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A PIECE OF MUSIC IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARTEFACT AND FACT¹

Abstract: In this paper, I shall consider the ontological duality and functional interchangeability of *artefact* and *fact* in the field of music, proceeding from the assumption that every artefact is at the same time a fact, yet every fact is not necessarily an artefact. Thereby, I understand the *fact* in the sense of everything that exists in reality, and bears an enduring identity as an object, phenomenon or information. By *artefact*, I understand a material product of human activity.

Such a starting point, enables, in each piece of music, the multifaceted consideration of the dynamics in the relationship between artefact and fact. On this occasion, I shall exem-

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plify this relationship on Svetlana Savić's compositions *The Sonnets* for female voice, violoncello, piano and electronics (2012), from three characteristic aspects: 1) their ontology in the score and at the phenomenal level; 2) the ensemble, presenting a specific ontological unity of *artefact* and *fact*, the unity for which the compositions are created; and 3) environmental sounds as a *fact* in the shaping of compositions as *artefact*.

All three aspects of consideration are expected to point to the complexity of the relationship between *artefact* and *fact*, to their particular, individual profiling, but also their mutual resignification in a piece of music, owing to the nature and the kind of the piece's relevant 'protagonists'.

Key Words: fact; artefact; artefact-fact duality; environmental sounds; Svetlana Savić; *La douce nuit*; *La vita fugge*

In the sphere of music, and not merely in it, the relationship between *fact* and *artefact* is very complex in its ontological duality and functional interchangeability. If we assume that the *fact* is everything that exists in reality, which bears an enduring identity as an object, phenomenon or information, and that the *artefact* is a material product of human activity, all human 'handicraft', which differs from natural objects and phenomena, then the basic level of the fact-artefact relationship is immediately established. This level implies that, in principle, every artefact is at the same time a fact, yet every fact is not necessarily an artefact. That which is produced in the material sense remains an always recognizable and endurable object; but that which is always a recognizable and endurable object, which is a fact, can 'become' an artefact only under specific conditions, provided, for example, by the process of an *institutional* promotion of the fact into the artefact. However, the said level of the fact-artefact relationship also involves a situation in which human labour on some material, more precisely, a specific aspect of this labour need not result in a materially tangible and endurable object. In that case, the way in which this impalpable product exists in reality, in which it *is being* as an artefact, is not, *as such*, regularly recognizable. Yet it is recognizable when this impalpable appearance is 'transferred' to a real object by being notated exactly in the form of its transience, its temporality. So, only conserved in this way, can a temporal artefact also exist as an objectively present fact. In other words, whether an artefact will be sustained as a permanently recognizable fact depends on the form of its existence.

It is precisely that situation in which the relationship between the fact and artefact is already revealed at its basic level, as an ontological issue. Here, we are primarily thinking of the phenomenon of the musical and, in general, artistic artefact, the sense of which is, generally speaking, closer to what Randall Dipert calls the *philosophical-etymological sense*, putting this against the *anthropolog-*

ical-historical sense of the artefact as a primarily “historical-cultural object”, as a product which is not in the true sense of the word the result of a personal, *individual* intention, but rather of the needs of a cultural milieu, society, actually of a “culturally inherited model of behaviour”.² However, as Dipert stresses, the artistic artefact implies the individuality of creation, and a receptive response to thoughts and feelings that are involved in this creation.³

Proceeding from the assumptions I have just explained, every musical piece can be considered from numerous aspects of the relationship between the artefact and fact. On this occasion, we shall be dealing with three of those possible aspects: 1) the ontological forms (both in the score and in sound) of a work of music; then, 2) with the setting as a specific ontologically unique artefact-fact for which the work is composed; and 3) with the environmental sounds as facts in the shaping of a composition as an artefact. Considering all of that, we shall pay special attention to the *nature* of both the fact and artefact, to their possible ontological duality, possible ontological overlap, their functional relations and equations.

(1) From the perspective of the presented platform both ontological forms of a piece of music – the one *closed* (*opus perfectum et absolutum*) and the one *open* (*improvisationally* founded) – bear the artefact. Namely, these are both the result of an artist’s creatively dealing with the sound as a selected production material, the result of the process of composing or improvising.

The process of composing consists of the action on that production material, which entails the structuring of the material and the score notation of the structured musical whole. In principle, that material encompasses the field of musical sound, in fact, the field of differentiated pitches, but also the complete region of sound, including the natural and concrete sound fields. As the raw material for building a musical whole as an artefact, that sound material has the meaning of fact. Thereby, we should notice the duality of the material’s factual nature itself. Because, on the one hand, the field of pitches which, as we have seen, has the function of the fact – not solely because it bears a general ‘state of things’, an item of ‘information’ which is being permanently confirmed, but also because of its position in relation to the nascent work as the artefact – is at the same time a kind of artefact itself, having been the consequence of an intervention carried out in the region of sound, that is, of its specific acoustic-systemic organisation. On the other hand, every concrete sound originates mostly from an object-type

² Cf. Randall R. Dipert, “Artifact” in: Michael Kelly (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Vol. 1, New York–Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, 121–123; id. *Artifacts, Art Works, and Agency*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993.

