

Croatian Radio Three
Series: Life of Music
Date and time: Friday 4 October 2013, 16.35 – 18.00
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BOOKS FROM SHELF 78

VIOLIN-MAKING AS IT WAS AND IS

Dear listeners,

as a new series of „The Life of Music”, begins, the author Nada Bezić welcomes you. First, I should explain the title of this series which reads: "Books from Shelf 78". Many library users know that the number 78 forms part of the classification system of books which concern topics related to music. Within the library system of the Universal Decimal Classification, UDC, the number 78 signifies the subject "music." So in these programmes we will, on the first Friday of the month, talk about interesting and unusual books about music.

Today's broadcast is entitled: *Violin-making as it was and is*. The sub-title is much longer: An historical, theoretical and practical discussion of the science and the art of violin making, the use of violin and violinists, amateurs and professionals. The book dates from 1884, and was published by the London publishing house Ward, Lock & Co., which gained repute as publishers of the first stories about Sherlock Holmes and the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The author of the book we talk about today is Edward Heron-Allen, a very interesting person with an unusually wide field of interests.

The story of Heron-Allen and his book will be accompanied, of course, by compositions for violin from the time when the book was created, the years around 1884. Prominent among them is the Violin Sonata in A major by César Franck. We will listen to the first movement, Allegretto ben moderato, performed by the violinist David Oistrakh and the pianist Vladimir Yampolsky. * COMPOSITION 1: C. Franck – Sonata for violin and piano, S-CDO5910, 6:17

Edward Heron-Allen was a man of encyclopaedic knowledge. Born in London in 1861, by the age of 18 he had begun work in his father's law firm. After that he decided not to study, because his interests were sailing from one area to another and he seems to have been extremely successful in everything. His first love was the violin, precise playing and violin making. He learned the trade with London's finest violin maker, George Chanut. Then he became an expert in palmistry, and achieved fame in London society and had a lot of success in America. He read palms and analyzed the handwriting of many famous people of his time. He made friends with his contemporaries, Oscar Wilde and his wife Constance, who asked him to do a chart for their son Cyril. Heron-Allen's third area of interest was quite different: with no prior knowledge and formal education he became involved with foraminifera, the single-celled, tiny marine protozoans that deposit themselves to create thick layers of limestone. His work in this area was so significant that in 1919 he became a member of the prestigious British Royal Society. He was among the first members of the Society for Psychical Research, i.e., the first society for paranormal research. When Heron-Allen wrote his stories, often with bizarre and sci-fi themes, he used the alias Christopher Blayre. His interest in and talent for languages led to significant results. Heron-Allen translated from Persian the Rubaiyat, the famous collection of poems by the 11th-century poet, Omar Khayyam. All in all, he was a true child of his time, the late 19th century. At the same time,

on the eastern edge of the European continent, the ancient story of the Persian narrator Scheherazade attracted one composer.

* COMPOSITION 2: N. Rimsky-Korsakov – Scheherazade, 1. stavak S-CDO1494 ili S-CDO69 10:23 ili 10:04

Violinist and under the direction performed the first movement, the Sea and Sinbad's ship, from the symphonic poem Scheherazade by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov .

It's time to introduce the book *Violin making* , the work of a 23 -year-old, the uniqueness and quality of which ensured that it has remained in print until today (evidence of this is the latest edition in 2005) . To my knowledge , there is only one copy in Zagreb libraries, in the library of the Croatian Music Institute. Opposite the title page there is photo of the young Heron - Allen, with beautiful straight features , and with an unfinished violin in his hand. A text of 360 pages follows, in three main parts : the historical, theoretical and practical. In the introduction Edward Heron - Allen explains that he dares to write a book because he has realized that despite much literature on the violin, there is no solid and practical manual on making a violin. The author does not hide his satisfaction with his book , and concludes: " Amateurs need no longer say in despair 'I should like to make a fiddle, but cannot find directions anywhere how to set to work', so that violinists may at last really know something about how their instruments are made, and so that those who would learn how fiddles are built can do so without going through the tedious and expensive course of tuition which I, and all other fiddle-makers, have had to endure. Thus, to the Theory, which has been my constant study ever since I first touched a violin, I have brought the Practice which has been a fascinating amusement in recent years, and I think I am right in saying that now for the first time the History, Theory and Practice of Violin-making have been combined in a single volume."

Based on the impressive literature that is studied, Heron - Allen gives us a handful of interesting facts from the history of the violin. For example : George Dubourg writes that „Queen Elizabeth was a violinist, and his statement seems to be confirmed by the wonderful fiddle, now exhibited in the South Kensington Museum, which is made of boxwood, beautifully carved ‘with woodland scenes’, and which is said to have been given by Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Leicester."

Heron - Allen mentioned among the forerunners of the violin the viola da gamba. Its sound is described as nasal, but very expressive, and he claims that at that time, 1881, there were (probably in England) a few amateurs who played the viola da gamba. He even found information about two ladies who played this instrument, indeed much earlier, in the 18th century. They must probably have had some courage to perform on such an instrument , especially if we consider that Heron - Allen claims that only by his time did women violinists no longer have to have special courage to perform in public.

