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**Vladan Radovanović: MUZIKA SFERA (MUSIC OF THE SPHERES),
double compact disc, PGP RTS, no. 431753, Belgrade, 2005**

Eight years following Vladan Radovanović's authorial compact disc *Kosmička muzika* (*Cosmic Music*) (published by SOKOJ-MIC), comes a double compact disc featuring works of the same composer – *Muzika sfera* (*Music of the Spheres*), thus making the bulk of Radovanović's music oeuvre readily available to potential listeners (the publication was financed by the Serbian Ministry of Culture). The titles of both works refer to a major conceptual basis of Radovanović's entire output, which may be designated as an orientation towards other, hidden dimensions of existence and an attentive listening to the universe pulsating. The sonic world to which Radovanović aspires in his works he himself calls cosmic, and it is a known fact that already in his earliest works he was deeply engaged in researching types, or "tribes", of sound which he classified into cosmic, sacral, cosmic-sacral, inorganic and others. Departing from these ideas and from his insight into the developmental tendencies of music in the 1950's, he has developed a personal poetics dominated by an avant-garde urge to experiment with sound. In practice, this desire was realized principally as the imaginative use of cluster techniques and other avant-garde procedures, as well as of possibilities of electronic and computer synthesis of sound. The end result greatly corresponded to world's most progressive tendencies in music – as early as at the outset of Radovanović's career, when the flow of information about events in major centres of music avant-garde was minimal in our country.

Sazvežđa (*Constellations*) is the only composition that features on both music releases; namely, there are two versions of the same work: on the earlier compact disc, the music component of this polymedia work is given in electro-acoustic version, while on the latest release it is realized as mixed electro-acoustic music, a combination of choral voices and electronic sounds. It is also the "youngest" of all the works on the new compact disc. A period of almost five decades elapsed between the creation of *Devet komada za klavir* (*Nine Pieces for Piano*) (1951), the first number on the album, and the composing of *Sazvežđa* (1997). In the meanwhile Radovanović's creative evolution took place in several media concurrently, particularly in the field of synthetic art. Most of the compositions featured on

this album date from his early career – the 1950's and 1960's – and they reveal the evolution of the author's music thinking from the initial orientation towards modernism (based on a highly expanded tonality and on atonality) to neoclassicism (that is, polymusic, to use Radovanović's term) to the increasingly complex structures of the serial and hyperpolyphonic type.

The earliest period of his work saw the creation of the objectivistically conceived and characterwise diverse *Devet komada za klavir* (1951) performed by I. Đojbašić and *Svita za fagot i klavir* (*Suite for Bassoon and Piano*), interpreted by B. Tumpej and O. Đurđević.

The neoclassical stylistic sphere includes *Šest prelida za klavir* (*Six Preludes for Piano*) (1955; performed by M. Jelača-Jovanović), *Druga sonata za dva klavira* (*The Second Sonata for Two Pianos*) (1955; performed by N. Rackov and A. Valdma), *Koncertantna simfonija* (*Sinfonia Concertante*) (1956; performed by the Belgrade Philharmonic under the direction of Ž. Zdravković) and *Korali, intermecca i fuga* (*Chorales, Intermezzi and Fugue*) (1957; performed by a chamber ensemble under the direction of Z. Vauda). Much different from other interpretations of neoclassicism in Serbian music, Radovanović's approach is characterized by a more discreet allusiveness to various stylistic models and enhanced contrasts between quiet and meditative episodes and the robust, vigorous and sharp ones. In that respect, the solemn and monumental third movement of *Koncertantna simfonija* and the striking sonic world of *Korali, intermecca i fuga* are particularly impressive.

Created several years after *Korali*, *Pentaptih* (*Pentaptych*) (1962; performed by J. Anastasijević and a chamber ensemble) has a related concept and a similar mysterious atmosphere, but as a composition that was created while the author was working on *Sferoon* (*Spheroon*), it also possesses some of the characteristics of Radovanović's neoclassical works. The same year also saw the creation of *Šest minijatura za klavir* (*Six Miniatures for Piano*) (performed by I. Đojbašić), another one of the author's use of the piano, a composition of spontaneous expression, albeit organized structure.

Prazvuk (*Primeval Sound*) (1959) is here represented in the sound realization for soprano and chamber ensemble (D. Nikolić and a chamber ensemble under the direction of B. Babić), but other interpretations are possible since the work was created based on the author's earlier compositions for an indeterminate scoring – *Polifonija 3* and *9* (*Polyphony 3* and *Polyphony 9*). In this work Radovanović first applied his principle of “frequency of tone non-repetition”, which originated from serialism.

Four decades following its creation, the intricate radiophonic composition *Sferoon* (1960-1964; soloists on the piano and organ accompanied by the Choir of RTB, under the

direction of B. Simić) still sounds original and fresh. Similar to the cluster technique in “mass music” in terms of sound effects, the procedure applied here retains intervallic thinking, although in certain situations it makes use of partial clusters.

The album also includes Radovanović's two divergent works: *Kamerni stav (Chamber Movement)* for mixed choir and chamber orchestra (1967; RTB's Mixed choir and chamber orchestra, under the direction of B. Simić) and a radiophonic poetic composition *Malo večno jezero* (1984; voices of the author and actors, the recording of electronic music was made by the author). While the former composition is, according to the author, a sort of “small” *Sfeeron*, with all the proportions decreased, the latter is a polymedia work, based on the author's notations of dreams. It is based on a specific polyphony of diverse sound media – speech, ambient sounds, vocal, instrumental and electronic music.

The double album *Music of the Spheres* is accompanied by a booklet containing basic information about the author and brief comments on all the works on the disc, all of which is, as usual, translated into English. These invaluable texts authored by Vladan Radovanović himself provide not only useful information about the creation of his works, but also sketches of the elements of the artist's poetics. As an active and successful author also in the field of visual arts, Radovanović himself has effectively designed the booklet, inspired by Pythagoras and Plato's vision of music of the spheres.

Vladan Radovanović's works can too seldom be heard in concert halls, which wrongs not only the artist but also our entire music milieu that deserves to be much better acquainted with contemporary tendencies and works in Serbian music, particularly with those which have greatly defined it in the past decades. We therefore consider this music release with a representative selection from Radovanović's oeuvre as an opportunity for our music and, in a larger sense, cultural public to gain a thorough understanding of the compositional work of our eminent artist and then evaluate it adequately.

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac