

Monika Novaković, Teodora Trajković
Institute of Musicology SASA

DIGITIZATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT HERITAGE OF THE COMPOSER VELIMIR SPERNJAK

Abstract. In this paper, we will present the stages of the archiving and digitization process legacy of archpriest and composer Velimir Spernjak, which is located in the Archive of the Institute of Musicology, SASA. The heterogeneity of this material is reflected in different types of documents that include printed musical pieces, sheet music, transcripts, photographs, personal documents as well as manuscripts. After the first review of the material and insight into the state of documents, the need for priority digitization was established, for the sake of preserving this heritage and its availability to future interested researchers. In preparation for digitalization, three stages are planned. First stage involved sorting and classifying the material, so that the second stage would then include listing with a detailed description of each document, as well as its signing. Digitization was implemented in the third, or last, stage. Although without most modern equipment, the technical conditions of the Institute of Musicology SASA met the needs of realizing digitization. In this regard, it has been successfully brought to an end, so we have the opportunity to illustrate the results of this endeavor on this occasion.

1. Archive of the Institute of Musicology - brief history and challenges

The Institute of Musicology was established by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts in 1948, on the initiative of composer Petar Konjović. He was a visionary who wanted for the institute to have two main activities. One was about presenting music as an art of historical and cultural importance. Second, to institutionalize the care of musical cultural heritage, both traditional (folk and church) and artistic, through its collecting and preservation.¹ From those initial ideas until today, the activity of the institute has been far more diverse, but Konjović's ideas have remained. In this regard, the institute has, as a separate entity, an Archive in which, first of all, are stored composers' legacies², but also documents of exceptional importance for the musical and cultural history of Serbia.

Among the fonds, Archive of the Institute of Musicology SASA houses the legacies of composers and other important people such as Kornelije Stanković, Davorin Jenko, Stevan Mokranjac, Isidor Bajić, Stanislav Binički, Petar Krstić, Milenko Paunović, Kosta P. Manojlović,³ Vladimir Nikolajević-Štirski, Vlada Petrović, Milivoje

¹ Даница Петровић, *Музиколошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности (1948-2010)* [Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (1948-2010)], *Muzikologija/Musicology* 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2676>, 35–36.

² See: Биљана Милановић, *Фонд композиторских заоставштина у Музиколошком институту САНУ* [“Legacy Collection of Composers in the SASA Institute of Musicology”], *Muzikologija/Musicology* 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2679>, 101–139.

³ Александар Васић, *Архив Музиколошког института САНУ – колекција докумената, аутографа, преписа, старих нотних издања и фотографија* [The Archive of Institute of Musicology SASA – Collection Of Documents, Autographs, Transcripts, Old Music Manuscripts And Photographs],

Crvčanin and many others.⁴ As Aleksandar Vasić points out, the collection's impressive growth is owed to, first and foremost, the efforts and diligence of the musicologist, Stana Đurić Klajn (1908–1986), who tackled first challenges in organizing the Archive and ensuring the preservation and longevity of acquired legacies and documents, spanning from music manuscripts, letters, to rare publications on the theme of Serbian music history.⁵ After Klajn's retirement in 1974, her mission was continued on by academician Dimitrije Stefanović, alongside Danica Petrović and other associates.⁶

Presently, we will discuss one of the composer's legacies found in the Archive, which we systematized, cataloged and digitized during 2022 and 2023. In this article we aim to present this process of archive organization and later, digitization of the legacy of the archpriest and composer Velimir Spernjak (1870–1948). This legacy is hosted at the Archive of Musicological Institute SASA and possesses great historical and cultural value, showcasing the great artistic and cultural efforts Spernjak made in composing music and bringing music to others. Documents and records within this modestly sized legacy (housed in one archival storage box) include various important archival material such as composer's biography and bibliography (compiled by his son, Bogdan Spernjak), correspondence, personal documents, photographs, concert tickets, invitations and concert programs, manuscripts of musical scores as well as published musical scores.

