

Living the intangible culture
Vranje music

The interview with Mrs. Ivana Tasić Mitić was conducted by Vladimir Kolarić in February 2022 via Zoom



Ivana Tasić Mitić is 40 years old. She was born in Vranje and still lives in this city. By education, she is a doctor of the methodology of classroom teaching, while by profession she is a professor of the methodology of teaching Serbian language and literature. Also, Ivana is a renowned interpreter of Vranje city songs. I talked with Ivana about Vranje music, an element of the living cultural treasure of Serbia.

Vladimir Kolarić (VK): How would you describe your relationship with Vranje Music?

Ivana Tasić Mitić (ITM): I was born in Vranje, and I still live in this beautiful city. I come from a family in which Vranje's musical heritage has been nurtured and preserved from oblivion for a long time. I have been interpreting the Vranje city song both independently and as a vocal soloist of the ethno group "Izvor" ("The Water Spring" or "The Source") for more than 25 years.

VK: What does Vranje music, an element of the living cultural treasure of Serbia, mean to you personally?

ITM: I perceive Vranje's musical heritage as a reflection of the identity of the people of the Vranje region, their mentality, customs, folk costume, language, and everything that, in a cultural sense, shapes the inhabitants of this region in the far south of Serbia.

VK: What knowledge and experiences did you gain by practicing the Vranje City Song as a part of Vranje's musical heritage?

BMI: By practicing the Vranje musical heritage, I gained valuable knowledge about the way of life and living conditions of the people of Vranje at the end of the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century. I got to know many authentic personalities who lived in Vranje at that time, and whose life stories inspired songs. I learned about significant events that took

place in my city and our region. In a word, I learned a lot about the sensibility and mentality of the inhabitants of the Vranje area.

VK: In your opinion, why is music, and especially city songs, important for Vranje?

ITM: Broadly speaking, Vranje music is part of the living cultural wealth of Serbia. Observed narrowly, specific musical expressions developed in Vranje, and especially the Vranje city song, preserve the tradition and culture of Vranje, the language, and customs of the people from Vranje and the Vranje region. This specific musical expression reflects a deep sensibility and temperament of the people who live and have lived in this area, preserves the language and customs in their original form, speaks of authentic personalities and events, depicts the spirit of an environment... For that reason, it is necessary to make a great effort to preserve this living cultural treasure for generations to come.

VK: Is Vranje music connected with other practices of the intangible culture in Serbia? If so, in what ways?

ITM: I would say that the Vranje musical heritage is most closely connected with the intangible heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. This is mostly reflected in the musical expression (rhythm and melody) and the topics it deals with. I assume that the geographical connection and almost identical historical circumstances contributed to that the most.

VK: If you think that Vranje's musical heritage is important for other communities in Serbia, briefly explain why.

ITM: Vranje's musical heritage is undoubtedly important for other communities in Serbia. In order to understand the tradition and culture of a nation, it is necessary to know all its elements, and Vranje music is an indispensable element of the culture of the Serbian people. Although Vranje is known throughout Serbia for its musical heritage, I think that it is not present in other Serbian areas to the extent that it should be. That is why it is necessary to make efforts to promote it and get it closer to the members of other communities in Serbia.

VK: In your opinion, in what ways can the awareness of our fellow citizens be raised about the importance of Vranje's musical heritage?

ITM: The role of the media is crucial, especially radio and television, where adequate shows dedicated to Vranje's musical heritage and audio and video recordings of Vranje's songs would contribute to the popularization of this living cultural treasure. Also, a significant contribution could be provided by organizing festivals and similar events, where the Vranje musical heritage would be presented.