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NIKOLA PEJČINOVIĆ*

The 11th festival *Koncerti mladih autora – KoMA* (Young Authors' Concerts)

The 11th festival *Koncerti mladih autora – KoMA* (Young Authors' Concerts) was held on 19 May 2015 at the Belgrade Philharmonic Hall. The programme, comprising pieces by BA and MA students of composition, offered the audience an array of works featuring, as one might expect in this context, strong academic authorial voices, but with a clear tendency among the authors to search for musical solutions that might help them to achieve their own individual styles of composition. This was perhaps less pronounced in the works by younger composers: *Kalenić* for soprano and piano by Damjan Jovičin;[1] *Trubaduri* (Troubadours) for oboe and bassoon by Ana Krstajić;[2] *Zašto, molim* (Why, Please) for soprano and piano by Mira Milosavljević;[3] *Put u podzemni svet* (The Road to the Underworld) by Aleksandar Savić;[4] *Miris bagrema* (Scent of Acacias) for soprano, clarinet, and guitar by Marko Karanfilovski,[5] as well as in two works for chamber orchestra, *Varijacije* (Variations) by Milana Milošević[6] and *Transfiguracije* (Transfigurations) by Mirjana Veljković.[7] It seems as if the seeds of individual musical expression, whose initial developmental stages we could certainly hear in these mostly programmatic pieces, had fully blossomed only in the works of more senior authors: *Dinarska svita* (Dinaric Suite) for oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano by Marko Kovač;[8] *Jednom sam negde čuo...* (Somewhere, I Once Heard…) for clarinet, piano, and string quartet by Lazar Đorđević;[9] *Concerto da camera* for amplified harpsichord and chamber orchestra by Aleksandar Beljaković;[10] and *Kammerkonzert – The Archivist* for 18 musicians by Jug K. Marković.[11]

In *Kalenić,* a solo song, Jovičin synthesized neo-impressionist, neo-expressionist, and neo-avant-garde procedures to produce a sound picture based on a play of

* Author contact information:
dayw4lk3r@live.com

1 Damjan Jovičin is a student of the third year of BA studies in composition in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

2 Ana Krstajić is a student of the fourth year of BA studies in composition in the class of Prof. Isidora Žebeljan.

3 Mira Milosavljević is a student of the fourth year of BA studies in composition in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

4 Aleksandar Savić is a student of the fourth year of BA studies in composition in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević-Mijanović.

5 Marko Karanfilovski is a student of the third year of BA studies in composition in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević-Mijanović.

6 Milana Milošević is an MA student of composition in the class of Prof. Svetlana Savić.

7 Mirjana Veljković is a final year student in composition in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević-Mijanović.

8 Marko Kovač is an MA student of composition in the class of Prof. Isidora Žebeljan.

9 Lazar Đorđević is preparing for his PhD in composition in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

10 Aleksandar Beljaković is a final year student in composition in the class of Prof. Isidora Žebeljan.

11 Jug K. Marković is an MA student in composition in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

clusters and dissonant vertical sonorities, generating a form built on contrasts between densely and more transparently textured segments. Since Jovičin's song is based on the eponymous poem by Serbian poet Vasko Popa, the soprano vocal line was for the most part oriented toward portraying the verses, with the overall dramaturgy of the piece following it in the same direction. Ana Krstajić realized her work *Trubaduri* as a cycle in three movements. The main axis of the slow opening movement is a gradual development of folklore-inflected motivic material in a dialogue between the oboe and the bassoon. The fast middle movement evokes the music of the troubadours, with a wealth of ornaments and sweeping motivic clichés, even, at one point, producing the impression of an improvised musical flow, while the piece as a whole comes to a peaceful end in the anti-climax of the final movement's bleak atmosphere. Compared to the rigid style of *Kalenić*, it seems that *Trubaduri* demonstrates a more daring break into the domain of musical folklore, which certainly felt refreshing at this point of the evening. In her piece *Zašto, molim*, Mira Milosavljević produced a picture similar to that of Jovičin's work, first by alternating between fast atonal passages and breaks, and then also by achieving a wide timbral range between the vocal and piano parts. However, unlike the rather harsh sound picture of *Kalenić*, the musical language of *Zašto, molim* is more moderate and the dynamics are softer, with fewer contrasts.

One could say that up to this point in the concert, Aleksandar Savić's *Put u podzemni svet* showed the highest potential in terms of programmatic music. In this piece, the listener is initially met with mystical and soft neo-impressionist clusters in the piano's high register and a tranquil melody in the violoncello. Then, adhering to the title of the work, the sound moves 'down' and switches to the low register, presenting thematic material in the violoncello part supported by an ostinato sound in the piano part and lending the work a clearer formal profile. *Miris bagrema* by Marko Karanfilovski is structured along similar lines. The work opens with fragmentary, broken motivic ideas but then its form grows tighter, based on a triple rhythm and periodicity. As for the sonic result of this, compared to the multilayered tissue of *Put u podzemni svet*, it is considerably lighter, due to playing with unconventional performing techniques, such as over-blowing on the clarinet.

