in the pan-Slavic narrative and relied on Russian financial and educational help.³⁵ In an endeavor to emancipate itself from the Oriental influence, the region turned towards its Europeanization through industrialization, education, and democratization, but also through musical production that would suit Western European taste.³⁶ From the perspective of the *horizon of expectations*, these divergent cultural trajectories shaped fundamentally different conditions for the early reception and *after-life* of Chopin's music across the region.

The cultural differences between Yugoslav East and West manifested in various ways. For instance, while prominent Slovenian composer Fran Gerbič (1840–1917) and Chopin's student Karol Mikuli (1819–1897) worked together,³⁷ Montenegro (understood here in the sense of its 19th-century political centre in Cetinje) acquired its first piano only in 1855.³⁸ Similarly, Croatia founded its Musikverein in 1865, yet the Association of Musicians of Macedonia was formed only in 1947, with the country's recognition at the end of World War II. Serbia, the most developed country in the eastern part, opened its first music school in 1899 and established its higher music education in Belgrade in 1937.³⁹ Youth from the rest of the area were largely educated in Belgrade, where they might have first heard of Chopin. However, this also invites a thought that music would hardly be a choice study in dire circumstances and explains the late Chopin's reception in eastern Yugoslavia. Although socialist Yugoslavia prioritized educational development, Chopin was widely discussed in the region's east only when Europe had already begun debating the music avant-garde.⁴⁰

Samson's 1994 analysis of Chopin's reception in different European centers—focusing on French critics, German publishers, Russian composers, and English amateurs—specifically selecting the groups that best reflect Chopin's image within each culture, inspired a similarly tailored interdisciplinary approach. This study is informed by reception theory, particularly the notions of *horizon of expectations* and the *after-life* of musical works, which frame Chopin's music not as a fixed historical object, but as a continuously reinterpreted cultural

presence shaped by shifting social and institutional contexts. Thus, it first emphasizes the early reception by composers in the western part of Yugoslavia and then explores scholarly and popular discourse throughout the region. Organizing the research by national territories rather than by categories such as composers, scholars, or audiences allows for a deeper understanding of how Chopin's music was interpreted and integrated within the specific historical, cultural, and educational context of each nation.

Much like France, Victorian England, Germany, Poland, and Russia, the Yugoslav region also engaged with Chopin's music in ways that reflected its unique socio-political goals. For a significant period, Yugoslavia modeled its music production after influences from Russia and Prague, offering alternatives to Western paradigms.⁴¹ In Slovenia, the westernmost part of former Yugoslavia, Chopin could be heard in nineteenth-century salons known as *čitalnice*, or *reading rooms*, which featured his works alongside those of Slavic composers such as Smetana and Dvořák, celebrating a shared Slavic heritage and promoting pan-Slavic unity.⁴² In this sense, Chopin's early reception in the western part of the region reflects an *after-life* embedded in salon culture, where his music functioned as part of a cultivated bourgeois musical identity rather than an exclusively concert-stage phenomenon. In the twentieth century, discussions about music were frequently shaped by ideologies. For instance, in 1968, Chopin's mention in Montenegrin discourse aligned with the Prague Spring—Czechoslovakia's attempt at liberalization from the Soviet Union, a movement supported by Yugoslavia with its distinct socialist path. By referencing Chopin, who was celebrated as a symbol of resistance, Montenegrin writers and policymakers might have subtly connected him to Yugoslavia's broader political aspirations.

Throughout Yugoslavia, we find that the growing presence of Chopin in scholarly and popular literature parallels educational advancements. Thus, the growth of the twentieth-century Chopin discourse ran parallel with the rapid educational progress in socialist Yugoslavia and mainly revolved around biographical studies, popular articles, and literary reflections by authors who were not academics. Many professional musicians in these countries are primarily performers, as doctoral studies have not been offered until recently. However, the in-

troductioin of the Bologna system between 1999–2003 standardized education into the 3+2+3 (BA+MA+PhD) format. The requirement for master's degrees in teaching positions led to an increase in both master's recitals featuring Chopin's works and a growing number of academic works on Chopin.

My observations indicate that the still relatively limited existing scholarship on Chopin in the Yugoslav context predominantly consists of analytical studies that focus on harmony, form, and interpretation. However, slight regional differences speak of national influences and priorities. For instance, unlike Croatian scholars who have recently placed a strong focus on Chopin's health,⁴³ Serbian scholarship tends to explore Chopin's influence on pedagogy.⁴⁴ After organizing material by focus and category, this study identifies recurring themes in the discussion of Chopin.

