

former) “Yugoslav art space” to revive, in a new way, “the age of Mokranjac”, which is “seemingly calling for a new dialogue”, as the author put it. Olga Otašević, too, although very briefly, discusses Martinov’s approach to Mokranjac in her short study, asserting that for Martinov, Mokranjac is “a representative of another, Serbian culture, which is nonetheless close to him, being essentially Slavic”.

Still, the “other” topic of this book – the positioning of “others” regarding Mokranjac – which appears in various ways and various lights in each chapter, is ultimately not quite developed; exactly as the authors put it in the final chapter, it remains in the form of a question inviting new reflections, scholarly dialogues, and vantage points.

Overall, Ivana Petković and Olga Otašević’s *Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac u napisima „drugih“* is a major contribution to the jubilee – the centenary of Mokranjac’s death – its *raison d’être*. It brings together all available writings on Mokranjac by “others”, interprets them, interweaves its own “voice” with their texts, presenting them to its readers in their original languages and in translations, with plenty of photographs, bibliographic data, and important references. The main conception of this heterogeneous book stems from its authors’ open and free, postmodernist approach to every musicological text. The book’s chapters thus bear no imposing ideological inscriptions. Therefore, I believe this book will be broadly embraced, read, and widely used for new explorations in musicology and cultural studies.

Above all, the book is meant for professional musicians, but I believe its openness will attract readers of “other” profiles as well.

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Third Programme

**Marko Nikodijević: *dark/rooms***  
col legno, 2013

The publication of any CD containing music by a contemporary Serbian author is considered a rarity and a welcome anomaly. However, when this CD is published by one of the labels dedicated to “releasing top-class recordings of ground-breaking contemporary music” it is nothing short of a miracle. Or maybe not? The music of Serbian-born, now Stuttgart-based composer Marko Nikodijević has been steadily finding its way to prestigious concert halls and the repertoires of leading European orchestras in the past few years. Since his success at the Gaudeamus Music Week in 2010, his work has been receiving broader international recognition, and is becoming even more available to the wider audience, thanks to the renowned label *col legno*, which in 2013 published a CD titled *dark/rooms* exclusively containing compositions by Marko Nikodijević. The publication of this CD was supported by the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, which awarded Nikodijević (together with two other young composers – David Philip Hefti and Samy Moussa), with the Composers’ Prize for 2013.

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The five works presented on this CD were created during a relatively long period of time (bearing in mind that the composer was only 33 years old in the time of the release) – between 2000 and 2012, and present a selection of his best known and most successful endeavors. The album opens with *cvetić, kućica.../la lugubre gondola: Trauermusik für Orchester nach Franz Liszt* from 2009, here performed by the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien and conductor Jonathan Stockhamer. The title, as well as the music, makes reference to Liszt's famous piano elegy, *La lugubre gondola* – depicting a funerary procession along Venice's canals – while the inspiration, drawn from the stillness of the water, takes a more gruesome turn in the first part of the title, which is a quotation from the scribbles in a notebook by a little Albanian girl, killed in 1999, and dumped along with other victims inside a lorry which was submerged in a lake.

In the composition, Nikodijević uses his much favored algorithmic and fractal computations to transform Liszt's mournful theme, creating an equally opaque and somber atmosphere with some exceptionally skillful instrumentation. More than just a literal illustration of the scene, the inner pulsation of this slow-paced music development creates an emotional curve which comes in waves, like the submerged rage that occasionally breaks the surface, only to be inundated by the stillness and weight of the cold, enveloping water.

The references to the past contained in the title of the compositions, do not end with this piece – *music box/selbstportrait mit ligeti und stravinsky (und messiaen ist auch dabei)*(2000-2001/2003/2006), as a

nod to Ligeti's piano piece from 1976, followed by *chambres de ténèbres/tombeau de claudé vivier* (2005/2007-2009/2012), as an echo of the long-standing tradition of the 17<sup>th</sup> century's 'tombeaux', as well as *gesualdo dub/raum mit gelöschter figur* (2012) equally show how this young composer is (sometimes less literally but more) spiritually and methodologically indebted to the masters of the previous eras.

