Josip (Josef) Gostič

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MONOGRAPH
Marija Barbieri/Marjana Mrak: *Josip Gostiè – No more singers like him*
Kulturno društvo "Jo•e Gostiè", Homec & Nakladni zavod MH

The monograph about the great tenor Josip Gostiè – *No more singers like him* (Karl Böhm) – enriched the Croatian culture with a book that gives us a valuable and detailed account of several very lively decades, not only in the Croatian music, which could be scarcely found nowadays and will hardly ever again occur in the near future. This luxuriant bilingual edition in Slovenian and Croatian, released in Slovenia to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the artist's birth, presents Josip Gostiè, Slovenian by descent, education and his early career as an artist, as one of the greatest tenors of the Europe at that time, whose artistic personality is closely linked with the Croatian musical culture. Thus, no wonder that the greatest contribution was made by Marija Barbieri, a writer from Zagreb and an undisputed opera expert.

Josip Gostiè was a complex personality in Croatian music, who found his place among the leading tenors of the Zagreb Opera, intriguingly almost all of them of Slovenian descent. From Josip Rijavac in the 1920s, to the present leader Janez Lotriè, we now remember Josip Gostiè not only by his vocal potentials, specifically by his singular timbre, but also by the fact that he was a remarkable individualist, both as a character on the stage or podium and in his private life; by the kindness he showed to everyone around him, never saying anything bad about anyone. Indeed, this is exactly how the monograph, giving a detailed and rich description, accompanied by photographs and numerous reviews and reminiscences of his colleagues and partners, presents him and introduces him to those who did not have the opportunity to know him nor were lucky to have heard him singing and met him as an operatic artist. Already from 1930 he was occasionally performing as a guest singer at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, to eventually become its full member in 1937. Despite all his guest performances, especially in Vienna, he remained member of the Zagreb Opera until his retirement in 1960 and his last appearance on the stage was on 12th October 1963, in the Zagreb production of *Troubadour* – only two months before his death.

The introductory chapter of the monograph is about Gostiè's father, the organist, who was later on succeeded on that post by his son, also a fine organist. This introduction, written by the Slovenian musicologist Edo Škulja, outlines the background in which, in a certain way, Gostiè's extraordinary talent was molded. The introduction is followed by a chapter describing Gostiè's education and his engagement in the Choir of the Ljubljana Opera, penned by Marija Barbieri, and an account of his career as an operatic and operetta tenor at the Ljubljana Opera from 1929 to 1937, written by Marjana Mrak.

In 1937 he became a permanent member of the Zagreb Opera; I can still remember one of his first roles as Pinkerton, his partner being Nada Tonèiæ, with whom he later rendered many splendid appearances, such as the one in Massenet's *Manon* or Gotovac's *Ero s onoga svijeta*. In her description of that period, Marija Barbijeri, as she emphasized in foreword, "*made references to certain other theatrical events with aim to better situate Gostiè in that period and time and give a more credible account of this significant age for the Croatian National Theatre*." The delineation of the theatrical events in Zagreb of that period makes this monograph even more valuable from the aspect of historiography and theatrology. In addition to detailed information about Gostiè's appearances grouped by seasons, published in the monograph there are also photocopies of schedules of events from that period, reminding us of Gostiè's principal roles and of his numerous distinguished partners – singers and conductors.

JOSIP GOSTIÈ
Arije
Orfej HRT 30 (2CD)

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Josip Gostiè was an excellent opportunity for the Croatian Radiotelevision recording company Orfej to release a double CD with a total of 25 excerpts from operas such as *Aida*, *Faust*, *Lohengrin*, *Porin*, *Carmen*, *Otello*, *The Girl of the Golden West*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *Andréa Chénier*, *Ero s onoga svijeta*, and an important documentary recording of the second scene of the third act of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* sung by Gostiè in his very last appearance, which was arranged by the director of the Zagreb Opera Ivo Vuljeviæ, who was aware of the serious illness the singer was suffering from. The available foreign recordings could not have been used probably because of copyrights, and the quality of those presented here is not evenly balanced. Regretfully, the microphone was not very kind to Gostiè's voice, despite the lyrical softness he preserved even after he switched to the dramatic roles. He is best presented in the aria of Kalaf recorded in Ljubljana in 1959 and the aria of Ero, recorded 1962 in Zagreb under the baton of Jakov Gotovac, the composer of the opera. And yet, even in the last documentary recording of *Il Trovatore* Gostiè will impress us today by his high C note, sung just two months before his death. He was an indisputable professional, one of the greatest.