³ Cf. Dipert, “Artifact”, op. cit., 121.

sound source (e.g. train, pot, typewriter, siren ...), meaning, from a sort of artefact. As, after all, is the case with the sound produced by musical instruments, if one does not count those which are purely natural – like a blade of grass, a twig, a leaf, a pebble... So, with real objects and acoustic instruments it concerns the *simultaneity of the status* of the fact, and the *ontology* of the artefact, both in the *common function of the fact*. Hence it could be said that ‘pure’ sound fact originates exclusively from the sphere of natural sound.

A piece of music as the result of structuring the described sound material, as a completed and score-notated musical flow, bears its objectiveness by which it exists in reality like any other physical object, natural or made. But it also bears its phenomenal appearance in the form of the embodiment, the *sounding* of which is notated, and which tangibly exists only indirectly: when emerging on some carrier of sound, for example a CD.

Therefore, both ontological forms of a musical piece as the artefact attain their specific objectiveness: *opus perfectum* with its score, and the recording of the performance of the score, as stored on the sound-carrier, by the mediation of the carrier’s objectiveness. However, the very sounding of the piece – its phenomenal ontology – can be simultaneously considered as the artefact since it presents an artistic, interpretatively shaped *sound* product; and as the fact – since it is about the sound content which will remain recognizable as such, regardless of its different interpretative variants.

In the same sense, the musical whole which is formed in an improvisational way should be understood as the artefact, whereby it also achieves its factual sustainability only through its recording stored on the sound-carrier as a physical object. In that way, the improvisational artefact is preserved in its aesthetic irreversibility.

What I have just said refers primarily to the ontic determination of the notion of the factuality of a musical work which is, as any other thing that is “autonomous per the being”,⁴ of the beyond-temporal character. Of course, in its phenomenal appearance, the musical work is temporal in character, since it is heteronomous per the being.⁵ And although Roman Ingarden claims that “it would surely be intolerable to attribute to the determinations [of the artistic works] the ontic objectivity in the radical sense”, he has in mind that it “would be equally intolerable to declare them ‘subjective’, because it seems that, abstracting from the said moment of the heteronomy per the being, they fulfill [at least some] con-

⁴ Roman Ingarden’s formulation, after: Roman Ingarden, “Razmatranja o problemu objektivnosti” [Considerations About the Problem of Objectivity] in: id. *Doživljaj, umetničko delo i vrednost* [Experience, A Piece of Art, and Value], Beograd, Nolit, 1975, 262–304.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

ditions of the radical objectivity”.⁶ So, in each of its ontological forms, a piece of music relies on the autonomous musical logic.⁷ And if it concerns *opus perfectum et absolutum*, the musical piece does not change its acousmatics depending on the diversity of its experiences and on its reception, in general.⁸

Thus, with regard to the ontology of the musical piece, the relationship between the artefact and fact relies upon ontic-phenomenal unity.

(2) As we have already indicated, also, the setting for which a musical piece is composed points to a certain duality. It can be noticed already at the ontic level, in the kind and function of the performing ensemble. Its ‘oldest protagonist’, the voice, being the natural phenomenon, is a very specific fact. But the fact whose objectivity is mediated by the vocal cords and the mechanism of their functioning. Therefore, as a biological, physiological reality, the human voice is a fact that, generally speaking, has three elementary forms: the female, the male and the children’s voice, which exist solely in sounding that lasts as long as the chords vibrate. However, everything that a person can produce by means of his/her/its voice – including talking, singing, whispering, screaming, different forms of the character transformations achieved not only by the possible transfers of the male voice to the female and children’s voice, or the female voice to the male and the children’s, but also by the transformations within the expressive potentials of the voices individually (especially with reciting or acting) – involves a kind of human manipulation with the voice, that is, whatever one can do with it. From this angle, the voice is a kind of artefact, which, given the position that it can have in the process of composing, could be considered as the fundamental artefact; and its next, upper level, as the beyond-fundamental, that is, artistic artefact. This level is identified by the manner in which a composer, having in mind these human possibilities of the manipulation with the voice, uses it in his work. Therefore, what is meant here is a certain three-layered sense, which is determined by the fact and the two layers of artefact (elementary and artistic). Further, however, this elementary level is already two-layered itself, since it actually represents an *artefact-fact unity*. Because, as the consequence of the manipulation with the voice, it is the artefact; but as the *natural phenomenon* that enables this manipulation, it is the fact.

