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The 15th INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNE OF COMPOSERS
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Considering that on the pages of this magazine we had expressed certain qualms in regards to the profile and qualitative scope of the International Tribune of Composers in the previous couple of years, after the 15th Tribune, our strongest impression is a sort of merging of all the fundamental – creative-performance and editorial-organizational – planes of its existence. For the duration of four days, six concerts were held and 37 compositions performed in the Kolarac Endowment building, the Belgrade Philharmonic and the Guarnerius Art Center, of which almost two thirds were premieres for the local music audience. The strongest impact of this year's festival was the content orientation of certain concerts and the clear artistic position of the performers and ensembles carrying them out. In this way, the sorts of programs-recitals were avoided – made up of mutually disconnected compositional poetics and a disharmonized level of performance – which had frequently made the Tribune's program orientation considerably vague. Consequently, in spite of the fact that particular program selections and performance achievements can be put under discussion, it was possible to pin down, contextually and poetically speaking, the concerts performed at the 15th Tribune, and thus create a listening platform and a critical treatment of the festival.

Pursuant to one of the main program aims of the Symphony Orchestra and the Choir of Radio-Television Belgrade, this ensemble – under the direction of Bojan Sudjić – was bestowed with the honor of opening the Tribune (on November 18) and the presenting of local music opuses. The compositions *Dptych* op. 166 for English horn and chamber orchestra by Dejan Despić (2003), Concert for tuba and orchestra by Ivan Jevtić (1992), and *Voice of the Earthlings* for mixed choir and orchestra by Vladan Radovanović (1992/95) were performed as consistent, identifiable, and lasting creative selections. We can say that in Despić's life and compositional jubilee year, the value and status of his oeuvre – perhaps even more than the *Dptych* itself – have contributed to the decision to award the mentioned oeuvre with the Mokranjac award for 2005. Jevtić's Concert was presented to the Belgrade public for the first time. In this composition with a clear four-movement model, and especially allowing for expected dramaturgical twists particularly worked out in the ironically cutting *Scherzo diabolico* second movement, tuba player Eric Fritz stands out in every way. The first performing of Radovanović's oeuvre was perceived as highly specialized music, on both the levels of compositional-technical treatment and the requirements of perception, that is to say, true to the author's interpretation articulated in the program's commentary, as an embodiment of universal musical modernity imbued with a personal vision of the planet's cosmic reverberating.

Presented that same evening at the concert of the “Slavko Osterc” trio and the soloists of the Belgrade Philharmonic under the direction of Jürg Wyttenbach, was a program made up of the oeuvres of the European modern movement and the opuses of the younger generation of Serbian authors. The evening was structured around the music of Giacinto Scelsi. A dominant and the most impressive tone of the evening was rendered by this author’s opening *Tre pezzi*, created in 1956. The distinctive velvety Scelsi sound, tinged in the mentioned oeuvre by a deep melancholy, was brilliantly interpreted by saxophone player Dejan Prešiček. It was precisely that soft sonority which the instrumental ensemble was lacking while interpreting Scelsi’s composition *Kua* (1959), for soprano-saxophone and seven instruments, at the end of the concert. The premiering of the oeuvres of Ivan Brkljačić and Svetlana Savić redressed, each in their own way, a continuity with the already constructed authorial poetics and sensibilities. On one hand, in the piece *Fliza* for flute solo and chamber string orchestra, as one of the numerous results of Brkljačić’s longtime cooperation with a Slovenian ensemble, the author extends the intimistic-sentimental expressive level of his considerable opus. On the other hand, Savić’s *Transversions* postulate the poetics of the fragment or excerpt from a musical continuum and, together with the *D-versions* composition for tape performed the following day, make up segments of a sort of ‘cycle arising’, which the composer has been occupied with in recent years. Historically clearly contextualized, the uneven punctualistic language of Wittenbach’s oeuvre *Division* from 1964 clashed with the depicted audial context.

The concert of violinist Ana Milosavljević on November 19 marked a certain decline in regards to the 15th International Tribune of Composers as a whole. This concert was by its duration overdimensioned, and by its contents mostly not particularly provocative. Considering the fact that she lives and works in the US, it is logical that the artist, with the exception of the composition *Memo* for violin and portable cassette recorder, based on a theatrical work by composer Michel van der Aa, presented a program which epitomizes a small part of the most contemporary compositional scene. Dominating in a larger segment of the program were multiple tests of the interrelations of elements of sound texts differently generated (instrumental/violin, vocal/spoken and electronic), as well as their relation with visual and verbal texts. The oeuvre *Al’ Airi lepo sviri* for violin, tape and video by Milica Paranosić was based on a somewhat simplified, completely semantic congruency of all the represented elements and their focusing on the national secular and spiritual traditions, while in the composition *Before and After the Tekke* for violin and tape by Svjetlana Bukvich-Nichols the literal transposition of music folklore had a prosaic intonation. In the nocturnal oeuvre *The Old Rose Reader* for violin, electronic sound and video by Frances White, the lucid sound of the spoken text overshadowed the composed music, as well as the picturesque video recording. The issue of the role and status of the performer/musician and the author was fundamental for the understanding of Van der Aa’s oeuvre. Analogous with some other vocal-instrumental works of the Dutch composer, they were tested by a technique of superposing the live performer with a recording of the same performance carried out in a real point in time. Performed in this group of oeuvres was the musically unpretentious piece *Fiddle Faddle* for solo violin and computer by

Neil Rolnick. Except for the mentioned, the program also included the composition *Lila* for solo violin by Aleksandra Vrebalov, as well as the *Sonate printaniere* for solo violin and piano by Dušan Bogdanović, in which a certain inadequacy of the young female violinist's performing *brio* was notable.

