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**MILICA ĐORĐEVIĆ: ZVEZDOZNANČEVA SMRT – SKAMENJENI
ODJECI EPITAFU U ŠUTNUTOM KRISTALU VREMENA I & II
[THE DEATH OF THE STAR KNOWER – PETRIFIED ECHOES
OF AN EPITAPH IN A KICKED CRYSTAL OF TIME I & II]**

Dalje, rasrkoavljenih nožnih prstiju

Ja šutiram ove kristale vremena

Kroz tečni prostor

Iza svog čela

[Further, with bloody toes

I kick these crystals of time

Through liquid space

*Behind my forehead]*²

Abstract: This work is dedicated to the analysis of the diptych *Zvezdoznančeva smrt – skamenjeni odjeci epitafa u šutnutom kristalu vremena I & II* [*The Death of the Star Knower – Petrified Echoes of an Epitaph in a Kicked Crystal of Time*] by Milica Đorđević (1984), which the *Arditti* quartet premiered at the contemporary music festival *Ars Musica* 2009 in Brussels. Special attention was given to contemplating of the organization of music flow and the problem of the *difference* between the immanent characteristics of the work and the work as a perceived object, that is, the way in which it is received by interpreter/listener.

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² The composer's reflection on the verses of Vasko Popa and Miroslav Antić, recorded in the programme commentary on the first page of the score.

Analysis of the applied composing methods shows that the observation of sound events largely depends on the *music context*.

Keywords: Milica Đorđević, string quartet, sonority, sound saturation, music time, music perception.

The premiere of the diptych *Zvezdoznančeva smrt – skamenjeni odjeci epitafa u šutnutom kristalu vremena I & II* [*The Death of the Star Knower – Petrified Echoes of an Epitaph in a Kicked Crystal of Time*] within the contemporary music festival *Ars Musica* in Brussels stands out among Milica Đorđević's recent achievements. The composition was performed by members of the *Arditti* string quartet, who commissioned this work for the occasion. The programme of the concert played on March 12th 2009, when this esteemed ensemble presented the exciting results of the contemporary chamber expression to the world music audience, also included works by young Spanish author Hector Parra (1976), Belgian Philippe Boesmans (1936), as well as the French composer and philosopher who coined the term *spectral music*, Hugues Dufourt (1943).

The participation in the prestigious festival of contemporary music seems like an expected event in the career of this 25-year old composer, who has, since 2005, worked outside our country.³ A retrospection of her professional activities after studying composition in Belgrade confirms that permanent travels, constant improvements and learning are the *usual* part of the biography of a successful young artist who, as a part of *creative class*,⁴ depends directly on scholarships, commissions, projects and other (un)stable sources of income. Since 2005, Milica Đorđević's compositions have been performed in France (Strassbourg, Metz), Germany (Darmstadt), Switzerland (Blonay), Belgium (Brussels), Netherlands (Apeldoorn, Amsterdam), Great Britain, Italy, Austria, Macedonia, and some were written on commission for wellknown ensembles (*Arditti* quartet, *Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart* ensemble, *Orchestre National de Lorraine*), while promising

³ Milica Đorđević (1984) graduated composition at the Faculty of Music Art in Belgrade, in the class of Isidora Žebeljan. She continued her professional accomplishments in Strassbourg, where in 2007/2008 she began postgraduate specialist studies of composition at Conservatoire National de Region de Strasbourg, in the class of Ivan Fedele. She took part in numerous courses and festivals, in Metz (*Acanthes*, 2007 and 2009), Darmstadt (44. Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, 2008), Blonay (summer course at the Hindemith Institute, 2008), Amsterdam (International Gaudeamus Music Week, 2006), Apeldoorn (Internationale Stichting Masterclass, 2006). Some of the awards she received are the third award for composition *Opsena nigdine, Minotaur ili šta?* [*Delusion of Nowhereness, Minotaur or what?*] at the Second International Young Composers Meeting in Apeldoorn (Netherlands, 2006) as well as the first prize for composition *Sivo* [*Gray*] at the International Summer Academy Prague-Vienna-Budapest in Reichenau (Austria, 2005).

⁴ According to: Richard Florida, *The Rise of The Creative Class*, New York, Basic Books, 2002.

Welsh violinist Cerys Jones included the composition *Pomen* [Remembrance] in her standard concert repertoire. It should also be mentioned that, starting from September this year, Milica Đorđević attends the academic programme *Cursus I* on computer music at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in Paris. These biographic notes show clearly that this composer achieved notable results in a short time, but also that factors like education, mobility, networking of academic and cultural institutions, can protect the representatives of creative class from possible negative consequences of economic crisis.

The diptych *Zvezdoznančeva smrt – skamenjeni odjeci epitafa u šutnutom kristalu vremena I & II* consists of two string quartets that, being linked by similar creative premises and composing procedures, correspond in dramatic and composing-technical sense.⁵ It is, more accurately, an acoustic study, emerging from the composer's phenomenology studies in the field of sound saturation and the perception of music time, while the unusual title, based on the verses by Vasko Popa, served just as initial inspiration, setting in motion the author's rich sound/music imagination. Although it is impossible to begin a wider contextual discussion based only on partial insight into the opus of Milica Đorđević, still, on the basis of the analyses of the diptych, one gets an impression that her poetry, above all, resonates with the concept of *spectral music*. Her inclination towards contemporary music practice of using acoustic instruments which emphasize sonority *per se*, as well as the rich tradition of electronic music, resulted in specific instrumental expression.

First of all, this exciting composition, very challenging for the performers, demands excellent interpretation. Although the recording of sound events was made in conventional notation, this work still *counts* on musicians *accustomed to the new sound*, precisely, specialized in performing contemporary music, exactly like the *Arditti* quartet. It also requires an *active* listener, ready to detect (by his own abilities), occasionally very *complex*, (micro)changes of music events. Hence, I could divide the experience of listening to this composition into two phases: the *first* listening, which was spent trying to position/tune the ear/hearing and the search for a certain analytic/hearing perspective, and all subsequent hear-

⁵ Quartet I, *Zvezdoznančeva smrt – skamenjeni odjeci epitafa u šutnutom kristalu vremena I*, in the second movement of the diptych, was written for a competition *Dar Staubach Preis* at the international musical course in Darmstadt (July 2008). This work was performed by *Arditti* quartet in the final competition concert (the preview was on June 21st 2008, in Blonay). As a result of this successful cooperation, *Arditti* quartet asked the composer to write a new work for the festival in Brussels. That is how the second quartet II of *Zvezdoznančeva smrt – skamenjeni odjeci epitafa u šutnutom kristalu vremena II* came about, and was premiered as the first part of the diptych. The Quartets can also be played separately. Microfilmed score of the diptych will soon be included in the archives of the *Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel*.

ings, characterized by intensive sound experiences, always qualified by some new layer. Therefore, some meanings of this work are imprinted in, the dynamic relationship between the projected (author's conception), the physical/objective realization through interpretation, and the subjectively observable, where the problem of the *difference* between the immanent characteristics of the work, and the work as the observed object, that is, the way it is received by interpreter/listener, stands out as particularly intriguing.

The composer's fascination with the abilities of string instruments, emanation of timbre/volume of the sound, as well as examining of the ultimate limits of dynamics, resulted in a composing procedure very similar to structuring of the sound layers in works of electronic music. However, while in the domain of electronic music various sound manipulations are easily achieved by technologic process, what is fascinating in the field of acoustic spectral music is exactly the way of building the sound matter. In other words, although even and homogenous timbre is typical of the string quartet, the author showed that this medium has enough potential to create new, expanded music universe, on the border between the tone and the noise. By achieving rich expressive scale, she demonstrated a great skill in the treatment of the string instruments. So, thanks to almost unlimited possibilities of different ways of pulling the bow over the strings (contact-points), various effects are achieved throughout the composition – from distant and soft sounds, like whispering, to the screeching, scratching, sliding and irritating sounds⁶ which, in fact, mostly contribute to the constant rising of affective tension.

