
FESTIVALS AND SYMPOSIA

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FESTIVAL KoMA 8.5 AND 9

Having been adjusted to organizational conditions, the latest iteration of the festival *Koncerti mladih autora* [Young Authors' Concerts, KoMA] was arranged in the Belgrade Philharmonic Hall on two separate dates – 17th December 2012 and 29th March 2013. This duality, however, did not bring about any conceptual change to the ordinarily designed programme of the manifestation, which was yet again, for the most part, based on a review of the annual production, first of all, of students of composition at the Faculty of Music in Bel-

grade, with the lesser participation of works by students from other institutions of higher education in Serbia and abroad. The focus of the programme, consisting of works written for smaller chamber ensembles, reflected the curricular demands at the Department of Composition, which only reinforced the observation that this edition of the festival only added to its distinction as the “place of reflection” of achievements strictly within an academic context. Such emphasis was chosen pragmatically, due to deficiency of available performing apparatuses within the parent faculties, and so the event became the primary venue for live performance and the recording of newly composed works. For this exact reason, the organizers paid special attention once again to the quality of the performing element; hence, among other distinguished musicians, the festival stage featured the members of the renowned ensemble *Gudači Svetog Đorđa* [St. George Strings], as well as eminent domestic soloists.

The total of four concerts (two in each festival segment) included twenty works by students of master's and doctoral academic studies. The diversity of the performed works' titles confirmed the pronounced poetical and aesthetical heterogeneity of musical production by the youngest generation of creators which, covering a wide stylistic scope, shed a light

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on the predominant compositional discourse based upon building a work through motivic transformations over the entire range of possible procedures, with just a sporadic use of the electronic medium. Along the lines of these considerations, one can also note the absence of experimental interventions, elements of performance art or other contemporary solutions.

The thematic areas within which the present production is positioned are mostly inspired by a literary paradigm (transposed into either vocal or instrumental media), or by certain genre or formal models, or by musical heritage of an artistic or folklore provenance. Although the musical language of individual pieces corresponded to the expected level of individual creative orientations, the intersection of poetical and aesthetical properties of the entire production, in general, gravitated towards a modernist language which, apart from a range of diverse compositional solutions, principally showed the aspiration of the young creators to express themselves in a form demanding an “autonomous” musical meaning. The origin of this focus, on the one hand, can suggest personal artistic sensibilities and positions of the authors, while on the other, perhaps even as the generator of what has just been said, one should validate the nature of the curricular demands based on mastering compositional and technical skills, which by themselves direct the creative potential towards the construction of a musical language and structure that are often hermetic and semantically self-referential.

Compositions whose titles suggested the applied formal model or the character of the work – such as *Duo* for violin and piano by Lazar Đorđević, *Kapričo* [*Capric-*

cio] for piano by Vladan Gecin, *Sonata* for violin and piano by Jug Konstantin Marković, or *Koncertantna muzika* [*Musica Concertante*] for viola solo, 16 strings and harpsichord by Vladimir Korać – covered the stylistic range from contemporary interpretations of Neo-Impressionism to Neo-Expressionist solutions. Along these lines, one can note the predominance of those compositional patterns, which allow for the more immediate manifestation of affectations. In that respect, the common acoustic idiom in these authors’ works is a biting dichotomy between the pronounced sonority and the reduction of sound, which in certain cases is colouristically treated. It was the occasional colouristic shadings in the works by Jug Konstantin Marković and Vladan Gecin that created an impressionist sensibility of lyrical segments of the musical tissue; however, it is telling that the predominant character of not only these works, but also the ones previously mentioned, is highly dramatic. The dramatic sections in the pieces by Lazar Đorđević, Vladimir Korać and Vladan Gecin were exactly the primary areas where sonority was manifested, while lyricism, ranging from melancholy to resignation, was functionalized primarily as the echo of dramatic events.

Folklore-inspired subjects, used in *Varijacije na temu Zasp’o Janko* [*Variations on the Theme “Zasp’o Janko”*] for violin, violoncello and piano by Branislav Stojanović and in the work *Vlasinka* (folk dance from Southern Serbia) for saxophone and piano by Mirjana Veljković, inspired the authors mostly by their particular musical qualities which were used to build an artificial musical structure. The connection to the originals was not transparently applied in the pieces, but neither was it en-

tirely avoided. While Mirjana Veljković used the distinctive rhythmic pulse, indicating a distant relationship to a well-known dance from Southern Serbia, Branislav Stojanović created his reminiscence of a folk song by spinning out a melodic line, relying only on certain intervallic patterns taken from the original paradigm. Somewhat different attitude towards the folklore idiom could be heard in the work *Vuna, igla, kanap, kosti* [Wool, Needle, String, Bones] for flute and accordion by Draško Adžić, inspired by Wallachian magic rituals. The construction of the work's imaginary folklore was based on harmonic and rhythmical associations to the music of Eastern Serbia, weakened by the harsh acoustic confrontations of the two instruments, whose purpose was to amplify the expressive effect of the music.