In Concerto for piano and ensemble *gesualdo dub/raum mit gelöschter figur*, performed by Ensemble musikFabrik, pianist Benjamin Kobler and conductor Clement Power, one might recognize the chromatic semitone progression as a reference to a late renaissance composer's famous madrigal *Morro lasso*. However, more than a direct quotation, there is the sense of the late master's legacy in the complexity of the writing, the gradual development of rich sonorities and above all, a feeling of spatial vastness that opens up through the five attacca movements of this composition.

The similar progression as in *cvetić, kućica.../la lugubre gondola* and *gesualdo dub* – from a minimal sonic embryo into unforeseen and opulent music textures – occurs in three movements of the composition *chambres de ténèbres/tombeau de claudé vivier*, performed by Ensemble musikFabrik and Clement Power. The piece is inspired by the tragic life and death of the Canadian composer Claude Vivier, which is a recurring theme in Nikodijević's work – after *chambres de ténèbres*, he wrote his first opera *Vivier: A Night Report* which was commissioned by the Biennale in Munich in 2014, for the opening of its 14<sup>th</sup> edition.

And just like in his other works, these references are always multiple and rarely, only music-related. The way Vivier developed his themes – from the single nucleus, often in unison – bears a strong resemblance to the procedures Nikodijević uses in all of the mentioned pieces. But it seems that apart from the compositional techniques, Nikodijević is also intrigued by the late composer's unique figure and status in the music establishment of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – one that he could easily relate to: openly gay, excessive, judged and (often) overlooked.

In the context of this CD, it seems that three movements of *chambres de ténèbres* demonstrate all the main characteristics of Nikodijević's poetics. On the one hand, there is the spatial component, so evidently present in works like *gesualdo dub* or *music box*, and achieved through the careful positioning of various music events, whether original or borrowed as quotations from the works of other authors (Nikodijević stated himself, that he “filled the three chambers with bits of Vivier's music, like objects suspended in space.”) He also filled these ‘rooms’ with something else, which blatantly present in all of his works – a uniquely refined and inherent sense of groove and pulsation. In the composition *chambres de ténèbres*, the (possible) programmatic explanation of its presence could be found in the life story of Vivier, and his regular excursions to disco-clubs of the 70's, but this omnipresent, beating pulse also lurks in more elusive compositions like *cvetić, kućica.../la lugubre gondola* or *music box*.

This penetrating beat reaches its apotheosis in the composition *GHB/tanzaggre-*

*gat*, which concludes the CD. In this highly energized piece (whose title refers to gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid, a drug popular with party-goers), Nikodijević stresses the rhythmical component, giving it a distinctively modern, techno-sounding beat. Like a snippet from his own life-experience, a sonic recollection of some imaginary late night return home, with fragments of the song *Vranjanka* (and all the possible hidden meanings of this quotation – “you have taken my youth away” etc.) and distant brass-band sounding segments, this dance-machine ends in joyful and exuberant sonic fireworks.

Even more surprising than the fact that this type of sonic pandemonium is written for a symphonic orchestra, is the interpretation of the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien led by conductor Jonathan Stockhamer. This excellent interpretation, equal to the opening *cvetić, kućica.../la lugubre gondola*, displays the stunning versatility of this world-class ensemble, strongly dedicated to promoting contemporary music in all its varieties and eccentricities. An equally high level of interpretation and dedication were exhibited by the Nieuw Ensemble and Micha Hamel and the Ensemble muzik Fabrik with Clement Power, renowned chamber orchestras who performed *music box/selbstportrait mit ligeti und strawinsky (und messiaen ist auch dabei)*, and *chambres de ténèbres/tombeau de claude vivier and gesualdo dub*, respectively. All relevant information regarding the recordings of the compositions on this CD, detailed biographies of the author and performers, photographs and score facsimiles, as well as a highly informative and insightful text by Bern

Künzig, feature in a luxurious, 70 page booklet which complements this release.

The CD *dark/rooms* excels at all levels – intense compositions, captivating performances, the pristine quality of recording, the intelligent choice of works and the

enviable physical presentation of the product make it an extremely welcome contribution that shows what contemporary music and inspired publishing can achieve.