The possibilities of the variation principle were explored in two works for string instruments: *Varijacije* by Milana Milošević and *Transfiguracije* by Mirjana Veljković. The form of *Varijacije* rests on contrasts, that is, on alternating between soft and light episodes and rhythmically tense segments featuring a neo-expressionist harmonic language enriched with harsh vertical sonorities. By contrast, *Transfiguracije* is based on the principle of generating a musical flow by following an ostinato-like rhythmic pattern, which was in this case realized by using the instrument's body as a percussion instrument. But despite the domination of the rhythmic principle, this work is more melodic than *Varijacije*, which is demonstrated by its folklore-inspired material coloured by dissonant friction in the harmony. One might also note that, unlike in *Varijacije*, whose texture is vertically directed, in *Transfiguracije* this musical parameter is guided by a horizon-

tal principle, by interrelating the melody and the accompaniment. Therefore, in terms of technique, in both works, the two authors worked more with changes in the domain of rhythm, timbre, and harmony, than with the musical material itself. In both pieces, the overall sound tissue leaves one with the impression that *Varijacije* are more developed in terms of dramaturgy, with more pronounced culminations, due to the work's sharper musical expression, whereas *Transfiguracije*, owing to its folkloric musical construction, generates the impression of an elegiac work with a lyrical sensibility.

The second part of the 11th *KoMA* festival opened with Marko Kovač's *Dinarska svita*. The work comprises ten dramatically contrasting scenes based on opposing soft folkloric motivic fragments, broken with pauses and dynamically gradational cluster segments. Generally speaking, *Dinarska svita* features a rather well developed rhythmic component, primarily due to using irregular metric patterns and percussive effects in the piano part, while the work's best quality is perhaps the fact that Kovač managed to achieve a rather full and piercing sound with a relatively small ensemble (oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano), by skilfully shaping the instruments' mutual relations in terms of register and manipulating their sound colours. Lazar Đorđević's piece *Jednom sam negde čuo*, from its neo-impressionist opening to the culmination in extremely sharp neo-expressionist ostinatos with clusters in the string corps, generates the impression of a lavish sound palette. That palette's main carrier was certainly the string section, especially in the construction of pronounced dramatic tensions, while the clarinet and piano parts served the author as a means of playing with colour in moments of anticlimax.

Up to this point, the concert was dominated by works that may be placed in an academic stylistic framework, with their musical expression shaped mostly by neo-impressionist and neo-expressionist means and with occasional breaks into the folkloric domain and neo-avant-garde amplifications. In that regard, unlike those pieces, the *concertante* works of Aleksandar Beljaković and Jug K. Marković, *Concerto da camera* and *Kammerkonzert – The Archivist* feature a kind of treatment of material that also includes, among other things, postmodernist creative strategies. One could hear this first in Beljaković's *Concerto da camera*, a re-examination of the harpsichord's sound identity. Beljaković achieved this by subjecting neo-baroque figuration in the harpsichord part to electronic manipulation, thereby moving it into a new, modernized musical context, consisting of prolonged cluster sounds in the chamber orchestra corpus. But viewing the evening as a whole, one may openly say that its pride of place was occupied by Marković's *Kammerkonzert – The Archivist*, not only in terms of scope and complexity, but also its creativity and maturity of Marković's authorial expression. This is a work of a broad dramatic range, which is presented right at the outset, by means of gradation and timbral transformations, leading to the presentation of the thematic material. The overall structure of the work is tripartite, with the middle section featuring the piano in a more prominent soloist role. And precisely in that segment Marković offers a re-conceptualization of the traditional concept of the solo instru-

ment's function, that is, its deconstruction of sorts. Namely, instead of clearly shaped themes, Marković used minimalist tools to generate the musical flow in this section of the piece, repetition and gradation that, through dense and dissonant sonorities, grow into a culmination, realized by means of expressive piano arpeggiations and rather intense orchestra dynamics. Finally, another interesting feature in *Kammerkonzert* is the author's decision to use a musical quotation to strike up a dialogue with another *concertante* work, one from the standard repertoire. The quotation is a motive from Brahms's *Second Piano Concerto*, which in Marković's piece appears twice – at its first appearance, it is easily recognizable, whereas the second time it is partly obscured by a torrent of fiery passages in the piano part.

What one might criticize regarding Beljaković and Marković's works is their insufficient work on defining concrete thematic materials – they generate the tissue of their works primarily by layering (cluster) sections and repetitive figurations one on top of another, whereas in the preceding pieces one could clearly hear their authors' need to shape concrete thematic entities in constructing the overall sound picture. That is why in *Concerto da camera* and *Kammerkonzert* it seemed, at times, as if form had taken precedence over content. However, that certainly cannot diminish their overall quality, which truly raised these two works above the rest of the repertoire and thus marked the 11th *KoMA* festival.

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NIKOLA PEJČINOVIĆ

The 24th International Review of Composers

The 24th International Composers' Review was held in Belgrade between 24 and 30 September 2015 under the title of *The Music Box*. In some 67 featured works by authors from 18 countries (countries of the former Yugoslavia, the United States, Netherlands, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Great Britain, China, Romania, Sweden, Italy, Lithuania, and South Korea), last year's festival developed its chosen thematic framework in various ways, but for the most part in conceptual and mimetic terms, by evoking the sonic and timbral qualities of music boxes. Thus drawing inspiration from this mechanical instrument, the composers sought to realize their creative potentials and explore how the workings of a musical box might be transferred/posited in the discourse of art music.

A possible answer to that question was offered already on the Review's opening night, on 24 September, on the Raša Plaović stage of the National Theatre in Belgrade, with a concert programme titled *Kaleidoskop (za decu i odrasle) Nade Kolundžije* (Kaleidoscope (for Children and Grown-ups) by Nada Kolundžija). The presentation of the Mokranjac Award to composer Svetlana Savić for her work *Zarobljena* (Trapped) for women's choir and electronics was followed by a multi-