Considering that term *archival material* encompasses source material as well as reproduced documentary materials vital for history and other scientific fields, regardless of the time of its inception,⁷ this legacy holds great value in the Archive of the Musicological Institute of SASA. This group of documents and files concerning Velimir Spernjak is considered a personal fond due to the fact that these materials reveal a plethora of information on life and work of a person that possessed an important role in societal and musical life. This fact that Spernjak was the “epitome of the cultural zeitgeist of the first decades of the 20th century”⁸ and the fact that the composer's legacy started to show the wear and tear that naturally comes with its age – documents chronologically span from the year 1889 to the year 1988 – clearly underlined the promptness with which the task of digitization had to be taken.

2. The fond of Velimir Spernjak

Bogdan Spernjak (Figure 2), the son of Velimir Spernjak (Figure 1), entrusted the legacy of his father to the Institute of Musicology SASA in 1988. We learn of this from the letter written by academician Dimitrije Stefanović (former director of Institute from 1979 to 2000) upon receiving the material: „Esteemed professor Spernjak, the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts has received, with gratitude and utmost respect, the priceless legacy of late Velimir Spernjak. All the

Музикологија/Musicology 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2678>, 73–74.

⁴ Милановић, op. cit, 103.

⁵ Васић, op. cit, 71.

⁶ Ibid, 72.

⁷ Богдан Лекић, *Архивистика*, Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Београд, 2006, 29.

⁸ Наташа Д. Марјановић, Моника Ј. Новаковић, *Писани трагови о делатностима Велимира Сперњака (1870–1948) – заоставитина у архиву Музиколошког института САНУ [Written Traces of Velimir Spernjak's (1870-1948) Work – Legacy From the Archive of the Institute of Musicology SASA]*, *Зборник Матице српске за сценске уметности и музику*, бр. 65, Матица српска, Нови Сад, 2021, <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/12310>, 65.

pieces will be signified and processed in the musical archive of the Institute...“⁹ The son supplied the biography and bibliography he compiled himself, listing the compositions by opus number, date and the place of the piece’s inception.



Figure 1. Archpriest and composer Velimir Spernjak (undated; BCπ-8)

Archpriest Velimir Spernjak was born on May 30, 1870 in Vračevgaj near the Bela Crkva. Spernjak tried to devote himself to a musical career, as we learn from the biography written by his son, emphasizing that the composer enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy in Budapest, where he also intended to attend the Conservatory. However, he soon left Budapest and moved to Sremski Karlovci at the request of his parents to become a priest. Spernjak was a multifaceted person – a violinist, a composer, chanter, melograph, conductor as well as founder of vocal and instrumental ensembles.¹⁰ Education he acquired in the Serbian Orthodox Great Gymnasium in Novi Sad, as well as the one he acquired in Orthodox Seminary in Sremski Karlovci proved beneficial to the development of Spernjak’s creative and work endeavors.¹¹ Even though he wanted to pursue a career in music, he dedicated himself to priesthood never neglecting to explore his musical interests and hone his skills as a musician and a composer. Music, thusly, followed suit, not only as part of his chanting and melographic work in the church. Spernjak’s understanding of the importance of music in one’s life manifested itself through composer’s efforts to provide musical education and musical experience to the amateurs via the aforementioned formation of various ensembles, both for the needs of church service and the needs of the community that pursued musical activities. Composer’s piano pieces as well as his chamber music pieces demonstrate efforts to

⁹ Димитрије Стефановић, *Писмо Богдану Сперњаку* [*Letter to Bogdan Spernjak*], Архив МИ САНУ, Београд, 1988, ВСП-1.