Approaching Chopin's influence in the West, my research relies on the insights of Dragotin Cvetko (1911–1993), recognized as the *father of musicology* in Slovenia. Cvetko was the first to identify Chopin's influence on several Slovenian composers, noting their use of Romantic techniques and genres associated with Chopin and works that explicitly acknowledge Chopin's influence.⁴⁵ However, Cvetko did not provide a comparative analysis to support his claims. My comparative analysis builds upon this foundational research, including insights from my publication *Tracing Chopin in Slovenian Music: Mazurka Op. 42, No. 2 by Fran Gerbič*, in which I present stylistic similarities between Chopin's music and Gerbič's mazurka.⁴⁶ Some of those similarities include identical intervallic patterns in several measures of Gerbič's mazurka and various pieces by Chopin, illustrated in Examples 1a–1c. Another example is the cadential formula, which is characterized by a fifth scale degree followed by an ascending leap to a third and a stepwise descent to the first scale degree, as illustrated in Examples 2a–2d. ⁴⁷ In each case, this melodic pattern is supported by a dominant seventh harmony and functions as part of a conventional authentic cadential progression.

A particularly striking similarity appears in the intrathematic organization and melodic contour of the second thematic idea in Gerbič's mazurka and Chopin's

Waltz in A Minor, Op. Posthumous, where certain figures serve analogous expressive functions (Examples 3a–3b). Although the two works belong to different dance genres that operate within distinct accentual frameworks, the comparison is justified by the unusually close correspondence of their phrase structure and melodic construction. Both excerpts represent eight-measure antecedent–consequent themes whose grouping structure departs from the conventional period model through the absence of a clearly contrasting idea. Instead, both themes begin with a two-measure basic idea followed by two one-measure fragments derived from the basic idea’s second part. Despite differences in the opening scale direction—ascending in Chopin, descending chromatic in Gerbič—the subsequent three measures of the antecedent phrase show striking similarity. Both composers embellish the first note of the second measure (Chopin with a trill, Gerbič with a turn) and repeat the second-measure motive over the next two measures, each time descending. In both works, the initial scale serves to build tension that is gradually released: Chopin’s ascending scale outlines a dominant chord with a tendency tone, while Gerbič’s scale generates dramatic tension through chromaticism. The consequent phrases further intensify the tension through register shifts. While the same thematic organization reflects compositional practice found more broadly in nineteenth-century dance music, the close correspondence of melodic contour, ornamentation, and expressive trajectory lends support to Cvetko’s assertion of Chopin’s influence and illustrates how stylistic features associated with Chopin could be adapted by Slovenian composers. Nevertheless, a direct line of transmission cannot be conclusively established.

Chopinesque elements can also be seen in Gerbič’s mazurkas Op. 42 No. 1, Op. 59 Nos. 1 and 2, as well as the works—many of which are mazurkas, polonaises, and nocturnes—by other Slovenian composers noted by Cvetko. Those works include Jurij Mihevec’s *Chopin’s Memories* Op. 117, *Brilliant Mazurka* Op. 28, *Great Elegant Waltz* Op. 84, *Nocturne* Op. 96, *Mazurka Memories* Op. 112, No. 6, *Impromptu* Op. 142, *Fantasy-Mazurka* Op. 145, and *Brilliant Scherzo* Op. 182; Alojzij Ipavek’s *Fantasia in the form of a Polonaise and Trauermarsch*; Ivan Hinek’s *Gefühls-Fantasie mit Variationen über allbeliebte Volkshymne* (1853);

François Prescheren's *Memories from Trieste—Nocturne for piano Op. 1, Poetry of the Night—Piano Nocturne Op. 7*, and *Mazurka de Salon for Pianoforte Op. 13*; and Benjamin Ipavec's *Polka Mazurka* (1868), *Slavjanka Mazurka* (1878), *Mazurka* (1900), and *Poloneza* (1906).