Much of the information the author provides for the reader is on the one hand very approachable, and on the other there are numerous instruction books in the musical literature. Among other things, we learn that parts of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* were written for voice accompanied by viola da gamba . Among them is the recitative and aria *Geduld* . Performance by tenor accompanied by the Dresden Staatskapelle and conductor Peter Schreier .

* COMPOSITON 3: J. S. Bach – Muka po Mateju, br. 34 i 35, ukupno cca 5:30

The book *Violin-making* is really a do-it-yourself manual, written with the intention of providing the interested reader with really all the necessary information on how to make a violin. Edward Heron-Allen ensured the book's gravitas from the start: the book is dedicated to Queen Victoria's son, Alfred Ernest Albert, Duke of Edinburgh, who studied the violin for

a while. And the book shows how the author calculated on an educated reader, because there are Latin lyrics that are often inscribed on the bottom of violins from the 16th century onwards. The translation reads:

„I was alive in the wood
Cut by the cruel axe
In life I was silent
In death I sweetly sing.”

Adding to this interesting and complex book, are annexes such as *Gums, resins, and other substances used in compounding violin varnishes*. Amongst 27 ingredients are lavender oil, asphalt (type of resin), and dragon's blood (glue from South America). In a separate annex are various opinions on how to keep and preserve a violin. One method is to occasionally place warmed barley through the f holes to pick up dust from the inside of the violin.

As I said at the beginning, Heron-Allen was later a successful writer, and his writing skills are already reflected in this book. The final words are appropriate and not without pathos: „Until he has pursued the art no one can imagine the fascination of violin-making – the thousand pains the player never dreams of, the thousand touches the uninitiated eye never appreciates, the exquisite work of the interior which no eyes, save those of the maker and repairer, ever will be privilege to see. These are the things which make the Luthier love the work of his hands, as if it were his own child.

Years ago (it is said) there lived in Bremen a watchmaker, whose fame was universal, for his watches were the most perfect in the world. No one could discover the secret of his preeminence. At last he sickened and died, and the secret was revealed, for all his watches stopped one by one: - he had wrought a little of his own Soul into each timepiece, and when he died – they died also!

So it is with the Fiddle-maker: his whole soul is put into his work; but his work does not die with him, it lives, divinely sweet, till sheer old age crumbles it away, - till long after his grandchildren's grandchildren have lived out their allotted threescore years and then, in blissful ignorance of their ancestro who 'made fiddles.“ * COMPSITION 4: P. Sarasate – Ciganski napjevi, S-CDO3221 8:36

Violinist Itzhak Perlman, The Abbey Road ensemble, conducted by Lawrence Foster, played Zigeunerlieder by Pablo de Sarasate.

Following on from the text of the book by Edward Heron-Allen *Violin-making*, we should say something about the origin of some of the artwork in it. Specifically, amongst nearly 200 Heron-Allen drawings depicting predecessors of the violin or technical details, there are two humorous drawings. One of them, signed only with the initials RBH, is also on the cover. On it we see violin on a chair and a small mouse bringing a bow. Another drawing is at the very beginning of the book and shows a cat holding a violin like a bass and playing it. Added are the lyrics, which (according to internet sources) date back to the mid-18th century:

»Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the Moon,
The little dog laughed to see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.“

Translated to Croatian: »Mačka svira violinu, krava skače preko mjeseca, mali pas se tome smije, a žlica je pobjegla.«

The story of this sketch began several years before the book was published. Heron-Allen noted a drawing of a cat with a violin on the cover of a then new picture-book by

Randolph Caldecott, the famous English book illustrator. Immediately he wrote: " Dear Sir, I have only just seen your new work (...), will you allow me to say as a violin collector & connoisseur, that this is the first time I have ever seen a violin reproduced in a frivolous picture, where proportions & details are scientifically correct " Heron-Allen asked permission to reproduce the drawing, to which Caldecott gladly agreed. Thus the book of a man who was a rocket scientist and a great reader of palms reflects different sides of his character: at the beginning of the book there is an image of an Amati violin and – a drawing of a cat with a violin.

Here is the first sentence of the introduction: „There are but few of us who can look upon the above delightful drawing of Mr. Randolph Caldecott's, and deny that the Violin was one of the first impressions of our childhood. To me it has always been a most significant fact, that so many of the Nursery Rhymes with which we amuse our children are in some way connected with the fiddle.”

These words by Heron-Allen urged me to wonder how it is with violins and cats in our nursery rhymes? The answer I found in a convenient place: the 5th volume of the collection of *South Slavic folk songs* collected by Franjo Kuhač. Although this volume was published in 1941, Kuhač collected the materials during Heron-Allen's childhood. The songs in the collection do not mention the violin, but just a bear that grumbles with big „gude” (ie, "bass"). But cats do many things. In one song, "Maček išel v kovačiju," a cat wants to learn to be a blacksmith so that he can earn money and eventually buy a wife. (Incidentally, this rhyme has survived virtually to the present day, which is confirmed by the fact that it was registered last year in Mraclin near Velika Gorica by a student of Croaticistics, Paula Igaly).

