

## **Eugen Suchon (1908-1993) – the Founder Personality of Slovak National Music**

### **Introduction**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Slovak musical culture was, in comparison with the rest of Europe, developed in a different way. In its developmental tendencies there was evident not only in the adrift of<sup>1</sup> then-European course, but in comparison with the Czech nation which is the closed one to our nation. After the Czechoslovak Republic came into the existence in 1918, Czech musicians strived hard to raise the Slovak musical culture at an adequate level.

At a period when Europe begins to form avant-garde music, when A. Schönberg begins to publish the results of his compositional efforts to establish the form of his twelve-tone composing technique, in Slovakia in 1919 there was founded the first educational institution<sup>2</sup> established to educate professional musicians<sup>3</sup>. It is

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<sup>1</sup> That „adrift” resulted mainly in the overall cultural backwardness of present-day Slovakia, which was conditioned by strong magyarisation, but also by many other factors. From the history of our nation we are aware of the complex and diverse political development that Slovakia has undergone in the last hundred years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: from monarchical organisation of Austro-Hungary, through the democracy of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938), dictatorship of clerical-fascist Slovak State during the second world war in 1940s (1939-1945) and after the short 3-year democratic period (1945-1948) through the other – 40 year communist dictatorship (1948-1989) to the democratic consumer society with early capitalist features typical for the development after the change of political changes 1989.

<sup>2</sup> In the year 1919 there was established in Bratislava Musical School for Slovakia that was in 1928 promoted to Academy of Music and Drama and in 1941 State Conservatory.

<sup>3</sup> The other music-educational institutions were established after the World War 2<sup>nd</sup>: in 1949 it was Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava; in 1959 Conservatory in Košice and Conservatory in Žilina in 1961. The other educational institutions were established after 1990s: in the year 1991 State Conservatory in Banská Bystrica and other private and Church music conservatories, and finally in 1996 the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica.

similar also to other Slovak music institutions: There was established the first Slovak professional opera scene, although still only on a cooperative basis – Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava<sup>4</sup>. Opera house of Slovak National Theatre soon after it was founded, realised many successful European concert tours<sup>5</sup>.

Slovakia, however, still did not have the professional symphony orchestra<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, it is truth that in Bratislava it pursues its monarchist past, when there are regular concerts of major artists. In the period of 1<sup>st</sup> world war there come the following composers: Vítězslav Novák (1870-1949) – was awarded honorary doctorate at Comenius University in Bratislava, Josef Suk (1874-1935), Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Leos Janacek (1854-1928), as well as prominent foreign composers such as Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942), Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945) and others. In Bratislava there are organised concerts of Czech Philharmonic with Václav Talich, but also Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra with Richard Strauss and Bruno Walter. In the interwar period there were organised concerts of many excellent instrumentalists of world reputation<sup>7</sup>.

## **The Situation in the Compositional Output of Slovak Composers after the World War I**

Similar situation as we described above was also among the composers. After the establishment of independent Czechoslovak Republic music composer Ján Levoslav Bella (1843-1936) came back to Slovakia, however, he did not establish contacts with Slovak musical life. It was caused by the fact that he lived abroad for 40 years. Despite that fact he enjoyed the respect of criticism<sup>8</sup>.

At a time in Europe when there were established many organisations that associated contemporary music composers, in Slovakia were shaped the efforts to create Slovak national music. In 1920s Czechoslovakia became the establishing member of International Association for contemporary music – ISCM. However, mainly Czech composers are preferred to offer the results of their work. On the other side, we state, that counterbalance adrift of Slovak musical life, in comparison with Czech musical life, has very dynamic character from the very beginning.

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<sup>4</sup> The other opera theatres were established in 1945 in Košice and in the year 1959 in Banská Bystrica.

<sup>5</sup> L. Burlas, *Slovenská hudobná moderna (Slovak Musical Modernism)*, Bratislava 1983.

<sup>6</sup> In the year 1927 there was established Radio Orchestra in Bratislava, later renamed the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra. Professional symphony orchestras were originated after the year 1948 in Bratislava: in the year 1949 Slovak Philharmonic in Bratislava, in 1969 State Philharmonic in Košice and in 1974 State Chamber Orchestra in Žilina.

<sup>7</sup> L. Burlas, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> N. Hrkčková, *Tradičia, modernosť a slovenská hudobná kultúra 1918-1948 (Tradition, modernity and Slovak Musical Culture 1918-1948)*, Bratislava 1996.

It was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Czech educational institutions were open to talented Slovak musicians. Thanks to this historic fact the strong generation of composers enters Slovak musical life in 1930s. They promote in their work national musical elements of high artistic value. There begins to be formed the founding generation of Slovak national music, denoted also as Slovak musical modernism<sup>9</sup>.

### **Composers of the Older Generation**

The composers of older generation played an important task in the establishment of Slovak national music<sup>10</sup>. Its members – Mikulas Moyzes (1872-1944), William Figus-Bystry (1875-1937), Mikulas Schneider-Trnavsky (1881-1958), Alexander Albrecht (1885-1958), and Frico Kafenda (1883-1963) – gained various degrees of music composer's education and they, in a significant way, participated in the development of musical life not only in interwar period, but also before the World War I. They worked at various positions as teachers, cantors, church musicians and they formed the initial phase of emerging Slovak music education. Their composer's expression was based not only on the domestic folk music sources, but was enriched and enlarged in the features of expanded tonality. This was obvious mainly in A. Albrecht, F. Kafenda and surprisingly also in M. Moyzes. The significance of this generation in the formation of Slovak national music was at least symbolically appreciated by awarding the title of 'National Artist' to M. Schneider-Trnavsky in 1956. He was the first Slovak composer who was awarded that. This event is significant because the composer worked all his life as a choirmaster in religious services and the title was given to him by the representatives of the former communist dictatorial regime, which was characterised by the repression of religious freedom and by very sharp assertion of atheist worldview.

### **The Outset of Slovak National Modernism**

In the 1930s there was active the group of composers, approximately generational peers, the pupils from the class of Vítězslav Novák (a significant class master) at Prague Conservatory. From the three composers Alexander Moyzes (1906-1984), Eugen Suchoň (1908-1993) and John Cikker (1911-1989) a similar mission was expected, as was known from the case of Czech composers Bedrich

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<sup>9</sup> The concept was introduced in Slovak music historiography by Ladislav Burlas – see also L. Burlas, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> I. Hrušovský, *Slovenská hudba v profiloch a rozboroch*, Bratislava 1964.