The Mazurka in D minor shown in Examples 1–3—the nineteenth Slovenian piece with the most Chopinesque elements among those mentioned above—demonstrates that Chopin's influence on nineteenth-century Slovenian composers was primarily melodic and superficial, as it was in France and England, drawing on ornamental gestures and formal structures suitable for salon and domestic music. However, a twentieth-century composer Janko Ravnik, engaged more deeply with Chopin's music. As Katarina Hočevar shows, Ravnik not only adapted Chopin's conceptual traits but also transformed their semantics.⁴⁸ This contrast suggests that Chopin's reception by Slovenian composers transformed over time: early reception focused on expressive and virtuosic surface features, while later engagement became more conceptually transformative.

The flourishing reception of Chopin in Slovenia around the turn of the twentieth century is evident in both popular and scholarly discourse. Early reflections include Marica Barol's 1900 article *Friderik Chopin: Ob 50letnici Njegove Smrti. Po Ruskih Virih Spisala*⁴⁹ written fifty years after Chopin's death, and Lucijan Marija Škerjanac's 1920 musical survey *Glasbeni pregled*,⁵⁰ which features Chopin among other composers. Among the early contributions to popular Slovenian Chopin discourse is Bojan Štih's 1963 article on Chopin's A Minor Waltz, Op. 34, which provides historical context and personal reflections.⁵¹ This contribution is followed by Jean Rousselot's biography, translated by Bogomil Fatur, *Frédéric Chopin: burno življenje*,⁵² indicating the cross-cultural influences on Slovenian music scholarship. In 1965, Pavel Šivić combined an overview of Chopin's music with biographical details, *Chopin in njegov opus*,⁵³ followed by the appearance of the only novel about Chopin, written by Julija Sekelj in 1976—*Chopin v Parizu*.⁵⁴ Later, Marija Matrai and Anasvald Kriger's biography, *Ljubimca: George Sand in Frédéric Chopin*, translated by Breda Pugelj in 1985,⁵⁵ reflects an ongoing interest in Chopin's life and works.

Academic engagement with Chopin in Slovenia similarly developed over time. Jernej Kirbiš's master's thesis from 2014 analyzes Chopin's B minor sonata,⁵⁶ while in 2022, Hana Bitenc focuses on the influence of Hummel on Chopin's piano concerti.⁵⁷ Interestingly, both theses reference Chopin biographies by Franz Liszt and Frederick Niecks, which shows a trend in the reliance on the same narratives to frame their discussions. Additionally, Teja Ulaga's 2018 master's thesis focuses on Chopin's concert activities and performance styles,⁵⁸ while Uršič's 2022 master's thesis traces the development of the prelude genre from J.S. Bach through Chopin to L. M. Škerjanac.⁵⁹

In contrast to Slovenia, where scholarship has established Chopin's influence on composers, my research on the reception of Chopin in Croatia remains largely exploratory. While no studies have yet confirmed direct influence, some piano works by Blagoje Bersa (1873–1934) have been described as exhibiting *Chopinesque barcarolles and melancholic nocturnes*,⁶⁰ suggesting a possible connection. Investigating Bersa's barcarole *Na žalu* (1921), Notturmo in B minor, Op. 38, and Rondo-Polonoise, Op. 18, could shed light on potential stylistic links and remains a promising direction for future research.

The Croatian reception of Chopin is also shaped by the translation and dissemination of biographies. Dinko Štambak's 1944 translation of Guy de Pourtalès's⁶¹ and Julije Benešić's translation of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's 1949 Chopin biography⁶² are among the earlier contributions. Then, in 1961, Đorđe Šaula translated Adam Czartkowski and Zofia Jeżewska's Chopin biography,⁶³ while in 2011, Sanja Lovrenčić translated Franz Liszt's biography of Chopin.⁶⁴ Mirjana Ognjanović's more recent biography (2012) further enriches the Croatian perspective.⁶⁵ Finally, on the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, in 2010, a number of popular articles appeared in the Croatian journals *Tonovi* and *Dubrovnik*, several of which, authored by prominent pianists and educators Jakša Zlatar and Robert Andres, discuss Chopin's life and stylistic characteristics.⁶⁶

Focusing on Chopin's health, Croatian scholars offer an important interdisciplinary explanation of the musician's early death. The 2010 article by Darko Breitenfeld et al.,⁶⁷ published on the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, explores the pathography of Chopin's tuberculosis and compares it with other

composers who suffered from this disease. Two other articles by Breitenfeld et al. from 2013 broaden this discussion by studying a larger group of composers who died young.⁶⁸ Similarly, Ivan Okmaca's article (2019) focuses on the impact Chopin's health problems had on his life and music.⁶⁹ In addition to these health-related studies, in 2011, Maja Vukić Zorić discusses Chopin's influence on André Gide and thus provides another example of how Chopin's influence extends beyond musical contexts and enters literary production,⁷⁰ as also evidenced in Andrić,⁷¹ Vojeslav Molè (1910),⁷² and Sekelj.⁷³