¹⁰ Марјановић, Новаковић, *op. cit.*, 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

improve the field of amateur musicianship and contribute to furthering musical knowledge of the masses. Not only that, but many pieces contained melodies or segments of popular melodies from folk songs and dances.¹² His scores were noticed by the press and lauded for their accommodating to the musically inclined amateurs “and the choice of songs”¹³ on which the pieces are based on. The music scores in Spernjak's fond (see examples: Figure 3.1, 3.2 and Figure 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), both of the pieces composer created himself and of the pieces by other authors that were his role models, showcase Spernjak's awareness of disseminating one's work via musical publishing. Many of the scores to Spernjak's pieces demonstrate that he had a vision of the form and design the score will have (lettering the score with calligraphy letters, providing bilingual titles to the scores etc) in order to attract the attention of potential buyers.¹⁴

In the biography provided by his son, we also learn of the composer's personal and political views – during the first years of World War I, Spernjak was persecuted by Austro-Hungarian authorities. After the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Empire, and as people's representative of municipality of Izbište, Velimir Spernjak voted for the Banat, Bačka and Baranja to enter the Kingdom of Serbia and join the union of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.¹⁵



Figure 2. Bogdan (left) with his father Velimir (right), Belgrade (October, 1937; BCπ-7)

¹² Ibid, 60.

¹³ Анон, *Нова композиција [A New Piece]*, *Босанска вила* 18, 30th September 1905, 287.

¹⁴ Марјановић, *Новаковић*, op. cit, 60.

¹⁵ Ibid, 58. See also: Богдан Сперњак, *Биографија Велимира Сперњака – протојереја, композитора (1870-1948)* [*Biography of Velimir Spernjak – Archpriest, composer (1870-1948)*]. 1951, 1992 (revised by Bogdan Spernjak). BCπ-4.