Smetana (1824-1884) and Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) – the origin of *Slovak national music* that would carry all the attributes associated with the term. It was expected from them that they could plant Slovak national theatre in their compositions at the level acceptable in the international context. Composers' endeavour, especially the impact of foreign composers, was sharply criticised at that time. That was the case the case of A. Moyzes when critics found short composer's episode with the elements of jazz, in early 1930s<sup>11</sup>. Hopes for the aforementioned generation were fulfilled – even if the process was not straightforward and easy – by the introduction of the opera *The Whirlpool (Krútnava)* in 1949 which was from the very beginning considered the Slovak national opera. This generation of composers entitled by Ladislav Burlas Slovak musical modernism<sup>12</sup> was enlarged in other composers, especially the students of A. Moyzes: Ladislav Holoubek (1913-1994), Dezider Kardos (1914-1991), Andrej Ocenas (1911-1995), Tibor Freso (1918-1987), and others. These composers' enjoyed acclaim not only at home, but also abroad. This is evidenced by a variety of foreign performances of the opera *Whirlpool* at domestic and foreign opera stages since its opening in 1949 to 1985. The other operas by J. Cikker were also performed abroad with great success. For example *Mr. Scrooge* was performed in in Kassel in 1963; *The Game of Love and Death*, in Munich in 1969. The Symphonic works by other composers from the group, such as A. Moyzes and also by E. Suchon, were also successful.

### Eugen Suchon – Life Milestones



The leading representative of Slovak musical modernism, of the founding generation of Slovak national music, Eugen Suchon<sup>13</sup>, was born on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1908 in the beautiful vineyard town of Pezinok. The town lies approximately 20 kilometres in the north-east from Bratislava. Since his early childhood he came into active contact with music because his father was an organist and a skilled musician. In the domestic environment he

Picture: Eugen Suchon

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<sup>11</sup> N. Hřčkova, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> L. Burlas, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Eugen Suchon had two brothers – the older Imrich, played the cello and younger Anton (1923-1943) was a skilled violinist (E. Suchon, *Denník z notovej osnovy*, „*The Diary of the Stave*”, Bratislava 2012, p. 174).

learned the foundations of violin, organ and piano playing. Since 1917 he studied at grammar school first in Svätý Jur and later 4 years in Bratislava. In the year 1920 he started to study at newly established Music school in Bratislava piano playing in the master class of Frico Kafenda<sup>14</sup>. In the year 1923 he left grammar school and devoted his free time exclusively to music studies. In the years 1923-1927 he studied piano playing at Music school for Slovakia in Bratislava<sup>15</sup> as a student of Frico Kafenda and later of Libuse Adamcova-Svobodova<sup>16</sup>. During his studies he participated in music life of his home-town Pezinok, where was a rich music life at that time. He founded amateur orchestra<sup>17</sup> near Pezinsky sports club<sup>18</sup> that he conducted and wrote many compositions for its musicians. In his amateur compositions he reached remarkable acclaim while he composed more than 40 similar romantic compositions. He composed even more extensive works, such as ballet *Angelika*, *Concerto for piano and orchestra*, and even fragments of two operas<sup>19</sup>, and in the year 1927 he finished operetta *HE and his sister*<sup>20</sup>.

In the school year of 1927/1928 Music School for Slovakia was promoted to Music and Drama Academy, and on that basis it had equal rights with the State Conservatory in Prague and Brno. This fact brought other changes, they should open the missing branches, such as conducting, composition, playing the organ and drama division. In the year 1930 Suchon graduated piano playing in the class of L. Adamcova-Svobodova with *Sonate for piano H minor* by Franz Liszt<sup>21</sup>. Then

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<sup>14</sup> Frico Kafenda studied piano playing at Leipzig Conservatory in the class of R. Teichmüller, composition in the class of E. Paul and conducting as the student of A. Nikisch. F. Kafenda was an educated musician who was very well oriented in the latest composer directions of that time, including dodecaphony. He entered the history of Slovak music also as an outstanding organiser of music life (M. Palovčík, *Frico Kafenda*, [In:] M. Jurik, P. Zagar, *100 Slovak Composers*, Bratislava 1998, pp. 137-139).

<sup>15</sup> He had many friends from intellectual and circles and many were musicians or artists. He met a poet Jan Smrek, painter Martin Benka, Ludovit Fulla, Jan Mudroch, Peter Matejka or Janko Alexy, and also with poets Jan Kostra, Ladislav Novomestsky, and finally with literary critic and theoretician Alexander Matuška. (<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=725> [access 25.05.2015]).

<sup>16</sup> Prof. Libuse Adamcova-Svobodova (1901-1961) was a Czech pianist and pedagogue. As a solo performer she often travelled with Czech Philharmonic. She belonged to significant pedagogues of Academy of Music and Drama, together with F. Kafenda and E. Krizan (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 171).

<sup>17</sup> It was a saloon orchestra, which was founded in 1923 and he performed there, for example, the overture of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, but also works by Bela Keler, Franz von Suppe, as well as of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

<sup>18</sup> The fact that Eugen Suchon was an active football player in his youth is not well known (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 194).

<sup>19</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> E. Suchon was a very skilled pianist and during his studies he worked as an accompanist in National theatre of Bratislava. He even thought of the career of a piano virtuoso. He taught private

he continued to study composition in the class of F. Kafenda and conducting at Jozef Vincourek<sup>22</sup>. Frico Kafenda recommended E. Suchon to study *Third String Quartet* op. 30 of Arnold Schönberg<sup>23</sup> from the year 1927, while he insists that Suchon's graduation work (thesis) – *String quartet* known under the op. 2 – took inspiration from the concept of Schönberg's composition<sup>24</sup>. Suchon remembers in retrospection some circumstances connected with the study of composition at Frico Kafenda like following: „... during the study of composition Kafenda never asked his students to keep to folk expression or folklore”, he says that „Kafenda had in mind the priority of internal ideas and therefore he broadened the horizons towards experimental research. (...) He also tried himself to compose the composition in 12-tonal system and he recognised the principle of atonality. He wanted me to choose this direction too”<sup>25</sup>. He graduated the study of composition at F. Kafenda in the year 1931 by *Sonata for violin and piano* op. 1 and *String quartet* op. 2. In the years 1931-1933 he studied composition at Master School of Prague Conservatory under Vítězslav Novák<sup>26</sup>, where he was accepted without entrance exams<sup>27</sup>. He graduated his studies by *Piano quartet* op. 6, while during the study he created much more compositions, such as *A small suite with Passacaglia* op. 3 ESD 48a, song cycle *Nox et Solitudo* op. 4 ESD 49b, *Serenade for Wind Quintet*, Op. 5 ESD 50a and *Burlesque for violin and orchestra* ESD55. These compositions are quite mature in their compositional style and they have been performed until now. After he graduated master school of Prague Academy, he taught, in the years 1932-1937, at the Czechoslovak vocational school for women's vocation in Bratislava the subject Music Education<sup>28</sup>. For presentation purposes of the school choir he wrote one of the best and most popular Slovak choral songs