In the case of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, discussing the reception by composers is challenging for several reasons. As mentioned earlier, although numerous regional musicians were inspired by the Romantic revisit to the folk motives that suited the awakening national consciousness, limited access to sources and opportunities to collaborate with European musicians, particularly during Ottoman rule, meant that music from this area reflects less of an influence from Western Europe. Apart from this, the comparatively late establishment of music institutions resulted in belated critical discourse on Chopin.

Like in Croatia, valuable reception sources in Serbia are Chopin's biographies, which reflect the cultural taste of their times. Thus, among the earliest appears the Janković's 1952 translation of the same Guy de Pourtalès's biography,⁷⁴ which presents Chopin's life and work in an engaging and dramatic manner for a general readership. This contribution was followed by biographies by Andreja Preger (1998),⁷⁵ Stefan Šabena (2009),⁷⁶ Marina Milić-Radović (2010),⁷⁷ and translations of Chopin's letters by Nataša Gatalica (2023),⁷⁸ which contribute to a deeper understanding of his portrayal and offer insights into the interests of Serbian audiences.

Recent studies indicate that Serbian scholarship on Chopin has mainly focused on performance, harmony, and form. The first studies focusing on harmonic analysis include diploma theses by Marijana Nikolić (2009) on Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28,⁷⁹ and by Nedad Milivojević (2009) on the nocturnes.⁸⁰ This focus on harmony continues in Marko Čorbić's 2013 diploma thesis on Chopin's

Études, Op. 25,⁸¹ and in Marko Milenković's 2015 article on form and harmony in the Preludes, Op. 28.⁸² More recently, Serbian research has emphasized interpretative studies: Bogdan Savić's master's thesis (2022) investigates romantic expression in Chopin's sonatas,⁸³ while DMA dissertations by Isidora Jovanović Driscoll (2023) and Natalija Mladenović (2023) focus on performance aspects of the B-flat minor sonata and ballades.⁸⁴ Jelena Zidarić Zečević's (2023) DMA dissertation on musical expression in selected piano pieces also reflects this interpretative trend in Serbian Chopin scholarship.⁸⁵

Additionally, Serbian scholarship finds Chopin's influence on piano pedagogy important. Jelica M. Radovanović's 1922 translation of J. Philippe's works on piano curriculum and the interpretation of Chopin's etudes and preludes affirms his importance in the history of piano pedagogy in Serbia.⁸⁶ That his pedagogical contributions remain valued in Serbia is illustrated by Dragan Šobajić's 2019 translation of Chopin's *Project de méthode*.⁸⁷ Further insight into how Chopin was contextualized within the broader narrative of musical life in the region comes from a section in Stana Đurić-Klajn's book (1956), which explores the contributions of Chopin's music to the musical events in Yugoslavia,⁸⁸ and Slobodan Turlakov's 2003 study of Chopin's selected works and his reception until 1941.⁸⁹ The book *Stanislav Vinaver* (2021), a famous Serbian writer, translator, and diplomat, includes a section on Chopin that provides insights into how Chopin was integrated into the broader intellectual discourse, helping us understand how influential figures shaped public opinion.⁹⁰

In Montenegro, Dragoljub Šobajić (2001) studies the phenomenological aspect of how the music of Beethoven, Chopin, and Brahms engages the listener's imagination, exploring the emotional and mental imagery that their compositions evoke.⁹¹ Branko Koprivica's master's thesis (2022) explores Chopin's harmonies and their contribution to shaping the *distinct characters* of his ballades and études.⁹² While these represent the only scholarly research on Chopin published in Montenegro so far, they mark an important foundation of the region's scholarship. Beyond academic circles, the earliest accessible mention of Chopin in Montenegrin periodicals dates back to the December 1965 issue of *Титов пионер* (*Tito's Pioneer*) featuring articles on Beethoven, Schubert, and

Chopin.⁹³ In 1966, *Тумов пионир* presents Chopin as one of the most famous Slavic composers alongside Tchaikovsky.⁹⁴ Manja Radulović contributed to the dialogue on Chopin through several articles published in the magazine *Наша жена* (*Our Woman*) in 1968.⁹⁵

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, scholarly works on Chopin are also scarce. However, the titles of two sources I discovered present the emerging Bosnian analytical discourse. In her 2011 article, Biljana Štaka deals with the transformation of form and character in Chopin's waltzes Op. 64.⁹⁶ Rastko Buljančević's 2023 article deals with the texture in Chopin's études.⁹⁷ Although there are no biographies written by Bosnian authors, *Šopen* by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz was translated by Petar Vujičić (1990).⁹⁸ As the only biography of Chopin in the Bosnian language, it represents an important indicator of regional perceptions of Chopin.

When it comes to scholarly discourse in North Macedonia, I was able to find only Kristina Svetieva's article (2014) on mastering technical problems of Chopin's E minor concerto through the establishment of formulas.⁹⁹ However, Chopin's works have consistently appeared in master's recitals at the Academy of Music in Skopje from 2002 to 2024. Out of 29 students who performed his works, eight recitals coincided with the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, which demonstrates the recognition of his contribution to piano literature.¹⁰⁰ The performance of Chopin's scherzi is particularly noteworthy, as 11 out of 29 performers (37.93%) included them, with several students choosing to play multiple scherzi in a single recital. This preference suggests a pedagogical orientation within the Macedonian piano school toward works of heightened dramatic intensity and large-scale virtuosic architecture, rather than exclusively toward the more intimate salon repertoire traditionally associated with Chopin's shorter forms. Within this framework, the Macedonian data can be read as a delayed formation of a *horizon of expectations* in which Chopin is primarily encountered through pedagogical and institutional channels, producing a performance culture oriented toward virtuosic and structurally expansive works.

While this limited academic engagement may reflect broader cultural priori-

ties, Chopin's enduring presence in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia is particularly evident through school curricula and participation in various music events, such as *Šopenfest*, *Montenegrin Youth Music Festival*, *May Musical Festival*, and several others.¹⁰¹ These trends in less developed countries will eliminate the need to further illustrate Chopin's prominence in the countries where his influence has been long established.

CONCLUSION

While Chopin's reception in the region is diverse, the quantity of the material remains limited and measurable. In the nineteenth century, the reception of Chopin's music in the Yugoslav region was sparse, mainly reflected in compositions by several Slovenian and perhaps one Croatian composer. In the twentieth century, the reception expanded primarily through popular literature: only two short scholarly works and one scholarly translation focused directly on Chopin, alongside approximately 19 popular publications such as biographies and articles. In the twenty-first century, after the adoption of the Bologna system, Chopin scholarship grew, including 14 scholarly works, eight theses reviewing the current state of knowledge, and three doctoral dissertations.

The findings suggest that Chopin's reception in the region is heterogeneous and closely aligned with broader socio-historical and institutional developments. Viewed through the combined lens of reception theory—*particularly the horizon of expectations and the after-life of musical works*—Chopin's presence in the Yugoslav region appears as a stratified phenomenon shaped by uneven institutional development, cultural transfer, and changing pedagogical priorities. By tracing the chronological development of Chopin reception within national frameworks, alongside comparative analyses of stylistic influence in selected Slovenian works and an overview of evolving scholarly and popular discourse across the region, this study highlights the ways in which musical meaning is historically constructed and culturally mediated. Rather than following a linear trajectory from less to more developed contexts, the material instead reveals differentiated modes of engagement that reflect distinct cultural priorities and institutional conditions. Finally, while this study offers a structured overview

of Chopin's regional reception, it also opens space for future studies on the dynamics of Chopin's reception and potentially inspire local researchers to deepen my results in the analysis of historical developments or local manifestations, ultimately showing the most significant contribution of this study.

NOTES:

¹ Ivo Andrić, "U Šopenovoj rodnoj kući," in *Staze, lica, predeli. Sabrana dela*, knj. 10, Prosveta, Beograd, 1981, 115, <https://tszoricaivanovic.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/ivo-andric-izabrana-proza-pripovijetke.pdf>, accessed June 22, 2026.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Throughout the region, music is an obligatory subject in general elementary and middle schools. Music instruction includes history and it covers most important movements and figures, including Chopin.

⁶ Dragotin Cvetko, "The Problem of National Style in South Slavonic Music," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 34 (82), 1955, pp. 1–9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4204707>, accessed June 22, 2026; Biljana Milanović, *Disciplining the Nation: Music in Serbia until 1914*, PhD diss, University of London, 2009.