An important segment of the production presented at the festival were lyric songs, clad in various chamber forms. The authors' orientation towards the classical pinnacles of domestic and foreign poetry suggested their urge to position themselves creatively within the discourse of high art. The academistic approach to the creative act, apparent in almost all of the works in this genre, certainly corresponded with the context in which the musical pieces were written, but it could also be perceived as a sign of the young authors' disinterest in more contemporary types of musical expression. However, the character of modernist musical language, at the level of the entire production, was not determined by an avant-garde way of thinking, which would have involved some more radical musical solutions from the rich heritage of the previous century, but was primarily constituted through compositional and

technical work taken from more moderate stylistic patterns. Thus, the consistent use of a trained voice could be given as an argument for the previous statement. While the compositions *Da imenuješ senke zvezda* [If You Gave Names to the Stars' Shadows] by Marko Atanacković, after the verses of Dušan Matić, and *Brankusijeva ptica anđela* [Brancusi's Angel Bird] by Milana Milošević, after the epic poem by Adam Puslojić, were conceived as songs for voice and piano with impressionist overtones, a predominantly atonal work *Jesen* [Herbst] by Aleksandar Beljaković, for soprano, violin and piano, after the verses of Reiner Maria Rilke, showed the author's orientation towards somewhat more contemporary expression, melodically more austere and expressionist in nature. Unlike Miša Cvijović's work *Senka moje duše* [La sombra de mi alma] for mezzo-soprano, flute and piano – written to the poem by Federico García Lorca – which can be described as introspective lyrical fantasy, in which the author reached for an economical compositional procedure, the cycle *Gurije* for soprano and string quartet by Nemanja Sovtić was carried out as a vocal-instrumental form in which the instrumental and vocal-instrumental movements were interlaced. This work, inspired by the poetry of Stevan Raičković, was marked by a repetitiveness and gradual change in the treatment of the material, which is nostalgic and intimate in character.

Two works that could be qualified as atypical for the production presented at this year's festival were written by Ivan Vukosavljević and the young Slovenian composer, Dominik Steklasa. Inspired by the martial arts, Vukosavljević wrote *Kickboxing* for tape, two trumpets, trombone

and tuba. The work's musical idiom and the linguistic component recorded on tape refer to the world of popular culture. Steklasa's composition titled *Searching for...?* for two accordions deals with the subject of the critique of modern society and wondering about its sense. Conceiving it as a tissue of timbres with occasional motivic digressions, the author also employed the production of special acoustic effects on the instruments, which only reinforced the impression given by his slightly radical composition.

An array of works written for smaller chamber ensembles and slightly larger orchestral apparatuses presented the production of master's and doctoral candidates of composition. The pieces performed reflected already shaped artistic personalities, confirming the authors' individual affinity for thematic spaces they had already conquered. In that respect, the spiritual resonance which Stanko Simić had previously established with the creativity of Alexander Scriabin received its specific materialization in the composition *Lestvičnik* [*Climacus*] for eight wind instruments and piano. In *Lestvičnik*, Simić related his musical inspiration by the 6th-century work *Ladder*, conceived around the idea of the gradual ascension of the soul to perfection and unification with the universe, to Scriabin's programme of *The Poem of Ecstasy*, compatible by ideas and dramaturgy. Inspired by works of domestic artistic heritage were the compositions by Matija Anđelković and Jelena Srdić. Unlike the majority of vocal-instrumental works performed at the festival, which in various ways treated masterpieces of domestic and foreign poetry, Anđelković in his composition *Legenda o spavačima, magnovenje i san*

[*Legend of Sleepers, an Instant and a Dream*] reached for Danilo Kiš's *Enciklopedija mrtvih* [*The Encyclopaedia of the Dead*], presenting his imagination of the scene on the Celion Hill. The work *Pet slika Petra Lubarde* [*Five Paintings by Petar Lubarda*] for string quartet by Jelena Srdić was an attempt at transposing an impression left by particular visual works into a musical medium, and in that respect, the personal impression was used only as the source of a creative "game" whose result can be established only as a conditional reference to the object of inspiration. With its Neoclassical hues and elements of a grotesque, the work *Marko Kraljević i vila* [*Prince Marko and the Fairy*] for two clarinets and piano by Marko Kovač employed polytonal sound and playfully complex metrical and rhythmical contours.

The most complex compositions performed at this year's KoMA were the works by Vladimir Trmčić and Sonja Mutić. Abandoning the discourse of homogenous musical style, Trmčić in *Concerto grosso* for alto flute, vibraphone and amplified harpsichord employed the fusion of various formal patterns and aesthetic principles. Although oriented towards the Baroque concert tradition, the composition also relied on elements of the Baroque motet "passing" through the author's minimalist prism. The largely suspended melodic component, the insistence on long held notes, timbres and their changes, as well as the minimalist treatment of the figures and sections of the musical tissue – all of this rendered primary significance to the general acoustic image of the work instead of focusing on its individual layers. A similar concept of "integral" sound was also carried out in the work *Inicijacija* [*Initiation*]

for chamber orchestra by Sonja Mutić. Confirming her dedication to the research of the acoustic and sonic properties of the classical instrumental apparatus, the author in this work merely extended the continuity of her own creative interest, examining the possibilities of achieving dramaturgical consistency within a larger musical form. Liberated from the melodic component, present only in the shape of repetitive motivic figurations, the work was based on the acoustic polyphony of a heterogeneous instrumental body, where the constant changes of rhythm and meter, as well as the diversified dynamics, were the basic moving forces of the dramaturgical development.

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As a venue presenting the youngest generation's artistic musical production, KoMA in its latest edition fulfilled the pragmatic purpose of public premiere performances and recordings of new works. At the same time, in terms of the quality of its programme, confirmed this year as well, KoMA has shaped up as a cultural manifestation of the first order, open even to much wider audiences interested in the compositional creativity of the upcoming generation. On the eve of its tenth anniversary, its continuity plainly reflects its importance and the value of the idea it promotes.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