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piano lessons, music theory, harmony, counterpoint, music forms, while he had 12 students in Bratislava and Pezinok (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 192).

<sup>22</sup> Music pedagogue and conductor Jozef Vincourek (1900-1976) was in the years 1924-1945 artistic director of the Opera of the Slovak National Theatre. E. Suchon studied at the Academy of Music and Drama Department conducting in Vincourek's class in the years 1927-1931 (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 171).

<sup>23</sup> Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951) was a significant Austrian composer and music theoretician, the author of 12-tonal composing technique – dodecaphony.

<sup>24</sup> E. Suchon, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> N. Hřčková, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>26</sup> Vítězslav Novak (1870-1949) was one of the most significant Czech composers of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the very beginning he was influenced by Romanticism, while gradually he tends towards Czech, Moravian and Slovak folklore and Impressionism. He taught leading representatives of Slovak music modernism – Alexander Moyzes, Eugen Suchon and Jan Cikker.

<sup>27</sup> E. Suchon, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 195.

<sup>28</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 191.

– legendary choir *'How beautiful you are'*<sup>29</sup>. In the years 1933-1941 he taught at Academy of Music and Drama music-theoretical subjects and obligatory piano. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940 he married<sup>30</sup> Herta Schischitz<sup>31</sup>. The couple had two children – a son who was born on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946 and a daughter Danica<sup>32</sup>, was born on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949. In the year 1938 he started to work as a secretary of Academy of Music and Drama in the years 1941-1948, after the academy was renamed Conservatory, he was a professor of composition there. In the year 1948 he became the professor of Faculty of Education and in the years 1954-1959 he was the Music Education department head at the University of Education in Bratislava<sup>33</sup>. In the years 1960-1974 he was the professor at Department of Musicology of Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. In the same period he was a chairman of entrance commission for composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. After he was retired in the year 1974, he devoted his time to composition and theoretical activity. He died after a long and serious illness on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1993 and is buried in his home-town, Pezinok.

During his active life Eugen Suchon showed extraordinary organizational skills, when in the years 1946-1948, he was a member of the Prague Spring Festival Committee, in the years 1945-1976 he was a chairman of the Slovak Association of copyright protection (SOZA), in 1949-1950 he was a chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Slovak Philharmonic<sup>34</sup>, in 1963-1970 he was a chairman of Festival Committee of the Bratislava Music Festival, the Chairman of the Festival Committee Music Summer Trencianske Teplice and Piestany, in the years 1966-1969 he was the vice-president of the international organization

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<sup>29</sup> Choral songs were popular at that time what is evidenced by the fact that after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, it was considered as the national anthem.

<sup>30</sup> For E. Suchon's mother it was very difficult to conciliate with the marriage of her son (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 179).

<sup>31</sup> Herta Schischitz (1916-1995) was a student of Eugen Suchon. In the years 1928-1932 she studied the piano performance at the Academy of Music and Drama for Slovakia. After school leaving exams at State German Grammar School (1933-1934) and at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava (1936-1937), she studied in the years 1938-1940 at the Academy of Music and Drama for Slovakia, piano performance in the class of Anna Kafendova and the study of counterpoint and music instruments under Eugen Suchon. She graduated her study with public concert in Reduta on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940 (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 178).

<sup>32</sup> The daughter of Eugen Suchon PhDr. Danica Štilichová-Suchoňová, graduated at Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, the field musicology. She worked at the Museum of Music, Slovak National Museum in Bratislava, where she took care of the estate of his father. She married the Slovak poet Peter Štilich (<http://www.databazeknih.cz/autori/danica-stilichova-suchonova-54461> [access 25.05.2015]).

<sup>33</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> Slovak Philharmonic was founded in the year 1949. Its first chief conductor was a Czech conductor Vaclav Talich international reputation (1883-1961).

for copyright protection, CISAC in Paris, and finally in the years 1972-1982, he was the chairman of the Union of Slovak Composers and Concert Artists.

For his compositional work Eugen Suchon received 27 various awards and honours, out of which we select the following: in 1958 – title National artist at the occasion of 50<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary; in 1968 – Award for work, artistic and cultural-political activity; in 1969 – Honorary Doctorate of Comenius University in Bratislava; in 1972 – Commemorative Medal of Janacek Academy of Performing Arts in Brno; in 1978 – Gold Medal of Performing Arts in Bratislava; in 1979 – Talich Medal of the Slovak Philharmonic, awarded at the occasion of 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Slovak Philharmonic; in 1981 – Herder award, Hamburg – Vienna; 1981 – Annual award for OPUS publishing musicological work *Akordika from the triad to 12-tonal system*; in 1982 – Gold medal Monnaie de Paris (Paris Mint); in 1988 – national award, Order of the Republic on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of the composer; in 1991 – National award of the Slovak Republic for lifetime musical work, deeply connected with the core values of the Slovak national tradition<sup>35</sup>. In 2001, at the building of the Opera of the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava, there was unveiled the bust of Eugen Suchon and in the year 2008 at the occasion of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, was the square in front of Reduta (Bratislava) renamed the residence of Slovak Philharmonic in Bratislava to The Eugen Suchon Square<sup>36</sup>. At the occasion of 100<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Eugen Suchon in the year 2008, his birthday was enlisted in the calendar of UNESCO anniversaries.