We've come far, so it is best to have a rest with some music. I chose a work that not only was created at the time of Heron-Allen's book, but is a prototype of music for children. It is the *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns. Listen to this part: Long-eared creatures, Fossils and Finale. The performance is by the London Sinfonietta conducted by Charles Dutoit. * COMPOSITION 5: C. Saint-Saëns – Karneval životinja S-CDO1570 44“ + 1:19 + 2'

When you start researching the life and work of Edward Heron-Allen you really cannot not know where all this research will take you. For example, to - asparagus . At the end of his life our violin connoisseur became an expert on growing asparagus , and also wrote a manual . But let us go back to the period of his youth . The book on violin making was a success from the start, and the following year (1885) the second edition was published (a copy of that edition was used in the writing of this programme) . At the same time Heron-Allen went to Italy , as a special envoy of the organizers of a great exhibition in London's Albert Hall. The main objective of his trip through northern and central Italy was to study and record the old musical instruments in public and private collections . He had an unusual method of writing a diary: every day he wrote a diary in the form of a letter and then sent it to himself in London . When he returned home , he simply imported the scripts into volumes, now carefully preserved by his descendants .

The story of the above-mentioned exhibition in London will take us further. From the beginning there were plans to publish the exhibition catalogue , but that happened only three years later, in 1888 , when it was published under the title *Musical instruments , historic , rare and unique* . The compiler of the book is Alfred J. Hipkins , but in his introduction he makes no mention of Heron-Allen's contribution to the exhibition . The book is actually a collection of unbound large pages with delicate drawings in colour by the illustrator William Gibb . It displays 50 instruments from different periods and countries, among them , of course, violins. Perhaps this wonderful book is the dream of every collector and music lover , but certainly not easy to handle because the pages with illustrations measure more than half a metre , and

the whole book weighs a few pounds. In Zagreb, there is only one copy of this valuable book, which is located in the library of the Croatian Music Institute.

Before proceeding, let's hear another hit from Heron – Allen's youth : Berceuse for Violin and Piano op. 16 Gabriel Fauré . Violinist Adrienne Demax -Privat with piano accompanist Leo Roussel . * COMPOSITION 6: G. Fauré – Berceuse za violinu i klavir op. 16, S-CDO2037 3:30

To find parallel nursery rhymes in England and Croatia at the time of Heron-Allen and Franjo Kuhač was relatively easy. But a reconstruction of the history of violin construction in Croatia and Zagreb, is no easy task. When the Heron-Allen's book was published, in 1884, the old Zagreb master of violin making, Franjo Fink, now forgotten, had certainly already died, and unfortunately his violins did not survive either. The twentieth century brought two more violin makers with the name Franjo: the first was Franjo Kresnik, the doctor who was interested in the love of violins, and wrote an extensive study *The Old Italian art of building stringed instruments*. While Franjo Kresnik restricted his activities to the city of Rijeka, Franjo Schneider developed in Zagreb a diversified business as a builder and restorer of violins and owner of a store and factory for musical instruments. A permanent memorial to Schneider exists thanks to a donation by his daughter, and the Museum Franz Schneider, located next to the School of Applied Arts, still exists, so the museum's workshops and musical instruments are located in the immediate neighbourhood of today's violins in the building of the Academy of Music.

The most famous violin in Croatia is definitely the King by one of most famous violin masters of Cremona, Guarneri. The violinist Zlatko Baloković left the violin to the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, which not only care for the safety of this precious instrument, but also enable it to be regularly played. Therefore, in this show we have a chance to hear the King, in the hands of the violinist Tamara Smirnova Šajfar with piano accompanist Peace Fleece Šimatović. They perform music that brings us back to the year of Heron-Allen's book: it will be the first movement Allegro Amabile of the second Sonata for Violin and Piano op. 100 by Johannes Brahms. * COMPOSITION 7: J. Brahms – 2. sonata za violinu op. 100, 1. stavak DGO5056 oko 9

Dear listeners, with the sounds of Brahms' 2nd Sonata for violin and piano, we come to the end of the first in the new series of Books from shelf 78 in which they discussed the book, Edward Heron-Allen *Violin making*. The programme was edited by Nada Bezić, editor of the series is Gordana Krpan. Before the closing music, Bach's Chaconne from the Partita in D minor, BWV 1004, performed by Jascha Heifetz, I would like to thank Mr. Timothy McCann, Chairman of the Committee of the British Edward Heron-Allen Society, who helped me in collecting data on the life and work Heron-Allen.

Finally, allow me, dear listeners, a dedication to a recently deceased friend. The man who started a musical apprenticeship learning the violin, due to illness had to leave his beloved instrument and focus on musicology. He was Franjo Bilic, the editor and the author of programmes that for several decades defined Croatian Radio Three. * COMPOSITION 8: J. S. Bach – Cacciona iz Partite, S-CDO2744 12:53