The music flow of the diptych movements is built by a mounting procedure, and based upon the juxtaposition of homogenous/heterogeneous segments, in which the perception of tone pitch is often impossible. The work *grows* from silent harmonics lasting almost two minutes, which gradually form a sharp texture. The long duration of the initial, so-called *timbre-chord* (sound *aggregate*, as John Cage says), with slow and subtle sound modulations, is an important indicator of the further development of the music flow. This procedure at the beginning of the work already establishes the state of rising tension, while the listener is motivated to listen actively – his attention is directed to the *sonority* of the instruments, concrete material manifestation of the sound itself, in order to better observe the delicate acoustic changes.

⁶ It requires an excellent performing discipline, which above all implies the constant pressure of bow and precise speed of pulling it over the stings. The score includes detailed performing instructions: unspecified pitch, highest tone possible, gradual change, wide vibrato with changing pitch & tone, gradual change from non-vibrato to irregular *quasi glissando*, glissando with extreme vibrato, maximal/extreme bow pressure gradual/ at the heel, gradual change from normal to maximal bow pressure and vice versa.

Instead of the traditional thematic/motive work, the music flow is based on the micro-movements, second intervals and gradual transformation of music masses. The minor second interval, which is occasionally *heard* as a distant trace of folk tradition, achieves hegemony over the other forms of horizontal development, while the majority of vertical structures are built by combining the intervals of second and fifth. The inner movability and the density of sound blocks (from punctually sparse to very saturated facture), is achieved by dynamic colouring and varied rhythmic movements.

In fact, the most important part in the structuring of music time and the perception of sound events is played by the rhythmic component, treated variously, from layering of irregular rhythmic groups and frequent changes of pulse, to the absolute negation of rhythmic articulation. Thus, for example, the steady rhythmic background of viola and violoncello in the first movement (from b. 49) served as a footing for emphasizing sharp sound *loops* of violins, while in the continuation of this segment (from b. 58), adding of kindred elements and irrepressible (rhythmically unsynchronized) second movement in all parts, which achieves the effect of friction of sound layers and a high level of emotional tension, creates the impression of constant listening to the same material, that is, movement without progressing.

The first movement of the diptych ends in glissando and dynamic rise to maximum sharpness, thus preparing for the atmosphere of the second movement, which begins with glissando of different speeds in all parts, and forte dynamics. The *sliding* sound picture then gives way to multi-layered sound landscapes of emphasized rhythmic status. In these segments, polyrhythmic collisions create interesting acoustic superimpositions and an unstable sound picture, which offers the possibility of comparison with *Ligeti-like micropolyphony*. But, contrary to Ligeti, who uses slow variations of timbres, Đorđević in her work uses perceptively very remarkable changes of sound, marked variations of timbre, dynamics, articulation...

So, as the title of diptych suggests, the composer deals with the problem of the experiencing sound phenomena (*live*), observing the *crystal of time through liquid space*, that is, the way in which we move through the musical space/time. From the standpoint of psycho-acoustics, in this diptych, Milica Đorđević examines the *relation* between her perceptive *anticipation* and the perception of the listener, aiming to prove the *subjectivity* of the act of perception. So, for example, in the second movement of the diptych (from b. 34, see example 1) she creates a sound situation where the gradual compressions and expanding of the model based on the tone *E*, are hardly noticed in successive listening (there are gradual, very small time shortenings, and then expanding, in comparison with the initial state of the model).