## Characteristic Features of Suchon's Oeuvre

The works of Eugen Suchon<sup>37</sup> characterises initial inclination to late-romantic chromatics and to specifically conceived reality which he reached by detailed study of characteristic features of older Slovak folklore, that was sometimes Slavonic. This period of modality is characterised by the creation of particular mode which was entitled as modal total<sup>38</sup> –  $e \flat f g a b c d \flat e$  minor<sup>39</sup>. The composer used this material in melodic and chord component of his compositions. Material elaborated that way was introduced for the first time in 1939 in his *Sonatina for violin and piano* op. 11 ESD 60 that makes this work significant interface in the development

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=725> [access 25.05.2015].

<sup>36</sup> E. Suchon, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>37</sup> In his youth E. Suchon wrote approx. 40 compositions of various kinds and genres, including his *Sinfonietta* for orchestra, symphonic poems, ballet *Angelika*, or fragments of 2 operas (L. Burlas, op. cit., pp. 82-83).

<sup>38</sup> Ladislav Burlas denotes it also as 8-tonal total (op. cit., p. 122).

<sup>39</sup> L. Burlas, op. cit., p. 122.



of his oeuvre<sup>40</sup>. The characteristic interval of Suchon's composer's manuscript is the use of Lydian Quarts<sup>41</sup> – triton. It can be found in double form also in aforementioned modal total as the following:  $e^b-a$ ,  $g-d^b$ .

Typical works of his composer's style are *Sonatina for violin and piano* op. 11 ESD 60, opera *Krútnava* ESD 72, *Baladic suite* ESD 58b, *Metamorphoses* ESD 77a and ESD 77b in both versions (for piano and orchestra), as well as instructive cycle of *Pictures from Slovakia*<sup>42</sup> ESD 79.

Example of the score Nr 1. E. Suchon: *Whirlpool, Lullaby of Katrena*, the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> image

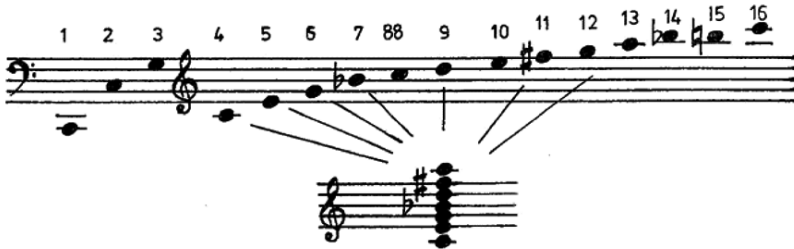
His significant period was the second period of his life when he showed the tendency toward dodecaphony, which he learned during his studies from his composition teacher, Frico Kafenda. This composer's principle was by Suchon derived from diatonic total –  $c-d-e-f\sharp-g-a-b(c)$ , which was made by derivation

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Slovak folk music is, in a significant way, rooted in the tradition of ecclesiastical scales – medieval modes.

<sup>42</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, [In:] M. Jurik, P. Zagar (Ed.), op. cit., p. 263; E. Suchon devotes his attention to this theoretical principle in his theoretical work *Akordika*, which will be described later in the study, M. Jurik, P. Zagar (Ed.), op. cit., p. 263.

from the chord<sup>43</sup>, comprised from 4 to 12 higher harmonious tones<sup>44</sup>, leaving out the tone c<sup>2</sup>.



Example of the score Nr 2. – E. Suchon. *Akordika*, Bratislava 1979, p. 16

Eugen Suchon approaches his harmonious thinking in his theoretical work *Akordika*<sup>45</sup>. In it he focuses on the development of harmonious thinking in the music of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and at the same time he theoretically elaborates mainly his own harmonious acts<sup>46</sup>. His theory of diatonic total relies on higher harmonious tones. In his choral thinking Suchon relies on the chords of thirds structure using all 32 harmonic tones with understandable omission of recurring tones, on the basis of what he gains 12-tonal sound which he denotes as synthetic 12-tonal sound. This is the starting point of his choral thinking that approached the technique of twelve-tonal sound technique and all choral forms are derived from that:



Example of the score Nr 3. E. Suchon, *Akordika*, p. 17

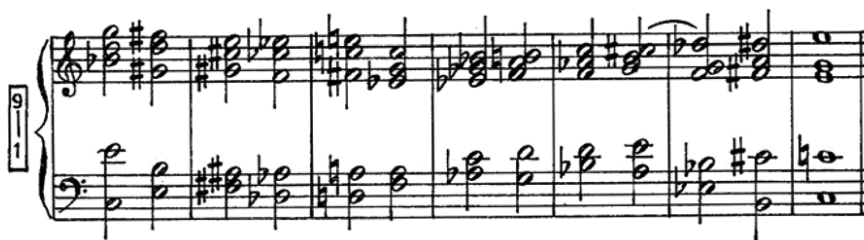
<sup>43</sup> E. Suchon devotes his attention to this theoretical principle in his theoretical work *Akordika*, which will be described later in the study.

<sup>44</sup> E. Suchoň, *Akordika*, Bratislava 1979, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Bratislava: OPUS 1979.

<sup>46</sup> We are aware that the scope of this study does not allow us to further concern of Suchon's theoretical work. However, we hope that this brief outlook makes some of the principles of his choral thinking clearer. This specific choral thinking leads into specific understanding of 12-tonal composer's system. In his book Suchon deals with very interesting choral phenomenon – chromatic total, or interval and choral combinations. His monograph is important for the fact that it shows numerous examples of musical creation not only from the works of foreign composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and also from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Interestingly in Suchon's choral principle there is „applied a certain choral form that is changed to 12-tonal basso. That means we use its derivation of transposed synthetic 12-tonal sounds”<sup>47</sup>. In that sense there exist a very interesting sample sequence of complete major-minor non-chords in the basic form of 12-tonal basso:



Example of the score Nr 4. Eugen Suchon. *Akordika* Bratislava: OPUS 1979, p. 41

This period is represented, among others, by the *Poème macabre for violin and piano* ESD 83, ESD opera *Svätopluk* 80, *Rhapsodic suite* in both versions ESD 87 (two pianos and for piano and orchestra) and especially *Symphonic Fantasia on BACH* ESD 93 for organ, strings and drums tools and *Kaleidoscope* 89b. It is interesting that the composer's two creative periods have common denominator – the transition from linear thinking to vertical thinking<sup>48</sup>. An interesting fact of Suchon's work is that abovementioned two songwriting principles are not mutually exclusive, but they indicate that the author deliberately constructed „his own multiform and yet monolithic lifecycle”<sup>49</sup>.

