

Selena Rakočević (10/26/1971–5/18/2022, Belgrade)

Zdravko RANISAVLJEVIĆ¹ 

¹Assoc. Prof. Dr., University of Arts, Faculty of Music, Department for Ethnomusicology, Belgrade, Serbia

Ethnomusicologist and ethnochoreologist Selena Rakočević, PhD, an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, left us prematurely on May 18, 2022, after a brief serious illness. Although interrupted in the prime of her research career, Selena Rakočević was an untiring worker not only in the field of ethnochoreology but also in ethnomusicology and paved the way for new generations of scholars. Her colleagues, associates, and admirers unanimously agree that she made a historic contribution to the humanities in this region. Her passion for traditional dance, which she cultivated in theoretical and practical interpretations, became a hallmark of her academic career.

Selena Rakočević spent her childhood and youth in Pančevo, where she finished primary and secondary music school. In 1990, she began her graduate studies in ethnomusicology at the Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology of the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade. In 1995, she graduated with an average grade of 9.95 after defending her graduate dissertation entitled *Muzička tradicija banatskih Srba okoline Pančeva* [The Music Tradition of Banat Serbs in the Area of Pančevo]. In 2001, she defended her master's thesis *Vokalna tradicija Srba u Donjem Banatu* [The Vocal Tradition of Serbs in Lower Banat], which were both under the supervision of Dimitrije Golemović, PhD. In 2009 she received her doctoral degree after defending her dissertation *Tradicionalna igra i muzika za igru Srba u Banatu u svetlu uzajamnih uticaja* [The Traditional Dance and Dance Music of Banat Serbs in the Light of Their Mutual Relationships] under the supervision of Dimitrije Golemović, PhD, and Olivera Vasić, PhD.

She became a teaching assistant in ethnochoreology at the Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology of the Faculty of Music of the University of Arts in Belgrade in 1998, and remained in this position until 2010. She taught in the specialist field of ethnomusicology (while teaching ethnochoreology) from 2010 to 2016 and received the title associate professor in 2016. From 2011 to 2018, she was the head of the Department of Ethnomusicology. In addition to her employment at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, she was teaching ethnochoreology at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad since 2010.

As a guest lecturer, she taught the courses *Reading Images of the Balkans*, which is a part of the Cultural Management and Culture Policy study program, at the University of Arts in Belgrade (since 2005) and *Dance Cultures of the World*, which was part of the Theory of Arts and the Media master's program, at the University of Arts in Belgrade (from 2019 to 2020). In addition, she gave a number of lectures in ethnochoreology (e.g., theoretical lectures and practical courses) at the following faculties abroad: Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo (Spain, 2018), World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick (Ireland, 2018 and 2020), and Zhejiang Conservatory of Music (China, 2019). At the *International Conference Young Musicology*, which was organized by the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 2020, she gave a keynote lecture entitled *Challenges of Ethnomusicological and Ethnochoreological Research within the Ever Changing World. A View of a Scholar from Serbia*.

Selena Rakočević was one of the first ethnochoreologists and ethnomusicologists in Serbia to join the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) in the 1990s. Primarily active in the Study Group on Ethnochoreology and, eventually, in the Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe, she played a key role in the early implementation of global theoretical concepts and methodological postulates in Serbian science. At the height of her research career, she became known among ICTM-renowned scholars from this part of Europe and was recognized as a trailblazer by the Serbian scientific community. She was a member of the Organizer Committee of the Fourth Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe, which was held in Petnica, Valjevo in 2014.

Drawing on her professional credibility in foreign scientific circles, she worked tirelessly on forging links between Serbian scholars and the most distinguished authorities in ethnochoreology in the world. Toward this end, she organized a series of lectures by Colin Quigly (University of Limerick), Andriy Nahachewsky (Professor Emeritus at the University of Alberta, Canada), and Elsie Dunin (Professor Emerita at the University of Los Angeles) at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade in 2019. She also hosted the Third Symposium of the Sub-Study Group on Movement Analysis of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology by the ICTM entitled *Vertical Movements of the Centre of Gravity and Svikt Analysis*. The symposium featured 12 researchers from seven countries,

Corresponding Author/Sorumlu Yazar: Zdravko RANISAVLJEVIĆ E-mail/E-posta: ranisavljevic@yahoo.com

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including János Fügedi (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and Egil Bakka (Professor Emeritus at the University of Trondheim, Norway). At her initiative, the Faculty of Music hosted the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology in 2010 in its first online roundtable entitled *Ethnochoreology in a Time of Social and Physical Distance*, which attracted 94 researchers from 34 countries.

The outstanding original contributions by Selena Rakočević to the development of ethnochoreology as an academic scientific discipline in Serbia include the following:

1. introduction of the term *traditional dance*, which replaced the earlier concept *folk dance*;
2. introduction of the term *ritual dance*;
3. conceptualization of the method of structural dance analysis with the establishment of analogous kinetic and music parameters;
4. modification of Labanotation in academic-level ethnochoreological education, which is in accordance with the latest global developments in the transcription of the kinetic dance component;
5. introduction of the descriptive transcription of the kinetic dance component in local scientific practice;
6. introduction of the transcription of integral dance performances, which replaced the transcription of only invariant patterns;
7. development of a separate system of the transcription of horizontal space patterns in choreographed folklore; and
8. the study of the concept of intangible cultural heritage within the field of traditional dance.