⁷ Jim Samson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 9–10.

⁸ Mark Everist, "Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value," in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, p. 379.

⁹ Edmund Husserl, *The Shorter Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, Routledge, London – New York, 2001, p. 106.

¹⁰ Hans Sluga, "Ludwig Wittgenstein: Life and Work – An Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, eds. Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 12–14.

¹¹ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, intro. Paul de Man, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005, p. 43.

¹² Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, intro. Paul de Man, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005, p. 46–49.

¹³ David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*. Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. 116; Renáta Beličová, *Reception-Aesthetics of Music and its Nomenclature*, Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University Nitra, Nitra, 2008, p. 9; Nikola Dedić, "Estetika, komunikacija i teorija recepcije," *Kultura*, br. 131, 2011, str. 29.

¹⁴ Nicholas Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 8.

¹⁵ Marija T. Maglov, *Medijski obrt u muzici: produkcija i recepcija muzike u kontekstu medijske kulture u 20. veku*, doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, odsek za muzikologiju, Beograd, 2022, str. 23.

¹⁶ Miško Šuvaković, *Estetika muzike: modeli, metode i epistemologije u modernoj i savremenoj muzici i umetnostima*, Orion Art, Beograd, 2016, str. 291.

¹⁷ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 2–5.

¹⁸ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 5.

¹⁹ Derek Carew, "Victorian Attitudes to Chopin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 227–229.

- ²⁰ Derek Carew, "Victorian Attitudes to Chopin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 229–230.
- ²¹ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 10.
- ²² Derek Carew, "Victorian Attitudes to Chopin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 232–245.
- ²³ Andreas Ballstaedt, "Chopin as 'Salon Composer' in Nineteenth-Century German Criticism," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 19–28.
- ²⁴ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 5.
- ²⁵ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 5–8.
- ²⁶ Zofia Chechlińska, "Chopin Reception in Nineteenth-Century Poland," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 216–217.
- ²⁷ Zofia Chechlińska, "Chopin Reception in Nineteenth-Century Poland," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 220–221.
- ²⁸ Zofia Chechlińska, "Chopin Reception in Nineteenth-Century Poland," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 218–221.
- ²⁹ Anne Swartz, "Chopin as Modernist in Nineteenth-Century Russia," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 35–41.
- ³⁰ Anne Swartz, "Chopin as Modernist in Nineteenth-Century Russia," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 35–46.
- ³¹ Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 9.
- ³² Jim Samson, "Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis," in *Chopin Studies 2*, eds. John Rink and Jim Samson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 8–9.
- ³³ Josip Andreis, *Music in Croatia*, 2nd ed., Institute of Musicology, Academy of Music, Zagreb, 1982, p. 23–194.
- ³⁴ Peter Preston, "Imagining Montenegro: From Illyria to James Bond," in *Recounting Cultural Encounters*, eds. M. Knežević and A. Nikčević-Batričević, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2009, p. 11.
- ³⁵ Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2013, p. 67.
- ³⁶ Biljana Milanović, *Disciplining the Nation: Music in Serbia until 1914*, PhD diss., University of London, 2009, pp. 47–72; Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2013, pp. 117–118.
- ³⁷ Edo Škulj, "Gerbič – urednik in pisec," in *Gerbičev zbornik*, ed. Edo Škulj, Družina, Ljubljana, 2000, p. 69.
- ³⁸ Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2013, p. 113. It should be noted that the reference to 1855 pertains specifically to Cetinje and the courtly milieu of Old Montenegro under Prince Danilo. The editorial comment has usefully highlighted that keyboard instruments and a developed salon culture had been present considerably earlier in the coastal towns of Boka Kotorska (including Kotor and Perast), which at the time were shaped by Venetian and Austrian cultural spheres rather than the Montenegrin state. This clarification has helped refine the geographical and cultural precision of the argument, and we are grateful to

the editors for drawing attention to this important distinction.

³⁹ Biljana Milanović, *Disciplining the Nation: Music in Serbia until 1914*, PhD diss., University of London, 2009, p. 51.

⁴⁰ Katarina Tomašević, "Istok-zapad u polemičkom kontekstu srpske muzike između dva svetska rata," *Muzikologija* 5, 2005, p. 122.

⁴¹ Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans*, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2013, p. 341.