Suchon's significant composer's feature is his tendency towards balladic motives that has roots in philosophical core typical for many fields of Slovak folklore<sup>50</sup>. In Suchon's work there is one more significant feature the „combination of non-musical sources of inspiration with the principles of absolute music”<sup>51</sup>, and this influenced the other important feature of Suchon's work, that „his compositions have the pattern of musical drama”<sup>52</sup>. Suchon's oeuvre represents a rare balance of rational and emotional components of the compositional process.

<sup>47</sup> E. Suchoň, *Akordika*, p. 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 263.

<sup>50</sup> These features are seen in the majority of Slovak composers, who were took inspiration in Slovak folk music, more significant were in the work of Tadeas Salva (1937-1995), which was seen also in the titles of his works. Almost 50% has the term 'ballad' in its title.

<sup>51</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 264.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Eugen Suchon's Works

Eugen Suchon started to denote his compositions by opus number during his studies under Frisco Kafenda, his most significant teacher of composition at the Academy of Music and Drama in Bratislava. Suchon's works are in kinds and genres quite varicoloured<sup>53</sup>.

### Piano Compositions

An interesting phenomenon of his piano works is the fact that almost all of its piano pieces were orchestrated for symphonic orchestra or various chamber orchestras (with smaller or bigger time distance). The first significant piano composition is *Little suite with passacaglia* op. 3<sup>54</sup> ESD 48a, which was created during his studies under Vítězslav Novak<sup>55</sup> in the years 1931 to 1945. He orchestrated it later in the year 1967. *Baladická suite* op 9 ESD 58 was written in the years 1934 to 1936 in the two editions. The piano edition was premiered on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936 in Bratislava performing by Lisa Fuchs. It has 4 parts: (*Allegro moderato* – *Adagio* – *Allegro molto* – *Largo con malinconia*), while the fourth part, for the first time in Suchon's compositions appears meditative 'ballad' element. Orchestral version was performed a week later on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1936 in Bratislava<sup>56</sup>, performed by Bratislava symphonic orchestra<sup>57</sup> and was conducted by Karl Nedbal<sup>58</sup>. Immediately after the premiere, this work enjoyed great interest from renowned conductors as Karl Böhm, Wilhelm Furtwängler, K. Baranovic, Karla Sejnu a Paul Sacher, while in 1939 it was performed in Prague by the Czech Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic in 1940, and in Dresden, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Bucharest, Basel, Freiburg, Budapest<sup>59</sup> and other cities<sup>60</sup>. Similarly, dual nature also have

<sup>53</sup> The character of the study does not allow us to devote the space to complete works of E. Suchon.

<sup>54</sup> Nowadays it is the most performed piano work by E. Suchon.

<sup>55</sup> E. Suchon says: „Every Novak's student had to compose passacaglia for 2 reasons. Firstly, to learn consciously construct and secondly to train phantasy – more precisely, variation technique” (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 175).

<sup>56</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>57</sup> It was an orchestra that consisted of musicians who worked at the National Theatre Opera Orchestra in Radio Orchestra.

<sup>58</sup> Karel Nedbal (1886-1964) was a Czech composer and conductor who in the years 1928 to 1936 worked as a conductor of the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava. He was the nephew of world-renowned conductor and composer Oskar Nedbal (1847-1930), who was in the years 1923-1930 the director of the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava.

<sup>59</sup> On the advertising works by E. Suchon had merit the employee of editor's house Universal Edition in Vienna, Alfred Schlee (1901-1999), who promoted the works of contemporary composers. A Czech composer and theorist Alois Hába introduced him to the work of Suchon (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 179). Alois Hába (1893-1973) composed in microinterval tonal system.

<sup>60</sup> E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 93-94.

*Metamorphoses, five variations on the theme of their own* ESD 77b. Piano version ESD 77a was premiered in November 1953 and was performed by Herta Suchoňová, the composer's wife. Orchestral version was premiered by the Slovak Philharmonic and conducted by Dr. Ludovit Rajter<sup>61</sup> on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1953. This is a composition with clearly autobiographical traits, which reflects the events of the years 1935-1945. In its structure and overall concept it is based on a single theme, which is a type of monothematic composition<sup>62</sup>. Representative Suchon's work with striking dodecaphonic procedures is his *Kaleidoscope (Evoluzioni Armoniche)* ESD 89a from the year 1966. It is a multi-part composition, while each part has a special dedication: *Three Romantic Pieces* (To the memory of J. Suk<sup>63</sup>) – *Meditation (Dumka)* and *The Dance* (To the memory of B. Bartok) – *Three parts of contemplation* (To the unknown heroe of the Slovak National Uprising) – *Intermezzo* (To the memory of A. Scriabin) – *Impromptu with Variations and Finale* (To the young generation of Slovak composers)<sup>64</sup>. Especially the last part – *Impromptu with the variations and Finale* (devoted to the young generation of Slovak composers), explains Suchon's dodecaphonic system that is based on choral structures of twelve-tone bass, and was approached by the author in his theoretical work *Akordika*. In the beginning of this part the composer introduces the choral basis.

The first performer of *Kaleidoscope* was excellent Slovak pianist, a great promoter of Suchoň piano works, Klara Havlikova (1931-2007). In the year 1971 he orchestrated constituent parts of *Kaleidoscope* for piano, organ, strings and percussions ESD 89b.

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<sup>61</sup> Dr. Ludovit Rajter (1906-2000) was an outstanding Slovak conductor and composer. In the years **1924 to 1929** he studied at Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna (under Clemens Krauss and Alexander Wunderer – conducting, Franz Schmidt and Joseph Marx – composition, Friedrich Buxbaum – cello). In the years **1930 to 1932 he studied at Master class of Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music** in Budapest (under Ernő Dohnányi – composition). In the years **1933 to 1945** he was the first conductor of Hungarian Radio in Budapest, and at the same time in the years **1938-1945** taught at **Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music** in Budapest, first as associate professor, later in 1941 as a professor. In the years **1949 to 1976** he was the first conductor of the Slovak Philharmonic. In 1936 he was awarded – Doctor honoris causa, at New York College of Music (<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=2002> [access 04.06.2015]).