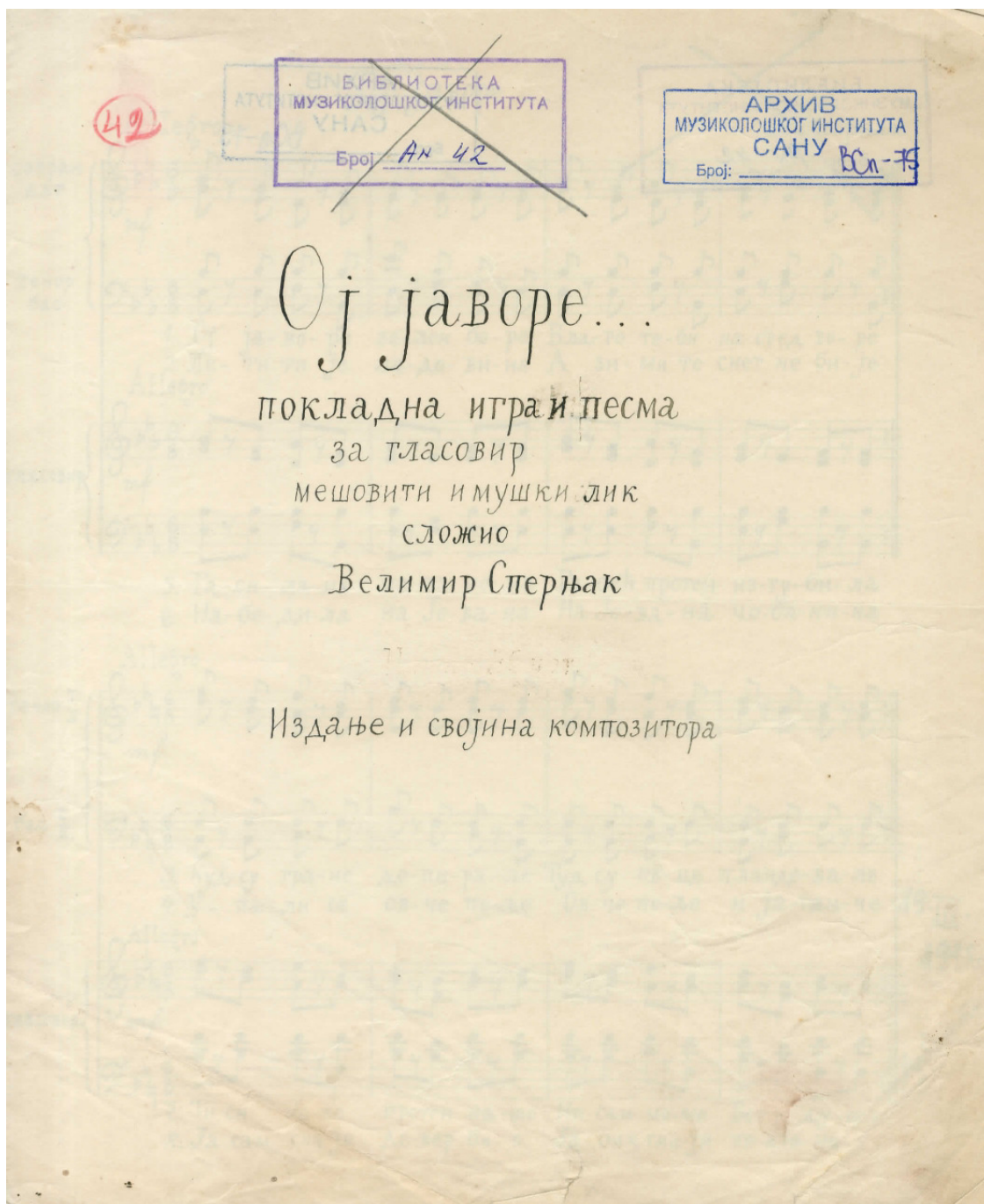


Figure 3.1: *Oj javore* (*Oh maple tree*) (composer's manuscript, 1912)

Ој јаворе...

В. Сперњак

Allégo

сопран
алт

тенор
бас

1. Ој ја-во-ре зе-лен бо-ре Бла-го те-би на сред то-ре
2. Ле-ти ти је ла-до-ви-на А зи-ми те смет не би-је

Allégo

гласовир

5. Га-си-ла их ма-ла мо-ма Га-сећ прстен из-гу-би-ла
6. На-бе-ди-ла на Јо-ва-на На Јо-ва-на чо-ба-ни-на

Allégo

тенор I.
II.

бас I.
II.

3. Куд су гра-не до-пи-ра-ле Туд су ов-це плаңдо-ва-ле
4. У-па-ли се ов-че по-ље Ов-че по-ље и ја-гањ-че

Allégo

гласовир

7. Ти си Јо-во прстен на-шо Ни-сам мо-мо Бог и ду-ша
8. Ја сам сна-ји де-вер би-о Ја бих сна-ји по-кло-ни-о.

19. III.
1912
Јулијана

Figure 3.2: *Oj javore* (*Oh maple tree*) (composer's manuscript, 1912)