At the concerts of the Austrian ensemble *Acrobat* (November 20 and 21) an excerpt from the contemporary European creative space was presented, originating mostly from the compositional-pedagogical workshop of Reinhard Febel, professor at the Salzburg Mozarteum University. To be precise, except for the oeuvre of Febel himself as well as the opuses of mostly the younger composers in his class, the ensemble's repertoire also included the oeuvres of Theodor Burkali, a member of the mentioned ensemble, as well as Simone Movio and Renato Miani. Thus, due to the compositional seminar held by Reinhard Febel on November 20 to 22 for young composers from the region, this composer was given a considerable amount of space at the 15th Tribune. And, we can say, rightly so. For, one of our most prominent impressions from this year's festival – on the level of not just the creative, but also the performing scope – is linked with the performing of Febel's composition *Die Masken des Pierrot* for soprano and piano. This truly theatrical piece, compressed in no more than several minutes, with an expressionistic honed expression, conceived by a rapid interchanging of very intense conditions spanning from the grotesque and ghastly hideous humor and mockery, to sadness and weeping, to sentimental outbursts, is very powerful, somewhat even frightening in its effect, supported to a large extent by the consummate interpretation of Elisabeth Kallos, soprano. In regards to Febel's *Choralbearbeitungen nach Johann Sebastian Bach* for piano, four hands, there is the complex issue of the authorship of the music oeuvre: how are Bach and his music presented to today's listener by means of authorial intervention? Which layers of meaning envelop his oeuvre and would we, if we were to unearth them, find the "real" Johann Sebastian Bach there or the constructed and unsteady site of our performances? Fausto Tuscano in his composition *strofe* for soprano and ensemble was involved with similar issues, albeit using Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's solo song as a model. In Febel's miniature *Dodo* for soprano and piano, we encountered the materialism of the vocal object, and in the large cycle *Zen and the Art of Piano Playing* by the same author we came upon a contemporary interpretation of the tradition of character piano etudes.

Except for Tuscano, a series of young authors, mostly Febel's graduate students, presented themselves at the *Acrobat* ensemble's concerts. The pieces *The Sound of Quiet Thoughts* by Jee Soo Shin, *Seelenwanderung-Ostwind* by Manuel de Roo, *Polly Nichols' Sketch* by Juan Garcia Rodriguez, *Trifida* by Ana Malekk, *Zum arabischen Coffee-Baum* by Josef Irgmeier, and *Di fragili incanti* by Movio interconnect the authors' inclination for sound researches. The piece *Der Brief für meinen Vater* by Irena Popović, conceived as a miniature theatrical scene in which the performers also take over the role of the story-teller, is unmistakably Irena's, with its half-experimental and half-performable spirit. The virtuoso Burkali presented us with an exquisite experience with the interpretation of his technically very demanding composition *aMorte* for bass-clarinete and violoncello.

A special place at the 15th International Tribune of Composers was taken up by the concert of the Ensemble for new music (on November 20). Presented at this concert – except for the composition

Geneté by Thomas Herwing Schuler and *Holiday Traffic* by Aris Carastathis, pursuant to the tradition of the mentioned group – were new oeuvres of local authors. Alas, due to a coinciding of the ending of the *Acrobat* ensemble’s concert and the beginning of the concert of the Ensemble for new music, the author of this overview could not listen to the first composition on the program of our renowned ensemble (*Gray* by Milica Djordjević). In the continuation, with exceptionally professional performing, several significant individual creative breakthroughs ensued. In the composition *Lost fragments* for clarinet, violoncello and piano, Miloš Zatkalik displayed his “other face”: broadening the expressive palette in relation to some of his former, frequently objectivistically insulated oeuvres, an intensifying of thematic processes, as well as complex work techniques with a rhythmic component, which resulted in freeing the “bloodstream” of Zatkalik’s music. In the suite *Three ways* for flute and piano by Mirjana Živković, albeit realized by way of a conventional inter-correlating of stands according to the tempo order quick-slow-quick, what enchanted – especially in the middle movement – was a fresh melodic invention and, seemingly vanishing in today’s age, a touching and direct emotionality. As another example of the author’s anti-modern attitude, we heard the *Quatre poèmes* set to the verses of Rainer Maria Rilke and composed by Aleksandar Damjanović, a composition with a very delicate sound and a detached expression, which should not be perceived in a negative sense. The ending of the Ensemble for new music concert was very interesting and exciting. In two fresh, but very impressive and accomplished authorial oeuvres – in the large three-movement piece *The White Angel* for Djura Živković’s chamber orchestra, and in a four-movement suite *I torri di San Gimignano* for brass, string instruments and drums by Dragan Latinčić – the question of the referentiality of music was posed: while Živković was occupied by the transposing of his personal experience of the famous religious performance into a specific harmonic system, Latinčić – by way of inventive experimentation with the referential stylistic range of the traditional suite form – has fundamentally transformed this form.

It seems a good deal of time will pass until a recognizable, specific and autonomous profile of the International Tribune of Composers is developed. In a set of circumstances which in the history of this festival were most frequently of neither an artistic nor a professional nature, we are aware of the fact that is to be a difficult process. At the same time, there is also the question whether, considering the practically inconceivable diversity of contemporary compositional practice, this can be done at all. Or perhaps it is this diversity that the recognizable image of the Tribune should be built upon.

Translated by Elizabeta Holt