<sup>62</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>63</sup> Jozef Suk (1874-1935) was a Czech violin performer, composer and pedagogue. He was a student and son in law of Antonin Dvorak. As a violinist he was the member of world-known Czech quartet, the ensemble with world reputation for the high quality of Czech chamber music.

<sup>64</sup> <http://old.hc.sk/src/osobnost.php?lg=sk&oid=988&show=diskografia&cddetail=2501> [access 25.05.2015].

## *Impromptu s variáciami* Impromptu mit Variationen

MODELLO

I. VI. XIII. IV. V. X. IX. VIII. III. VII. II. XI.

Example of the score Nr 5. E. Suchon: *Kaleidoscope* ESD 89a – *Impromptu with variations*

### Two Musical Instruments

The compositions for two instruments are represented chiefly by the compositions for violin and piano. From the period of Suchon's studies under F. Kafenda is known his *Sonata in A flat major* op. 1 ESD 40 for violin and piano, *Sonatina for Violin and Piano*, Op. 11 ESD 60 in 1937, which already carries the main features of modal total. In 1963 he created a quite expressive piece inspired by the tragic event, the assassination of American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963), *Poème macabre* ESD 83. The composition represents Suchon's composer's principles of diatonic total. Clarinet players often perform his *Concertino per clarinetto e pianoforte* with orchestra accompaniment ESD 100a since the year 1978, in an original version.

### Chamber Compositions for Four and Five Musical Instruments

The first composition for string quartet, as a representative group of instruments of that group, is *String quartet* op. 2 ESD 46, which is Suchon's graduation work at the Academy of Music and Drama where he studied compo-

sition under Frico Kafenda. This work was influenced by the *III-rd string quartet* op. 30 from the year 1927 by Arnold Schönberg<sup>65</sup> that he studied at the recommendation of his teacher. This fact has a deep impact on the further development of composer's style. The permanent place in the repertoire of the Slovak Chamber Music has the *Quartet* op. 6 ESD 53 for violin, viola cello and piano from 1933 that was composed during his studies under Vitezslav Novak at Master's class of Prague conservatoire, and also *Six compositions for string instruments* ESD 86 from the years 1954 to 1965. *Serenade* op. 5 ESD 50a for the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn, belonging to Suchon's Prague student period (1932-1933) belongs to the first compositions for wind quintet in modern Slovak history.

### Solo Instrument with Orchestra

The first major compositions in this field<sup>66</sup> are *Burlesque for violin and orchestra* ESD 55 and *Fantasy Op. 7* ESD 73 for violin and orchestra, which are often performed together. The other significant work is his *Rhapsodic Suite for Piano and Orchestra* ESD 87, which is known as *Partita rhapsodica* in a version for two pianos. It has important position, not only in Suchon's works, but also in the Slovak music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Symphonic Fantasia BACH* ESD 93 for organ, strings and percussion from the year 1972, which elaborates popular cryptogram on the principle of diatonic total.

### Compositions for Orchestra

To this group of compositions<sup>67</sup> there belong mainly instrumental piano compositions: *Ballad suite* op 9 ESD 58b, *Metamorphoses* ESD 77b, *Symfonieta rustica* (1957, instrumentation of piano composition *Sonata rustica* from the cycle *Pictures from Slovakia*), *Highlander Suite* ESD 79b (1967, the eponymous instrumentation of piano pieces from the cycle *Pictures from Slovakia*). Separated

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<sup>65</sup> K. Medňanský, *Druhá viedenská škola a jej vplyv na vývoj slovenskej hudby 'The Second Viennese School and its Impact on the Development of Slovak Music'*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Prešov 2008.

<sup>66</sup> They were preceded by Late-Romantic compositions from his youth – *Concerto for piano and orchestra* (1926) ESD 20, *Elegy* for trombone and orchestra ESD 25 (1926), *Nocturne* for cello and orchestra ESD 37 (1927) a *Ballad* for horn and orchestra ESD 40 (1928) (I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 265).

<sup>67</sup> These compositions were preceded by 7 orchestral compositions created in the years 1923 to 1927: *Concerto Overtude G minor* ESD 7 (1923), *Overture of Slovak Comedy* ESD 15 (1925), *Concerto Overture Clown* ESD 96/1 (1926, from the cycle *From my youth*, for orchestra, in 1977), *The first suite* ESD 96/3 (from the cycle *From my youth*, for the orchestra, in 1976), *Overture miniature G major* ESD 28 (1926), *The night of witches* ESD 34a (1927, rev. 1977), *Symfonieta in D major* ESD 36 (1927, rev. 1977 ESD 96/2) (I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 265).

orchestral pieces are *Serenade* op. ESD 50b from 1932 to 1933 for string orchestra and the overture *King Svätopluk* op. 10 No. 1 ESD 56, and music for the *Barn play King Svätopluk* op. 10 No. 2 ESD 57. The last two compositions meant the first Suchon's artistic encounter with the important character of Slovak history that led the composer in 1950s to create the opera *Svätopluk*<sup>68</sup>.

### Compositions for the Stage

Eugen Suchon was enlisted to the development of Slovak opera art with his operas<sup>69</sup>. While his first opera entitled *Whirlpool* ESD 72 is often referred to as the Slovak National Opera, the second opera *Svätopluk* ESD 80 is linked to the Great Moravian Empire<sup>70</sup>. The composer worked at the opera *Whirlpool* ESD 72 in the years 1941 to 1949, while the story was inspired by the novel written by Milo Urban (1904 to 1982) *Behind the upper millhouse*. The librettist was an opera singer Štefan Hoza (1906-1982)<sup>71</sup>. It is a story of socio-ethical life that depicts the Slovak village in 1930s. Out of the tragic-ballad story the composer created musical expressive drama music of Janacek type. The core motif is the triumph of justice over the crime – murder, which is the impulse of dramatic conflict of the opera. The original version of the opera was marked by some religious overtones of prayers included in it, or by the denial of the main characters attention to God. Its premiere on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1949 was a great success of audience and critics, but the then political leadership accepted it with great distance. They forced Eugen Suchon to revise the libretto to the ideologically acceptable form. In that version it was premiered for the first time in 1952, conducted by Zdenko Chalabala (1899-1962) in the National Theatre in Prague. This opera was successfully listed on many foreign stages: Linz, Leipzig, Berlin, Weimar, Augsburg, Kassel, Nuremberg, Budapest, Cluj, Tbilisi, Moscow, Poznan<sup>72</sup>, and on the other

<sup>68</sup> The duke Svätopluk (?-894) was since 850s the duke of Nitra province and co-ruler of Rastislav, from 871 to the year 894 he was the third most significant ruler of Great Moravia ([http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sv%C3%A4topluk\\_I.\\_%28Ve%C4%BEk%C3%A1\\_Morava%29](http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sv%C3%A4topluk_I._%28Ve%C4%BEk%C3%A1_Morava%29) [access 04.06.2015]).