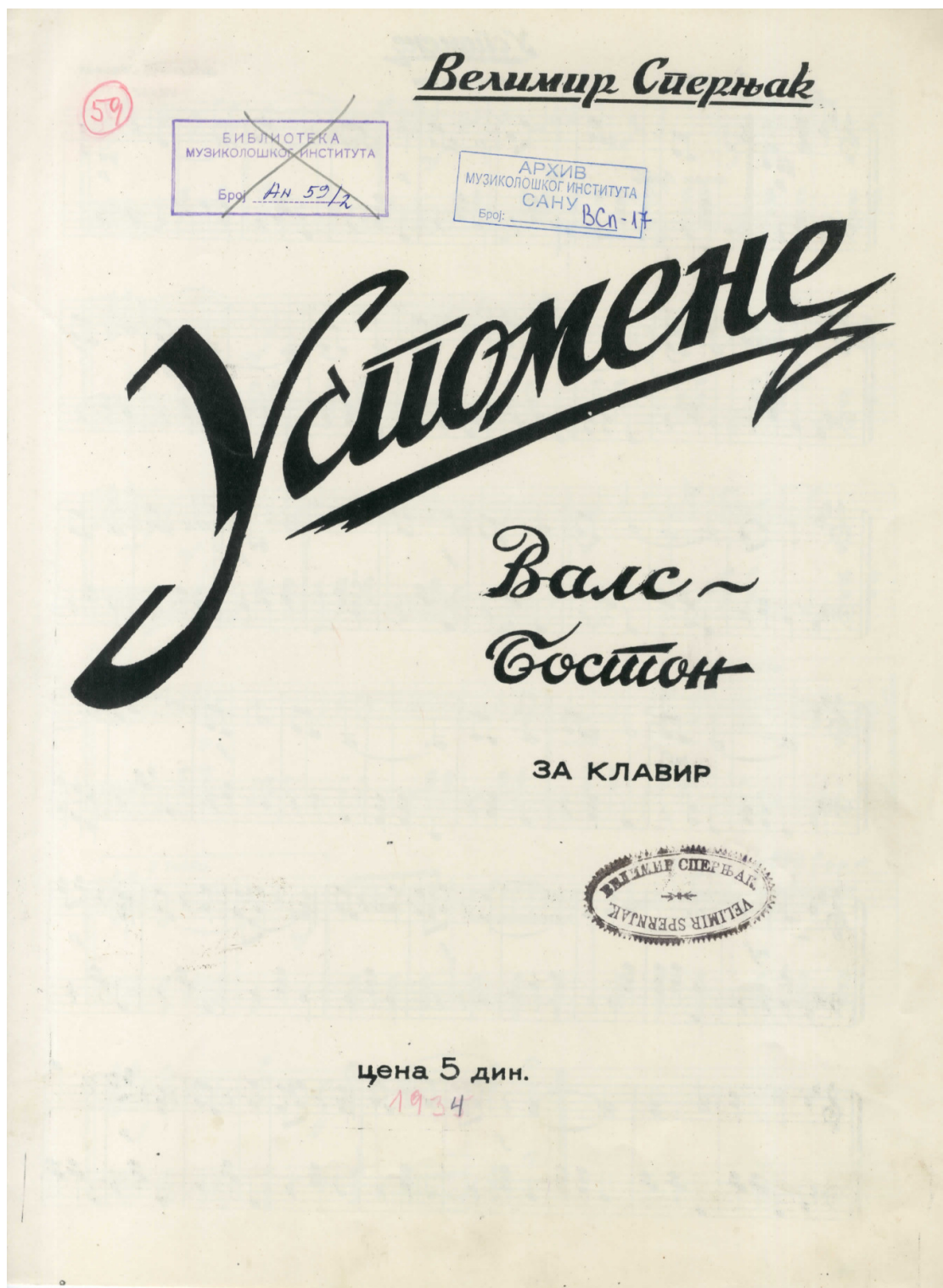


Figure 4.1 *Uspomene, vals boston* (*Memories Valse Boston*) (printed score, 1934)

Успомене
ВАСИ ВОСТОН

Велимир Сперьяк
VALSE

Tempo di valse
Introduction

The musical score is written for piano and bass. It begins with an introduction marked 'Tempo di valse'. The first system includes dynamics *p*, *sempre legato*, *mf*, *p*, and *p*. The second system is marked *legato* and *mf*. The third system includes *f* and *p*. The fourth system includes *mf* and *f*. The fifth system includes *mf*, *f*, and *p*. The sixth system includes *f* and *p*.

Figure 4.2 *Uspomene, valse Boston* (Memories Valse Boston) (printed score, 1934)

The image displays a printed musical score for the piece "Uspomene, vals boston" (Memories Valse Boston). The score is written for piano and is organized into six systems, each consisting of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various dynamic markings: *mf* (mezzo-forte), *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *ff* (fortissimo). It also features performance instructions such as "I volta" and "II volta" above the first and second endings, respectively. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Figure 4.3 *Uspomene, vals boston* (*Memories Valse Boston*) (printed score, 1934)

3. The importance of digitization for the care and preservation of composers fonds

Few points are to be underlined in regards to digitization, and will be briefly discussed here before presenting the challenges that digitization of Spernjak's fond posed as well as the tools and ways in which we overcame them.

As previously mentioned, the Archive of Institute of Musicology hosts a diverse array of legacies. Several documents date back to the beginning of the 19th century, whether in their original form or in the copy of the document that has long perished. One of such examples is the copy of the programme of the *Concert being held in honor of His Majesty's King Peter I's Coronation* in The National Theatre in Belgrade, on 8th of September 1904.