⁶ Ibid., 274.

⁷ Cf. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, *Pred muzičkim delom. Ogleđi o međusobnim projekcijama estetike, poetike i stilistike muzike XX veka: jedna muzikološka vizura* [Contemplating the Work of Music on Display. Essays on Mutual Projections of Aesthetics, Poetics, and Stylistics of 20th Century Music: A Musicological Viewpoint], Beograd, Zavod za udžbenike, 2007.

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

Fig. 1: Three-layered stratification

$\begin{aligned} & \text{fact} + \text{artefact} \text{ (two layers: elementary/artefact-fact, and artistic)} = \\ & = \text{fact} + (\text{artefact-fact} + \text{artistic artefact}) \end{aligned}$

We shall exemplify that on the three-part cycle *The Sonnets* for female voice, violoncello, piano and electronics (2012)⁹ by Svetlana Savić (1971), one of the most distinguished Serbian composers today. In the third composition from the cycle, *La vita fugge*, the voice is generally used in a span from singing and recitation to the electronic processing of the recording of the recitation. More specifically, this has to do with the conventional female singing of Petrarch's sonnet *Solo et pensoso*, but also the recording of its recitation performed by the Italian actor Moro Silo. The recording of his recitation is, however, electronically processed beyond recognition, actually, articulated in the form of the unfolding of the electronic sound mass exposed in the colour of the deep male voice. This unfolding acts as a sound stratum that simultaneously flows with the musical unfolding in the female-voice part.¹⁰ So, this is a situation in which we identify the male voice in three different senses: as the *factual starting point* being the natural phenomenon; as the male voice which has the sense of the *artefact-fact unity* embodied in the declamation; and the male voice as the *musical artefact* created in the form of an electronic, acoustic transformation, and hence remote from both, the voice as the natural fact, and the voice as the artefact-fact unity.

SOUND EXAMPLE No. 1: S. Savić, *Soneti*, b. 29–40.

[http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound Ex. 1. mp3.mp3](http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound%20Ex.1.mp3)

⁹ For a detailed analysis of this composition cf. Svetlana Savić, *Teorijska studija o doktorskom umetničkom projektu "Soneti"* [Theoretical Study About the Doctoral Artistic Project "The Sonnets"]. [Manuscript] The project was defended in the Department of Composition at the Faculty of Music, Beograd 2013; also cf. Branka Popović, "Svetlana Savić: *Soneti* 'La douce nuit', 'Looking on Darkness', 'La vita fugge'", *New Sound International Journal of Music*, 43, I/2014, 157–172; also cf. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, "Identitetske transformacije uzorka u ciklusu kompozicija *Soneti* za ženski glas, violončelo, klavir i elektroniku, Svetlane Savić" in: Sonja Marinković et al. (Eds.), *Tradicija kao inspiracija*. Tematski zbornik [Tradition as Inspiration. Thematic Collection]. Banja Luka, Akademija umjetnosti Univerziteta u Banjoj Luci, et. al, 2016. The score used in this study, for the purpose of the analysis, is: Svetlana Savić, *Soneti ciklus kompozicija za ženski glas, violončelo, klavir i elektroniku*, Beograd, 2008–2012, manuscript.

¹⁰ For more about this cf. Veselinović-Hofman, 2016.

The other parts of the ensemble of Savić's composition, the violoncello and piano, share in it the similar position as the voice. Given that these instruments are not natural but made – like any other acoustic instruments – they represent the artefact. At the same time, considering that, as such, they are recognizable visually and, according to their tone colour, that is, recognizable in the sense of information that can be permanently confirmed ontically, they also represent the fact. Therefore, in their initial layer, instruments in general, and in the said composition the violoncello and piano, reveal the sense of the artefact-fact unity. However, in the course of a compositional treatment that results in the artistic, musical artefact, this unity acts in the sense of 'tools', of the fact. In the cycle by Svetlana Savić, the compositional treatment involves the use of the authentic sound of these instruments, based on their intense variational reciprocity, and their individual as well as common reciprocity with the vocal and electronic parts. In addition, the composer here uses the synthesised sound of the violoncello, but some peculiar articulation effects of the violoncello and piano, too. She uses these effects as the basis for creating the sound of some instruments that are not among the setting of the composition. For example, in *La vita fugge*, we can recognize the sound of percussions. However, it is not authentic, but made by means of the FM synthesizer, and generated on the basis of the combinations of the piano strings' sound and the sound produced by the crumpling of paper and the friction of wood on wood, as the initial sound materials. Or, for example, we can hear the sound of the lute, produced by subjecting the violoncello pizzicato to the process of reverberation. This actually refers to the situation in which the musical artefact is transposed to the fact of the virtual reality, more accurately, to the situation in which the individual nature of both the fact and the artefact, as well as of their basic relationship, appears to be 'graded' and further stratified.

