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**KoMA '5 FESTIVAL**

This is the fifth December in a row that the KoMA (Koncerti mladih autora [Concerts of Young Authors]) Festival has offered the Belgrade audience an opportunity to hear new works of the youngest generation of authors in one place. The festival is organized by the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, and supported by the Belgrade City Department of Culture, Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports, and SOKOJ. Except for being the only youth music festival in our country, in addition to the International Review of Composers, KoMA is also the only festival of new music which can be expected with some degree of certainty year after year, at least as far as the situation in our culture allows.

KoMA '5 was held at the Belgrade Philharmonic Hall on Monday, December 22 and Tuesday, December 23, 2008. During the two concert nights, 15 students of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade and Academy of Arts in Novi Sad presented their compositions. The first night featured the works for piano and small chamber ensembles, while large chamber ensembles and chamber orchestras performed on the second night.

Two important facts make the KoMA programme interesting – the already mentioned authors' age and the way the works are selected for the programme. Namely, all authors interested in participating in the Festival submit their compositions by themselves (one piece, as a rule), which is performed at KoMA, if the technical and financial conditions allow. The youth are expected to provide art with freshness and vitality, since those are the surprise factors considerably less present in new works by established composers, and the auto-selection is to guarantee a versatile programme. In both of these aspects, this year's KoMA remained rather neutral and 'soft'.

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The authors' biographies included in the printed concert programmes stated their interests in popular, jazz, improvised and applied music, visual and scenic art. Very little of this was shown, most often in traces, in the works performed before the audience at the Belgrade Philharmonic Hall. Almost all compositions in the programme were written during the past year and were performed for the first time on this occasion. But, as it often happens at local concerts of contemporary music, the majority of the pieces were 'much older' than the authors who composed them.

Still, although the stylistic framework of the majority of works ranged from romanticism to neoclassicism, their undeniable quality in conjunction with a high artistic level of performance made both concert evenings quite successful. Performing technically challenging works, our best known performers of contemporary music, such as the pianists Neda Hofman and Sonja Lončar, and also Borislav Čičovački and Saša Mirković, were taking turns with the Belgrade Faculty students, who were never in the least behind in understanding and interpreting all the finesse of musical texture. The composers organized and conducted the rehearsals themselves and showed they could cooperate excellently with their colleagues-musicians and contribute to the better presentation of their ideas on the stage as much as possible. Not a few of them went on the concert podium, as soloists.

Miša Cvijović, awarded at international and local pianist contests, performed her piano suite *Odrzi* [*Reflections*] with precision and refinement. No less convincing were another two young composers and pianists, Marko Marić, in *Impresija* [*Impression*] for piano, and Stanko Simić, in *Mala svita za klavir solo* [*Small Suite for Piano Solo*]. Luka Čubrilo was confident in his performance of *Mahnita arabeska* [*Raging Arabesque*] for piano, a composition of a traditional romanticist language and ethnic colour. *I Have No CoordiNation* by Alen Ilijić was performed, as expected, quite well by Neda Hofman. The force, and at some points the roughness of musical gesture which is even more related to rock music than to the European artistic avantgarde, was energetically conjured up by Sonja Lončar in *Svita #1* [*Suite #1*] for piano solo by Nikola Vetnić, a student at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. Remaining on the edge of neoclassicism and modernism, unbalanced in style to some extent, this very attractive composition awoke the audience near the end of part one of the first concert. In contrast to this piece, inspired by Lorca's *Nocturne at the Window*, Vladimir Trmčić's music was contemplative, meditative, long-breathed, and of a refined and delicate expression. Vuk Pardoški's two trios were marked by unobtrusiveness, a chamber atmosphere and smoothness. Nemanja Stanković

and Miloš Veljković gave an impeccable performance of *Diptih* [*Diptych*] for violoncello and piano by Kristina Marković.

At the beginning of the second evening, in her song for mezzo-soprano and piano, *Drvo života* [*Tree of Life*], Ksenija Komljenović found herself ‘between a “pop-song-like” and an impressionistic way of thinking’, as she states in the programme. Initially, the performance seemed a little uncertain, but on the whole went on fine. Janko Vasiljević’s string quartet *Fourplay* was a short, effective and vivacious composition full of various rhythms. Aleksandar Sedlar, already known to the Belgrade audience, performed as a conductor, interpreting his own and Marko Aleksić’s nonets. Working carefully with details, both composers wrote classical-style pieces of harmonious and measured resonance. Sonja Mutić was also on the stage, playing the piano passage of her *Mantra* for twelve instrumentalists. Both this one and the composition *Balloon* by Vladan Kulišić were performed under the conductorship of Zorana Žderić. A senior undergraduate at the Department of Composition, Faculty of Music in Belgrade, Vladan Kulišić, is the autor of the most mature and the most interesting composition of the entire Festival programme. His world of sounds is completely personal, the language fully developed and modern, and the interventions on the harmonic tissue meticulous and always justified.

The young authors organized their performances, conducted rehearsals, played their pieces and treated the audience to two very good concerts. The students’ seriousness and professionalism were beyond all expectations. The only thing one could expect more from youth was, perhaps, a little bit more youth.

KoMA sprang up from the wish of the Belgrade students of composition to present their works outside the Faculty premises and bring their opus closer to a wider audience. Regretfully, the wider audience was missing this time. As for the media attention, the Festival was held, by all means unintentionally, almost ‘in secret’. The great young authors and performers, supported wholeheartedly by a small number of acquaintances, bowed and applauded to each other in one of the best Belgrade halls. Thus, the event was both private and official at the same time. One of the reasons was probably because the Concerts of Young Authors were just that – the festival did not include any supporting programmes, such as reviews or round tables on new works, installations, workshops, photography exhibitions. Similar various programmes, which can be considered usual at festivals of new music, generally contribute to better communicativeness and higher attendance at the event, making it more interesting both for the audience and the media.

It should be pointed out that KoMA does ‘not suffer’ from anything that is not characteristic of the majority of the new music concerts in our country. Apart from the International Review of Composers, *New Miniatures*, held in November, which is a bright example of good media coverage and large attendance, contemporary artistic music is most often brought into context with half-empty halls and a narrow circle of fans, connoisseurs and friends. The idea behind great festivals is to gather a larger audience in a shorter period of time than during the entire concert season. In view of the number of pieces of unestablished composers featured in regular concert programmes in our country, this year’s KoMA was quite a success.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović