
FESTIVALS AND SYMPOSIA

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The 22nd *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića* [The Tisa Horizons: Days of Josif Marinković]:

A Call for New Solo Songs by
Invitation, Novi Bečej, 29 May 2014

The music festival *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića* was established in 1993 in Novi Bečej, the birthplace of the composer Josif Marinković (1851–1931). Conceived as a sort of homage to the great Serbian composer and pioneer of the Serbian solo song, *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića* has been our country's only event that is primarily devoted to this musical genre, which is somewhat neglected in contemporary Serbian music.

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Over two decades of the consistent implementation of the festival's concept, predicated on a twofold programming modality – the biennial Call for New Solo Songs by Invitation, alternating with the festival's biennial Open Competition for Solo Singers – has resulted in the creation and premières of 80 solo songs in total, written by forty Serbian composers, as well as an opera,¹ and establishing careers for numerous young singers, many of whom have made a name for themselves not only in Serbia, but abroad as well.²

This year's 22nd *Obzorja* was marked by the Call for New Solo Songs. The pre-

¹ This was Dimitrije O. Golemović's *Dečak koji se ničega nije bojao* [The Boy Who Feared Nothing], premièred on 25 May 2007 at the 15th *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića*.

² The fact that some works written in answer to the Call for New Solo Songs, although unpublished, have become part of many singers' standard repertoires inspired the conception of a sort of collection of solo songs titled *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića. Solo pesme sa Pozivnog kompozitorskog konkursa* [The Tisa Horizons – Days of Josif Marinković. Solo Songs from the Calls for New Solo Songs by Invitation]. Due to an ever increasing number of works, that publication may be considered only the first volume in a series. Cf. Dimitrije O. Golemović, "Predgovor" [Foreword], in: Dimitrije O. Golemović (ed.), *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića. Solo pesme sa Pozivnog kompozitorskog konkursa*, Novi Bečej, Dom kulture Opštine Novi Bečej, 2005, 3.

mière performances of the thirteen pieces that entered the competition were preceded by the traditional speech on Josif Marinković, this year dedicated to his work in the field of church music.³ The speech stressed the manifold efforts Marinković made in this field, to which he was dedicated throughout his career as a composer. These involved not only creating works reflecting his individualism and strongly Romanticist orientation, but also his dynamic teaching career and his many activities as the conductor of a choir whose primary purpose was to take part in church rites. On this occasion, the audience was also told about some of the distinctive features of Marinković's church music, including, among others, the fact that his works, unlike those of Mokranjac, often follow the formal patterns of Western European music, as well as that in many aspects his musical language, despite his deep respect for tradition, assimilated a number of new choral elements, most particularly from Russian church music, especially in liturgical units treated like recitatives, such as *Oče naš* [Our Father] and *Vjeruju* [Credo].

The Call for New Solo Songs by Invitation included works by composers born between 1940 and 1990: from works by Minta Aleksinački (1947) and Vladimir Tošić (1949), to those of Dragoljub Perić (1952), Jugoslav Bošnjak (1954), Miloš Raičković (1956), Miroljub Arandžević Rasinski (1957), Miloš Zatkalić (1959), Milana Stojadinović Milić (1962), to those by Tatjana Milošević (1970), Svetlana Savić (1971), and Branka Popović (1977), to works by composers at the beginning of

³ The speech was given by musicologist Marina Marković.

their careers: Dalibor Đukić (1985) and Sofija Milutinović (1988). The presence of works by composers from the middle and younger generations provided a broader view of current creative trends in the genre of the solo song on the domestic scene.

The featured pieces were settings of the best poetic achievements, both domestic and foreign. However, there were also individual authorial "breakthroughs" in the process of shaping the lyrics⁴ and also a totally unique use of verses that are primarily interesting in terms of both the social context in which they were created and their creator.⁵ The pieces are characterized by a musical language steeped in the usual artistic conceptions of their authors, that is, those established and recognizable ones within the broader perimeter of their authors' creative work.

Thus, Miroljub Arandžević Rasinski's highly communicative song "Dositejeva staza" [Dositej's Path], a setting of verses by Dragoljub Brajković, Sofija Milutinović's "Da ti slikam" [Let Me Paint for You], the setting of a folk poem of the same title, and Jugoslav Bošnjak's "Noćna ptica" [The Night Bird] achieved a sort of simulation of the Romanticist stylistic model, whereas Minta Aleksinački's "Nepogoda" [The Storm], the setting of a poetic text by Milan Buca Petrović, and Dragoljub Perić's "Bez naslova" [Untitled], a setting

⁴ The lyrics in Jugoslav Bošnjak's "Noćna ptica" and the literary basis of *Kibukati* by Vladimir Tošić were both written by the composers themselves.

⁵ The work in question is "Pesma Gavrila Principa" [A Poem by Gavrilo Princip] by Miloš Raičković, a setting of the verses that Gavrilo Princip scribbled into the walls of his cell at Terezín.

of verses by Ivo Andrić, are a blend of late Romanticist rhetoric and elements of Impressionism.

By contrast, Miloš Zatkalik's "Historia de un balcón" is characterized by a pithy kind of Expressionist musical expression combined with a refined realization of the hidden dramatic potential of Antonio Machado's verses,⁶ whereas the depth of Milana Stojadinović Milić's interpretation of the psychological side of the poem she chose and her masterfully chiseled vocal melody, as the main characteristics of her "Plava pesma" [Blue Song], a setting of verses by Desanka Maksimović, are realized in a heterogeneous stylistic context, dominated by elements of Romanticist musical "speech". Likewise, a vocal melody colored by Romanticist lyricism characterizes Miloš Raičković's "Pesma Gavrila Principa" [A Poem by Gavriilo Princip], which, overall, corresponds with the key features of his concept of *new classicism*. By contrast, Vladimir Tošić's compositional procedure in his "Kibukati" rests on the consistently implemented reductionist principle, which also governs the shape of the work's textual basis, involving the constant permutation of syllables in the song's one and only word (*kibukati*), repeated many times.

The main feature of Svetlana Savić's creative procedure applied in her song "Avaj" [Alas] plays with repetitiveness, but this time within a postmodern kind of musical expression imbued with various intertextual references, all for the sake of a musical interpretation of the distinctive contents of Borislav B. Milić's verses that

⁶ Zatkalik used the original, Spanish text of Machado's poem.

belong to the poetic genre of the so-called autistic sonnet. By contrast, a sort of "bareness" of musical tissue, i.e. its reduction to just two contrapuntal lines, one sung and the other assigned to the piano part, is the main characteristic of "Memento" by Tatjana Milošević and may be viewed as a musical equivalent of the tight bond that verses "establish between musicality and representation, striving to position the purest words at the most resounding point in the verse, that is, the most intense or suggestive word at the place where the rhythm achieves the greatest intensity" in the eponymous poem by Željko Mijanović, which served as the textual basis of this solo song.⁷ By contrast, Branka Popović's "Na kutu belog oblaka" [On the Edge of a White Cloud] focuses on the vocal part, using the human voice, that is, the virtuosically treated melody assigned to it, not only in order to reach the semantic layer in Milena Pavlović Barilli's verses, but also to explore their autonomous sonic potential. To a degree, the same tendency pervades Dalibor Đukić's *Semena* [Seeds], a setting of Vasko Popa verses.

The impression of a rather successful presentation of the competing pieces was achieved owing to the interpretative skills of their performers: the soprano Aneta Ilić, mezzo-soprano Dragana Popović, tenor Ljubomir Popović, bass Goran Krneta, and pianist Milivoje Veljić.

The jury, comprising Vesna Šouc Tričković, conductor, Marina Trajković Bidžovski, professor of solo singing, and Marina Marković, musicologist, awarded

⁷ From a conversation with the author, on the occasion of the première performance of "Memento".

the first prize to Milana Stojadinović Milić, the second prize to Miloš Zatkalik, and the third prize to Minta Aleksinački, whereas the audience award went to Miroljub Arandelović Rasinski.

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The festival *Obzorja na Tisi – Dani Josifa Marinkovića*, which every year assembles an ever wider circle of musical artists whose creative or interpretative affinities rest upon the genre of the solo song,

has once again justified its existence. Moreover, this year's première performances of the new pieces, which brought the tally of these variously stylistically oriented works to eighty, all written in answer to the Call for New Solo Songs by Invitation, once again confirmed the festival's status as an event of major importance for our country. It is one of those events that always provide one with an opportunity to stay up to date with current trends on Serbia's contemporary art music scene.