Taking into account the circumstances in which the documents were being curated, the time of their inception and existence, as well as the frailness of the material they were formed on, deterioration and the degree of their deterioration manifests on the quality of the document. Any written, oral or digital account on the existence, nature and value of a deteriorated document is vital to the extension of its existence. Therein lies the answer to question of the importance of digitization – the digital copy of a particular document documents not only its existence, but the data on the said document – where it was stored, what it looked like, what were the contents of the document, what were the particularities of a document and so on, therefore confirming its value and extending its existence.

Further argument for our opinion is the fact that “digitization of the heritage culture is gathering facts and their archiving in digital form.”¹⁶ Digitization should not be relegated to a level of mere ‘translation’ of documents from their analogue form to the digital form. What should follow up the digitization is a database, set in a manner that will provide easy and user-friendly access to the digitized archival material for “it is obvious that the transfer from analogue to digital form – whether of images or audio recordings – of this invaluable material would prevent further deterioration and damages, but would also lead to a greater accessibility for professional processing, multimedial representation and presentation in national, as well as international, scientific and, more broadly, culturological frames.”¹⁷ With that intention in mind, Institute of Musicology SASA in the following years plans to form a digital database that will be accessible and searchable to all those interested in the musical heritage of Serbia.

Digitization could never, however, replace the experience of inspecting a real physical document, but will provide endless possibilities in accessing and researching cultural heritage of the yesteryear.¹⁸ Our intention was, and always is, to preserve every fragment of our invaluable musical and cultural heritage.

¹⁶ Мирко Стојковић, *Улога уметности у дигитализацији културне баштине* [The Role of Art in the Digitization of Cultural Heritage] у: Ђуро Кутлача, Александар Костић, Драган Прља, Радослав Зеленовић (ур.), *Примена дигитализације у култури и науци*, САНУ, Институт за упоредно право, Београд, 2019, 79.

¹⁷ Katarina Tomašević, “Značaj digitalizacije muzikalija i zvučnih zapisa u Arhivu i Fonoteci Muzikološkog instituta SANU” [“The importance of Digitization of Music Collection at Institute of Musicology SASA”], *Review of the National Center for Digitization*, 2, 2003, <https://dajs.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/6279>, 50.

¹⁸ Uroš Ćemalović, *Pravo intelektualne svojine i digitalna transformacija: neka aktuelna pitanja*, Institut za evropske studije, Beograd, 2019, 129.

4. The challenges of digitization of Velimir Spernjak's legacy

Several documents (mostly manuscripts of musical scores) were damaged by rusty paper clips, rusty staples and often, sellotape, which had to be removed to prevent further damage to the documents. Instead, acid-free paper (folded in half) was used in place of the staples and paper clips to hold the documents together. Most noticeable was the staining and discoloration of unknown origin on several documents, as well as ink and pen bleeding, leading to stains on other documents. The composer mostly used red and blue ink, as well as the pencil that either started to fade or has completely faded out in several places. According to the archivist principles of organizing personal fonds, the material was sorted according to the type of content: personal documents, printed and published musical scores, correspondence and manuscripts. Within these type groups, they were separated into two subgroups: dated and undated documents, as there were many that were unfortunately lacking information on the origin and date. In order to start the process of digitization of Spernjak's fond, some preparatory steps were needed. This was clear from the very beginning, due to the fact that one of the greatest problems we encountered during the approach to Spernjak's fond was the random order in which several documents were held together: pages of manuscripts of several musical scores were mismatched and misplaced which had to be reviewed thoroughly and rearranged in proper order before the digitization. Besides the organization, the documents had to be dated and properly stamped with an adequate number. The work on the fond was, then, organized in three phases: 1) collecting, sorting and classification of the archival material 2) making of the detailed inventory list of the said material in form of a table 3) digitization of the material using Epson scanner GT-20000.