SOUND EXAMPLE No. 2: S. Savić, *Soneti*, the sound of the 'percussions', b. 44–53.
[http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound Ex. 2. mp3](http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound%20Ex.2.mp3)
mp3

(3) As we have already stressed while exposing our methodological approach, the relationship between the fact and artefact may reveal an interesting picture from the perspective of the compositional use of the environmental/concrete sounds, too. On the one hand, these belong to the sphere of natural sounds, whereby, due to the nature of their factuality, they disclose noticeable analogies to the factuality of the human voice's nature. Like the birds chirping, dogs barking, the murmur of water, the whistling of the wind... environmental sounds naturally exist as the 'attributes' of fauna and flora (just as e.g. the 'voices' of animal species, or the woods exist), or as the 'voice' of natural phenomena (like

the crash of thunder, the sound of waves or the rain...). In other words, environmental sounds are connected with the natural world not merely in the sense of signs and symbols, but of identity.

In a composition, they can be applied as ‘pure’ facts, meaning, as the raw sound samples introduced in a musical flow, but also in the form of sounds generated electronically – for example, the sound of birds chirping, frogs croaking, or dogs barking. In the latter case, having been the result of a composer’s *doing*, his acoustic-technical product, these sound contents belong to the category of artefacts. But artefacts that – in the same sense as the ‘raw’ samples – bear the position and meaning of the fact in the composition, in the function of materials that take part in the structuring of its musical unfolding. Depending on the idea of a concrete work, this material may keep its sound authenticity and its mimesis, but may equally relevantly renounce them by subjecting itself to complete electronic distortion and dismantlement in any sense – formal and acoustic.

The same position in regard to the *fact-artefact* nature and their interrelations show the environmental sounds of the Schaefferian type, that is, the concrete sounds provided by made objects. Although these exist in reality primarily as “historical-cultural objects”, they, similarly to the acoustic instruments and their role in the shaping of a piece of music, reveal their own *artefact-fact duality*. Being the fact within the artefact of the higher degree – the compositional whole! – their duality has the sense of a structural element which need not be recognizable according to its sound-source.

Therefore, these are conditions in which the ‘status’ of the fact and artefact appears to be analogous to the ‘status’ these have in the said situation of the electronic synthesis of any instrumental reality. Namely, the virtual reality of the environmental sound, and the virtual reality of the instrumental sound, imply, in the same sense, the stratification and mutual functionalisation of the fact and artefact.

It is in that respect that the motifs are used, for example, of birds chirping, water gurgling, the sound of a train or of crickets, or the dog barking, in the composition *La douce nuit* for violoncello, piano and electronics, the first part of Svetlana Savić’s cycle. Although these sounds are predominantly the constituents of the electronic layer, they (first of all, the birds chirping) crucially determine the musical content of the violoncello and piano part, whereby they are not individually discernible as samples.

SOUND EXAMPLE No. 3: S. Savić, *Soneti*, b. 1–35.

[http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound Ex. 3. mp3.mp3](http://www.newsound.org.rs/en/Issues/issue_no_49_sound_examples/Sound%20Ex.%203.mp3)

To summarize. The examination of three aspects of the relationship between the fact and artefact in a work of music, which have been in the focus of this paper, reveals several moments: 1) From the perspective of the ontology of the musical work, the fact and artefact establish their ontic-aesthetic unity. 2) From the viewpoint of the performing ensemble, initially from the angle of the voice, it concerns three-part stratification, consisting of the fact and two layers of artefact (elementary layer = *artefact-fact unity* + the *artistic artefact*). From the aspect of the acoustic instruments, that relation is established in the sense of the artefact-fact unity in the function of the fact in shaping the artistic artefact. And in the case of the electronically generated instrumental sound, it refers to the transfer of the musical artefact into the fact of the virtual reality. 3) From the perspective of the environmental sounds, both ‘raw’ and synthesized samples have the status and the sense of the fact, only that, thereby, the synthesized sample has the sense of the artefact-fact. The Schaefferian concrete sounds retain the same position. At issue here is also the artefact-fact duality, as the fact in the artefact of the higher stage.

Therefore, according to this examination, a complex relational dynamic can be revealed between the categories of the fact and the artefact in a piece of music, which ultimately shows that the line of their demarcation is neither entirely sharpened nor ‘absolute’. In contrast to that, it is quite questionable at first, because of their ontological and functional interchangeability.

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