<sup>69</sup> Eugen Suchon in the early period of his work composed many works for stage: ballet *Angelika* ESD 16 (1926), with the premiere on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in the historical building of Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava. It was the first ballet title in the Slovak history; *Sweets* ESD 30, comic opera, fragment (1927); *Ester* ESD 35, opera (1927); operetta *He and his sister* ESD 38 (1927, was lost) (I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 265).

<sup>70</sup> Great Moravia was Western Slavic state formation, which in the years 833 to about 907 dealt with the territory of Moravia, Slovakia and the central and northern Hungary. ([http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ve%C4%BEk%C3%A1\\_Morava](http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ve%C4%BEk%C3%A1_Morava) [access 05.06.2015]).

<sup>71</sup> When Stefan Hoza started to work on libretto, E. Suchon had finished his 58-pages of libretto, which S. Hoza kept to (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 186-187).

<sup>72</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 206-208.



stages<sup>73</sup>. Its gramophone recordings were broadcasted in the most important European and overseas radio stations – including the U.S.A., Mexico and Japan<sup>74</sup>. In the partial form of the original version the *Whirlpool* was performed by the conductor Jan Valach<sup>75</sup> in Singspiel (Opera house) of Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theatre in Banská Bystrica. In 2008 at the occasion of a 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of composer's birthday they performed the original version again in J.G. Tajovský Theatre in Banská Bystrica, but this time it was renamed to National Opera House. There were introduced the original characters of Poet and Double, the holders of spiritual message of the Slovak nation. Music was reconstructed by the composer Vladimír Bokes<sup>76</sup> in 2003<sup>77</sup>.

The second opera by E. Suchon, entitled *Svätopluk* ESD 80 was written in the years 1952-1959 to the motives of the homonymous novel by Ivan Stodola. The author of the libretto is Jela Krcmery-Vrtslova (\*1924). E. Suchon used this theme met already in the 1930s, when he finished his overture *King Svätopluk* op. 10 no. 1 ESD 56, and *Music for the barn play King Svätopluk* op. 10 no. 2 ESD 57<sup>th</sup>. It is obvious that in that period he wanted to compose homonymous historical opera. This is a historical opera in three acts faithfully retaining historical facts. Its concept is very close to other historical Slavic operas such as *Libusa* by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) and *Boris Godunov* by Modest Petrovich Musorgsky (1839-1881). The opera *Svätopluk*, was designed on the principle of diatonic total, premiered at the Opera of the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1960, and it was conducted by Tibor Frešo<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> In 1979 soon after the opera *Whirlpool* was premiered in the American city of Lansing, Eugen Suchon received an interesting offer to teach at Michigan University (<http://www.zuspezinok.sk/eugensuchonhtml/index.html> [access 01.06.2015]).

<sup>74</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>75</sup> Ján Valach (\*1925), Slovak conductor, composer and organ player, introduced in Banská Bystrica the original version of Suchon's *Whirlpool*. After his emigration in 1968 he regularly performed it abroad (G. Füssyová, *A z tváre myseľ žiari 'And from the face the Spirit is Shining'*, Kežmarok 2005, p. 27-28).

<sup>76</sup> The fact that *Whirlpool* was reconstructed by Vladimír Bokes, is quite ironic, because his mother, a musicologist and music critic, Zdenka Bokesova (1911-1962) to a great extent participated in ideological-critical acceptance of *Whirlpool* and she recommended to submit it to „public discussion”, and this fact quite discredited E. Suchon in the public (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 186).

<sup>77</sup> E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 197.

<sup>78</sup> Tibor Frešo (1918-1987), Slovak composer and conductor. In the years 1939-1942 he studied composition at the Academy di Santa Cecilia in Roma under B. Molinari and conducting under A. Pedrotti. In the opera of the Slovak National Theatre, he works since 1942 until his death, except for the years 1949-1952 when he worked in Kosice Opera house. In the years 1957-1964 he was a principal conductor of the Opera of Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava and in the

Notable was also the ceremonial presentation of this opera in July 1961, in the amphitheatre under the castle Devin, one of the centres of the Great Moravian Empire<sup>79</sup>.

### Voice and Musical Instrument

In this field Suchon composed mainly song cycles with piano accompaniment<sup>80</sup>. During his studies under Frico Kafendu at the Music and Drama Academy in Bratislava he composes in 1929 (revised in 1985), inspired by folk poetry, his *Shepherd's songs* ESD 43. In Slovak vocal works there is especially notable Suchon's cycle of songs for mezzo-soprano and piano where the composer took inspiration from Ivan Krasko's poem (1876-1958) *Nox et Solitudo* ESD 49b<sup>81</sup>, which was created in 1932 during his studies in Prague under Vitezslav Novak. And other significant contribution to the treasury of Slovak vocal works is the cycle of songs for soprano and piano based on the lyrics of Stephen Zary (1918-2007) from 1961 *Ad Astra* ESD 81b<sup>82</sup>. All three cycles are the basis of vocal repertoire of Slovak singers<sup>83</sup>.

### Choral Works

The dominant position in the choral works by E. Suchon belongs to his composition written during his studies in Prague under Vitezslav Novak *How Beautiful You Are*<sup>84</sup> ESD 51a from 1932 inspired by the text by Peter Bella Horal (1842-1919). This choral work exists in the versions for female choir, male choir and mixed choir, as well as in solo version for baritone, bass and piano as ESD 51b<sup>85</sup>. From his other choral works we select the following: *About the mountains* op. 8 ESD 67 (1934-1942) for mixed choir; *About a man* ESD 82 (1962) for mixed choir inspired by the text by Lubovnikova (1898-1982), mixed choir and written inspired by the poetry by Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670), *Ghent Felicitas*

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years 1964-1968 he was its artistic director. To his most significant works belongs the opera for children *Martin and the sun* (I. Vajda, *Tibor Frešo*, [In:] M. Jurik, P. Zagar (Ed.), op. cit., p. 96-97).