A passionate field researcher, Selena Rakočević spent nearly 30 years (from 1994 to her death) investigating the dance and music heritage of Banat Serbs. This research into culture on the Banat territory yielded the following works:

1. Monographs

- *Muzička tradicija banatskih Srba okoline Pančeva [The Music Tradition of Banat Serbs in the Area of Pančevo]* (1999);
- *Vokalna tradicija Srba u Donjem Banatu [The Vocal Tradition of Serbs in Lower Banat]* (2002);
- *Tradicionalni plesovi Srba u Banatu [The Traditional Dances of Serbs in Banat]* (2012);
- the published doctoral dissertation entitled *Igre plesnih struktura. Tradicionalna igra i muzika Srba u Banatu u svetlu uzajamnih uticaja [Interweaving Dance Structures. Traditional Dance and Music of Banat Serbs in the Light of Their Mutual Relationships]* (2011);
- *Festival kao strategija dijaloga [Festival as a Strategy of Dialogue]* (2014); and
- *Dance, Field Research, and Intercultural Perspectives: The Easter Customs in the Village of Svinița* (2015);

2. Audio publications

- *'Aj' na rogalj momče. Tradicionalne pesme Srba u Donjem Banatu [C'mon to the Corner, Boy. Traditional Songs of Serbs in Lower Banat]* (2005);
- *Putevima tambure: od srca Balkana do vojvođanske ravnice [The Tambour Road: From the Heart of the Balkans to the Plains of Vojvodina]* (2007); and *Nova stara gradska pesma [New Old City Songs]* (2007); and

3. Multimedia compact discs

- *Tradicionalni plesovi Srba u Banatu. Antologija. Etnokoreološki terenski video snimci [Traditional Dances of Serbs in Banat. An Anthology. Ethnochoreological Field Research Video Recordings]* (2014).

In addition, her bibliography contains an impressive number of scholarly papers published in the Serbian and English languages in the most diverse and prestigious journals and collections of papers, specifically more than 50 in Serbia and more than 30 abroad. She tremendously contributed to various papers to the reconstruction of the development of ethnochoreology as a scientific discipline in Serbia, which especially focused on the lives and work of Ljubica and Danica Janković, Olivera Mladenović, and Olivera Vasić.

Selena Rakočević continued the practice, introduced by Olivera Vasić, PhD, of educating students of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology on the performance of traditional dances (in ethnochoreology practical classes). The continuity of the ethnochoreological practice, which served as a basis not only for ethnochoreological education in the academic context but also for the system of informal education of dancers at the Centre for the Study of Folk Dances of Serbia (today, it is called the Centre for Research on and Preservation of Traditional Dances of Serbia [CIOTIS]), was, thus, preserved.

At the same time, Selena Rakočević developed an interest in choreographed folklore as a course under the same name was introduced in the ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology study program at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade in 2010. Since its introduction, many choreographers of traditional dances were given the opportunity to share their experiences with students during classes. The broadening of interest by Selena Rakočević in applied ethnochoreology led to her engagement at CIOTIS as a co-founder and a member of the Management Board. This aspect included activities as a member of various judging panels at choreographed folklore festivals, the most notable of which is the *European Review of the Serbian Folklore of the Diaspora and of the Serbs in the Region and the Diaspora*, as well as her work on projects developed by the Association of Cultural Artistic Societies of Serbia. A testimony to her great initiative in the field of choreography is the festival *Serbian Kolo*, which was organized

by the aforementioned Association. Apart from her activities in the sphere of traditional dances, she was the founder and editor of the ‘world music’ festival *Ethno.com*, which was organized by the Cultural Centre of Pančevo, across ten years.

Selena Rakočević’s contribution to the wide academic community is evident in her involvement with national and international scientific and professional organizations as well as cultural and scientific institutions at home and abroad. Specifically, she was a member of the ICTM, a member of the International Council for Kinetography Laban, a co-founder and member of the Management Board of the CIOTIS, a member of the Society of Serbian Folklorists, a member of the editorial board of *Folkloristika* magazine, the chairperson of the Program Committee at the Fifth Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe (Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, 2016), a member of the Program Committee at the Sixth Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe (Sinj, Croatia, 2018), and the chairperson of the Program Committee of the First Online Roundtable of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology (Belgrade, 2020).

She made a notable contribution to the preservation of the dance heritage of Serbs in Banat by participating in the submission of *malo kolo* for the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia in 2021. In this manner, she helped to promote the highest national interests in the sphere of cultural politics through her involvement in the campaign to inscribe *Kolo – traditional folk dance in Serbia* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2017.

The impressive biography of Selena Rakočević bears testament to her singular passion for the study on traditional dance and music. Her scholarly contributions, creative outputs, and professional activities form an inextricable part of her personality, which occupies a prominent position in the history of the humanities in this region. Her pedagogical approach was recognizable and involved a keen desire to continually pass on knowledge and encourage the young to pursue scientific work during and after their studies. Due to her dual engagement in science and pedagogy at the academic level, this university worker, despite being cut off at the height of her academic career, has earned eternal life through the work of future generations of scholars.

ORCID ID of the author

Zdravko RANISAVLJEVIĆ 0000-0002-7873-2098

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