⁴² Josip Andreis, Dragotin Cvetko, Stana Đurić-Klajn, *Historijski razvoj muzičke kulture u Jugoslaviji*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1962, p. 430–433; Cvetko, "Chopin chez les Slovènes au XIXe siècle," *Book of the First International Musicological Congress Devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin: Warszawa, 16th–22nd February 1960*, Polish Scientific Publishers, Warsaw, 1963, p. 284; Stefaniya Leon, "'Unconscious Syncretism and Wilful Pragmatism': A Note on the Slovenian Salon Music's Aesthetics at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Mousikous Logos*, no. 1, 2014, p. 2–4, 6–10.

⁴³ Darko Breitenfeld et al., "Frederic Chopin and Other Composers with Tuberculosis – A Pathography," *Alcoholism* 46 (2), 2010, pp. 101–107; Darko Breitenfeld et al., "Diseases and Destinies of Famous Composers: Why Should One Even Write about Composers' Diseases?," *Alcoholism and Psychiatry Research* 49 (1), 2013, p. 55–60; Darko Breitenfeld et al., "Diseases and Early Deaths of 200 Young Composers," *Alcoholism* 49 (2), 2013, p. 131–143; Ivan Okmaca, "Frédéric Chopin i njegove bolesti," *Tonovi*, 34, 2019, str. 52–62.

⁴⁴ Frédéric Chopin, *Nacrt metoda = (Projet de méthode)*, trans. Dragan Šobajić, Udruženje Kreativna, Beograd, 2019; J. Philippe, *O klavirskoj nastavi i interpretaciji Šopenovih etida i preludija*, trans. Jelica M. Radovanović, Osvit, Beograd, 1922.

⁴⁵ Dragotin Cvetko, "Chopin chez les Slovènes au XIXe siècle," in *Book of the First International Musicological Congress Devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin: Warszawa, 16th–22nd February 1960*, Polish Scientific Publishers, Warsaw, 1963, p. 286–287.

⁴⁶ Tanja Knežević, "Tracing Chopin in Slovenian Music: Mazurka Op. 42, No. 2 by Fran Gerbič," *Harmonia: The Journal of the Graduate Association of Musicologists and Theorists at the University of North Texas*, 21, 2023–2024, p. 41–69.

⁴⁷ McGinnis identifies this cadential formula as characteristic of Chopin. See Francis Frederick McGinnis, *Chopin: Aspects of Melodic Style*, PhD diss., Indiana University, 1963, p. 103–108.

⁴⁸ Katarina Hočevar, "A Fragment to the Genre of the Piano Piece: Its 'Real' Beginning in the Slovene Musical Literature?," *Musicological Annual*, 42, 2006, p. 87–98, <https://doi.org/10.4312/mz.42.2.87-98>, accessed June 22, 2026.

⁴⁹ Marica Bartol, "Friderik Chopin: Ob 50letnici njegove smrti. Po ruskih virih spisala," *Ljubljanski zvon*, 20 (6), 1900, str. 359–364, <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:doc-8CV2D-BR6>, accessed June 19, 2024.

⁵⁰ Lucijan Marija Škerjanc, "Glasbeni pregled," *Ljubljanski zvon*, 40 (5), 1920, str. 277–279, <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-PTZ2B1EQ>, accessed September 2, 2024.

⁵¹ Bojan Štih, "Chopinov valček v A-molu št. 34," *Sodobnost*, 21 (4), 1963, str. 338–345, <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-GEIK4TGZ>, accessed September 30, 2024.

⁵² Jean Rousselot, *Frédéric Chopin: burno življenje*, trans. Bogomil Fatur, Obzorja, Maribor, 1964.

⁵³ Pavel Šivic, *Chopin in njegov opus*, Akademija za Glasbo, Ljubljana, 1965.

⁵⁴ Julija Sekelj, *Chopin v Parizu*, Pomurska založba, Murska Sobota, 1976.

⁵⁵ Marija Matrai and Ansvald Kriger, *Ljubimca: George Sand in Frédéric Chopin*, trans. Breda Pugelj, Obzorja, Maribor, 1985.

- ⁵⁶ Jernej Kirbiš, *Instructive Analysis of Chopin's Sonata in B-flat Minor*, magistrsko delo, Akademija za glasbo, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2014.
- ⁵⁷ Hana Bitenc, *Vpliv J. N. Hummla na teksturne in stilistične elemente Chopinovih klavirskih koncertov*, magistrsko delo, Akademija za glasbo, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2022.
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