<sup>79</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 211-212.

<sup>80</sup> Before he studied in Frico Kafenda's class, he composed 4 vocal cycles: *Lost dream* ESD 10 (1925, B. Mudroch), *Tantum ergo* ESD 19 (1926), *Death Bell* (1927, H. Pieschová), *Where were you, Janko?* ESD 96/5 (1928, from the cycle *From my youth*, rev. 1976-1977) (I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 266).

<sup>81</sup> Eugen Suchon orchestrated piano accompaniment for orchestra with the nomenclature ESD 49a.

<sup>82</sup> This cycle exists also in the orchestral version with the nomenclature ESD 81a.

<sup>83</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 265.

<sup>84</sup> This choral song was very popular and considered as extraordinary. After the origin of independent Slovak Republic in 1993 it was considered appropriate song for the Slovak national anthem.

<sup>85</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 266.

(1969) ESD 92. In the year 1988 he wrote one-voice *Slovak holy mass*. His last work is *Three prayers*<sup>86</sup> from 1991.

*Psalm of Sub-Carpathian Land* op. 12 ESD 65 for tenor solo, mixed choir and large orchestra from the years 1937-1938 with the text of Jaroslav Zatloukal (1905-1958) is considered masterpiece of Slovak cantata work. It is socially oriented work that was composed in a time of uncertainty and impending military conflict, which later led to the World War II. It was premiered on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938 and conducted by Karl Nedbal. The composer devoted it to his teacher Vítězslavov Novak<sup>87</sup>.

### Compositions for Children

Eugen Suchon devoted a lot of attention to the works for children. The result of his efforts is extraordinary cycle called *Pictures from Slovakia* ESD 79 (1954-1956). This piece is precisely written and from methodological aspect it brings gradual technical and artistic demands. It consists of 6 cycles in various instrumental and choral versions: *I. I am a little girl* – piano, or a choir for children, or 3 violins; *II. When wolves huddled* – piano, or a choir for children, or a string quartet; *III. Falcon overflew* – piano or string quartet, string orchestra; *IV. Sonatina* – piano or string quartet, string orchestra; *V. Highlander Suite* – piano or orchestra – instrumented in 1967; *VI. Sonata rustica* – piano or orchestra – *Symfonieta rustica* – instrumented in 1956. The whole cycle is based on modal total and in the first three cycles – *I. I am a little girl*; *II. When the wolves huddled*; *III. Falcon overflew* the composer uses folk songs.

From the other compositions for children, very interesting ones are the following: *Little mouse cooked a jelly* – nursery rhymes, *Songs for the Dawn* ESD 108 from 1984 – children's choir, text of J. Pavlovič, J. Turan and P. Štilich and *Calling Spring* ESD 106 to the text of Jan Holly (1785-1849) for children's choir and strings<sup>88</sup>.

### The Other Works

Similarly as many Slovak composers, also Eugen Suchon devoted his attention to arrangements of folk songs, especially for choirs: *Slovak Folk Songs* ESD 44 for tenor, mixed choir and orchestra (1932); *Songs from Terchova* ESD 78 for

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<sup>86</sup> Eugen Suchon was a very religious man. He remembers that when he was finishing his opera *Whirlpool* he: „Thanked God for his grace, that he blessed me and I could finish my work, which took me almost 8 years” (E. Suchoň, *Denník z notovej osnovy...*, p. 158).

<sup>87</sup> I. Hrušovský, op. cit., p. 202-204.

<sup>88</sup> I. Vajda, *Eugen Suchoň*, p. 266-267.

baritone, mixed choir and orchestra; *Reverberances* ESD 102 for mixed choir (1980); *Two Slovak folk songs* ESD 110. Eugen Suchon is the author of film music *The fight ends tomorrow* ESD 76 from the year 1951.

### **Theoretical Work**

Theoretical work of Eugen Suchon can be divided in three fields: occasional writing of scientific papers in journals, chiefly for the journal *Slovak music*<sup>89</sup>. The second field are textbooks which he wrote in co-authorship with a musicologist Miroslav Filip (1932-1973): *Comprehensive theory of music*, edited by Bratislava: Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo 1955, *Theory of harmony I, II*, edited by Bratislava Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo 1959, *Brief theory of music*. Bratislava 1962. The third field is represented by music scientific work *Akordika*, that is one of the most significant theoretical works in Slovak music-scientific literature<sup>90</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Eugen Suchon belongs to the most significant Slovak music composers whose success and popularity crossed the borders of Slovakia. With his composer's style that implemented not only modal, but also dodecaphonic elements into organic and compact composer's whole and he created unique composer's style. His opera *Whirlpool* (was performed abroad under the naming of *Katrena*) is also today a part of repertoire of all Slovak operas and theatres. It finds its way also to the foreign opera stages. Eugen Suchon with his compositions showed that it is possible to implement elements of folklore in a unique artistic approach. He is a good source of inspiration for contemporary generation of young Slovak composers. His synthetic composer's style gives to his work the patina of exceptional individuality also for contemporary generation.

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<sup>89</sup> It became extinct in the period of normalisation after the invasion of communist forces in the beginning of 1970s.

<sup>90</sup> We depicted it briefly earlier in the text.

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#### Summary

##### **Eugen Suchon (1908-1993) – the Founder Personality of Slovak National Music**

Eugen Suchon (1908 to 1993) belongs to the generation of Slovak musical modernism and to the founders of Slovak national music. He studies at the Academy of Music and Arts in Bratislava and in the years 1931 to 33 he studied the composition at Master's class of Prague Conservatoire under Vítězslav Novak. By the detailed study of Slovak folklore he reached particular composer's style, which is represented by his own modal feeling. Suchon is considered one of the most significant representative of modal thinking in European music of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his compositions were influenced by dodecaphony.

He created the first Slovak national opera *Whirlpool*, which is abroad presented *Katrena*, according to the main character. The core of his creation is piano and symphonic music, and the significant phenomenon is the fact that almost all his piano works were orchestrated by him later. He is the author of 6-part cycle of piano compositions for children and youth *Pictures from Slovakia* that was orchestrated for various orchestras, from violin trios to symphonic orchestra. Eugen Suchon in a significant way contributed to the development of Slovak and European music.