5. Concluding remarks

In this article we sought to bring attention to the rich contents of the Archive of the Institute of Musicology SASA and singled out the legacy of Velimir Spernjak whose legacy was organized, systematized, cataloged and digitized during 2022 and 2023. Despite modest means with which the Institute disposes, digitization of the legacies of various composers is implemented and conducted successfully, by virtue and enormous effort of its researchers. Every digitization effort moves us closer to our goals: preventing as well as slowing down the existing deteriorating quality of the archival materials; achievement of coherent and thoroughly organized and systematized archival material as well as managing to grant open access to interested researchers, as well as music lovers in Serbia. Spernjak's legacy, as well as those of other composers will thus become a part of a larger database that is currently in development and will be accessible online, therefore allowing these legacies to live a new, digitally mediated, life.

Acknowledgment

This paper was realized within the Institute of Musicology SASA, a scientific research organization funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (RS-200176).

References

1. Ćemalović, Uroš, *Pravo intelektualne svojine i digitalna transformacija: neka aktuelna pitanja*, Institut za evropske studije, Beograd, 2019.

2. Лекић, Богдан, *Архивистика*, Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Београд, 2006.
3. Марјановић, Наташа Д., Моника Ј. Новаковић, *Писани трагови о делатностима Велимира Сперњака (1870-1948) - заоставштина у архиву Музиколошког института САНУ [Written Traces of Velimir Spernjak's (1870-1948) Work – Legacy From the Archive of the Institute of Musicology SASA]*, *Зборник Матице српске за сценске уметности и музику*, 65, Матица Српска, Нови Сад, 2021, 49–72. <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/12310>
4. Милановић, Биљана, “Фонд композиторских заоставштина у Музиколошком институту САНУ” [“Legacy Collection of Composers in the SASA Institute of Musicology”], *Музикологија*, 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, 101–139. <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2679>
5. Стојковић, Мирко, *Улога уметности у дигитализацији културне баштине [The Role of Art in the Digitization of Cultural Heritage]*, у: Ђуро Кутлача, Александар Костић, Драган Прља, Радослав Зеленовић (уред) *Примена дигитализације у култури и науци*, САНУ, Институт за упоредно право, Београд, 2019, 77–85.
6. Томашевић, Katarina, “Značaj digitalizacije muzikalija i zvučnih zapisa u Arhivu i Fonoteci Muzikološkog instituta SANU” [“The importance of Digitization of Music Collection at Institute of Musicology SASA”], у: *Review of the National Center for Digitization*, 2, 2003, 46–51. <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/6279>
7. Петровић, Даница, *Музиколошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности (1948-2010) [Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (1948-2010)]*, у: *Музикологија*, 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, 11–58. <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2676>
8. Васић, Александар, *Архив Музиколошког института САНУ - колекција докумената, аутографа, преписа, старих нотних издања и фотографија [The Archive of the SASA Institute of Musicology: Collection of documents, autographs, copies, old editions of music printing and photographs]* *Музикологија/Musicology*, 10, Музиколошки институт САНУ, Београд, 2010, 71–100. <https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/2678>

Archival material

1. Anon. *Нова композиција [A New Piece]*. Босанска вила. 18. 30th September 1905. 287.
2. Сперњак, Богдан. *Биографија Велимира Сперњака – протојереја, композитора (1870-1948)*. [Biography of Velimir Spernjak – Archpriest, composer (1870-1948)]. 1951, 1992 (revised by Bogdan Spernjak). ВСП-4.
3. Сперњак, Богдан. *Библиографија композиција Велимира Сперњака*. [Bibliography of Pieces by Velimir Spernjak] 1992. ВСП-4.
4. Сперњак, Богдан. *Композиције Велимира Сперњака Поч-протојереја из Избишта*. [Pieces by Velimir Spernjak, late archpriest from Izbište]. ВСП-5.
5. Сперњак, Богдан и Велимир Сперњак, фотографија, Београд, октобар 1937, ВСП-7.
6. Сперњак, Велимир, *Протојереј из Избишта – Вршца*, фотографија, Недатирано, ВСП-8.
7. Стефановић, Димитрије. *Писмо Богдану Сперњаку*. [Letter to Bogdan Spernjak] Архив МИ САНУ, Београд, 1988, ВСП-1.

monynok@gmail.com

teodora.trajkovic93@gmail.com