On this example we can also examine the problem of sound saturation, and look for an answer to the question of how our hearing *gets accustomed* to the *excess* or *deficit* of sound, or, under which circumstances it becomes (in)sensitive to certain sound stimuli. As shown in example 1, the tone e^2 on the open *E* string occurs in combination with the same tone pitch on the *A* string, that is, with extreme vibrato, which is perceived as something *different* and *new*, although there is just a slight difference in the oscillations of the string, giving the tone greater expressiveness. On the other hand, in cases when the threshold of the stimuli is already *oversaturated*, that is, the hearing is focused on bigger *events* and sound masses, the minor changes *pass* unnoticed. So, by these composing strategies, far-reaching in playing with the listener's perception, Milica Đorđević demonstrated successfully that the modelling of the hearing experience and the perception of sound object largely depend on *musical context*.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

Ивана Миладиновић Прица

МИЛИЦА ЂОРЂЕВИЋ: ЗВЕЗДОЗНАНЧЕВА СМРТ – СКАМЕЊЕНИ ОДЈЕЦИ
ЕПИТАФА У ШУТНУТОМ КРИСТАЛУ ВРЕМЕНА I & II

САЖЕТАК

Рад је настао поводом светске премијере диптиха *Звездознанчева смрт – скамењени одјеци епитафа у шутнутаом кристалу времена I & II* Милице Ђорђевић (1984) у оквиру фестивала савремене музике *Ars Musica* 2009. у Бриселу. Дело је компоновано по наруџбини квартета *Arditti*, а чине га два гудачка квартета заснована на феноменолошким истраживањима на плану сатурације (засићења) звука и перцепције музичког времена. Ауторкина приврженост савременим композиционим праксама коришћења акустичких инструмената којима се истиче сонорност *per se* резултирала је особеним инструменталним изразом који обухвата проширени звучни спектар на граници између звука и шума. Њена фасцинација могућностима гудачких инструмената, еманација боје/волумена звука, као и испитивање крајњих граница динамике, имало је за последицу развој композиционог поступка који је врло сличан структурисању звучних слојева дела у електронској музици.

Нека од значења овог дела могу се тражити у динамичном односу између пројектованог (ауторкине замисли), физички реализованог кроз интерпретацију и субјективно опажљивог, а као посебно интригантан издваја се проблем *разлике* између иманентних својстава дела и дела као опаженог објекта, односно, начина на који се оно прима од стране интерпретатора/слушаоца. Специфичним начином органи-

зације звучних догађаја композиторка истражује у којим околностима слух постаје (не)осетљив на одређене звучне дражи, показујући да моделовање слушног искуства и опажање звучних објеката у великој мери зависе од музичког контекста.

Кључне речи: Милица Ђорђевић, гудачки квартет, сонорност, сатурација звука, музичко време, музичка перцепција.

Example 1

The image displays a musical score for Example 1, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 34-36) includes parts for Violin I, Violin II, and Cello/Double Bass. A box above the Violin I part contains the following instructions: "Vni I, II: senza vib. - sul Mi (open string) / molto vib. - sul La senza vib.". The Violin I part is marked with "sul La" and "arco ord." with a wavy line indicating vibrato. The Violin II part is marked with "col legno battuto" and "arco" with a wavy line. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked with "arco" and "col legno battuto". Dynamics include *f*, *fp*, and *molto f*. The second system (measures 37-40) features a key signature change to E major (marked with a red 'E' and a treble clef) and a tempo marking of quarter note = 50. It includes parts for Violin I, Violin II, and Cello/Double Bass. The Violin I part is marked with "(sul Mi)" and has a wavy line. The Violin II part is marked with "(sul Mi)" and has a wavy line. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked with "(sul Mi)" and has a wavy line. Dynamics include *fp* and *molto f*.

Miladinović Prica, I.: The Death of the Star Knower... (98-106)

8
41 *quasi molto espress.*

mf *ff* *mf* *fp* *f*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

p *fp* *f* *p* *fp* *f*

riss *aliss*

c.l.t. *nat.* *s.p.* *ord.*

F
45

fp *f* *fp* *fp* *mf* *p sub.* *f* *fp*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

tr *pesante* *riss*