
REVIEWS

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The 13th KoMA festival – Young Authors' Concerts

The festival *Koncerti mladih autora – KoMA* (Young Authors' Concerts) was held for the 13th time at the Belgrade Philharmonic Hall, on 25–26 December 2016. During the three concerts, young composers' pieces were presented, with a significant number of compositions written by BA and MA students from the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. Furthermore, there was an opportunity to hear works by authors from Slovenia and the Netherlands. In accordance with the syllabi of the Faculty of Music's Department for Composition and Orchestration, the young composers mostly presented works that can be categorized according to the yearly study programme –

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the youngest authors had their solo songs and shorter pieces for small chamber ensembles performed, while students of the final years, master students and graduates participated with formally more complex works, written for more diverse instrumental ensembles.

The first concert consisted of the performance of three solo songs, by David Atanacković,¹ Anđela Milić,² and Gordan Lazinica.³ Atanacković's *Preludium* for baritone and piano, based on the verses of the poet, Zoran Milić, as well as Anđela Milić's *Otuđenje* [*Estrangement*], written to the verses by Jasna Milićev, in a way, demonstrate an academic approach to the solo song media, an assignment to be composed in the first year of composition studies. Based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the motif of *female madness*, Lazinica's solo song *Senka* [*Shadow*] for soprano and

¹ Atanacković (1996) is a student of the second year of BA studies in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Svetlana Savić.

² Milić (1996) is a student of the second year of BA studies in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Svetlana Savić.

³ Lazinica (1989) is a student of the second year of BA studies in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade.

piano, demonstrates the influence of late romantic harmony. The challenging vocal part was effectively performed by Aleksandra Jovanović. The fragmentary structure of Vladica Mikićević's⁴ work *Slike sećanja iz Dunavske ulice, elegija za sopran, violinu i klavir* [Images of Memory from Dunavska street, elegy for soprano, violin and piano], which does not permit a stronger interconnection between the sections and the melodic lines of the piece, may, in a sense of the programme behind the piece, correspond with the idea of memories of a „long gone past’ that is always woven out of a series of images, but is never the same/truthful. Nevertheless, to communicate this kind of programme with the desired effect, the piece needed to be performed more convincingly. The composition *Orijentalni fragment* [Oriental Fragment] by Stefan Naerac⁵ for clarinet and piano, is conceived in three pictures echoing the sound and coloration of the East. Starting with a slow opening movement, through the scherzo-like play in the second image, up to the rhythmic and melodic calmness in the third image, the clarinet brings out most of the musical and timbre transpositions of an imaginary sound of the East into Western musical surroundings. In his piece *(D)ah!* for baritone saxophone and piano, Damjan Jovičin⁶ presented compositional and per-

forming procedures, which, to some extent, deviated from the common practice of this festival. Namely, Jovičin demonstrated an openness for quasi-improvisational actions and preparations of the piano during the performance. Although these are fairly common methods in contemporary music, they are, almost by definition, avoided by the composers featured in the KoMA festival. Marko Karanfilovski's⁷ piece *God Save the Queen* was written in the form of variations of the British hymn. The symbolic and music parody announced in the programme note, which was performed through the medium of a wind quintet with the apparent counterpoint skill of the composer, remained on the line of unconvincing and inconclusive. The last piece on the programme that night was the work by Mirjana Veljković,⁸ *Vizantijski odjeci* [Byzantine Echoes]. Along with the name of the composition, its inspiration (the work is based on the chants from the Byzantine *Osmoglasnik* and the church songs by Kir Stefan Srbin), and the specific treatment of the instruments which resulted in a somewhat sharp sound, Veljković, intentionally or not, made a reference to the opus of Ljubica Marić. However, in search of the peculiar echoing atmosphere intimated in the title, the author distinguished some interesting sound coloring by the (at times) unusual use of instruments such as the vibraphone and piano.

Two concerts were held on the second day of the festival. The programme con-

⁴ Mikićević (1994) is a student of the third year of BA studies in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević.

⁵ Naerac (1992) is a student of composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić and Prof. Branka Popović.

⁶ Jovičin (1995) is a student of the fourth year in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

⁷ Karanfilovski (1994) is a student of the fourth year in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade.

⁸ Veljković (1984) graduated in composition in 2016, at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević.

sisted of ten compositions. The piece *PLANETA IX [PLANET IX]* for chamber ensemble and electronics by Aleksandar Savić,⁹ was the only work presented at the KoMA festival this year that included electronics. Furthermore, Savić's work included the aleatory in conducting, which alternated with fixed notation. Bearing in mind that Mira Milosavljević's¹⁰ piece *Knotepunkt* was inspired by diverse musical and aesthetical influences, the fragmentary structure and expression could be understood through the abundance of ideas encountered and contained in the nodal places. During the second day of the festival there was a chance to hear works by foreign authors, such as Anej Černe¹¹ from Slovenia. His piece *Time to forgive* for wind quartet relied on carefully shaped individual instrumental voices, referring to the various signifiers of spirituality through pentatonic and folklore melodic movements, and a minimalist imitation of organ sonority. Jana Rančić¹² presented her piece *Lutkarsko pozorište [Puppet Show]* for contrabass and piano, whose main objective was to musically portray „experiences behind the scenes of a theatre’. Characterwise, this was an aphoristic and compressed piece, which, in terms of the pro-

gramme, indicates the inner experience of the theatrical hero of this work, that is, the puppet. The last piece in this concert was Ana Krstajić's *Waw an Namus* for string orchestra, piano, and percussion. As it has been noticed so far (in this text, as in the reviews of the previous festival) this concert presented an image of the whole KoMA festival, the hallmark of which, to this day, is the expression of high modernity that is fostered in composition studies at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. However, works by the senior students, such as those by Krstajić and Milosavljević, among others, demonstrate strong tendencies towards finding their own musical locutions.

The last concert was in a similar tone. Performing his piece on the piano, Marko Kovač¹³ was the first on the programme with the composition *Slovenska antiteza [Slavic Antithesis]*, premiered at the BEMUS festival 2016, at the time scored for piano and orchestra. In Kovač's piece, as well as his earlier works, one can recognize the strong influence of those local composers who drew inspiration from *imaginary folklore*, which was, in a way, implied in the name of his composition. The fragmentary expression, with which *Slovenska antiteza* abounds, is another characteristic of Kovač's previous works. The composition *Taraf de Haidouks* by Igor Andrić¹⁴ for violin and harpsichord also reveals folk music as the main source of inspiration, apparent in the melodic invention, harmonic progression, timbre, and

⁹ Savić (1991) graduated in 2016, in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Tatjana Milošević.

¹⁰ Milosavljević (1993) is an MA student of composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.

¹¹ Černe (1994) is a student of composition at the Music Academy in Ljubljana, in the class of Prof. Dušan Bavdek.

¹² Rančić (1993) is a student of composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Branka Popović.

¹³ Kovač (1989) is a PhD student of composition at the Faculty of Music, in the class of Prof. Isidora Žebeljan.

¹⁴ Andrić (1996) is a student of composition at the Faculty of Music, in the class of Prof. Isidora Žebeljan.

references to traditional instruments such as the *cimbule*. Stefan Čeganjac¹⁵ participated in the KoMA festival for the third time, with his piece *Ludicrum* for flute, clarinet, piano, violin, and cello. The principal motif of this work is the idea of a play, which is reflected in the playfulness of the instrumental and structural treatment, as well as in the articulation of the melodic ideas. Yannis Kyriakides'¹⁶ work *Words and Song Without Words* for cello was the only example of a multimedia piece at the thirteenth KoMA festival. Namely, Kyriakides tried to make a connection between music and the semantic notion of the word in music, by projecting words from Felix Mendelssohn's letter (1842) on the screen behind the performer. 'The text is coded in music, (...) and the meaning comes only into touch with the music itself', thus avoiding the subordination of the music to words. This idea could have been conducted more effectively if the shorter text had been used, bearing in mind that this piece has no traditional development and the expected musical flow, and it leads listeners to suppose that musicalized speech without words is in question. The last piece on the programme was *Srpske ljubavne pesme* [*Serbian Love*

¹⁵ Čeganjac (1993) is an MA student of composition at the Faculty of Music, in the class of Prof. Svetlana Savić.

¹⁶ Kyriakides (1969) studied musicology at the York University, and composition with Louis Andriessen.

Songs] for female voice and string quartet by Jug Marković.¹⁷ Marković used poems by famous Serbian poets, such as Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Miloš Crnjanski, Vasko Popa, as well as selected verses from folk poetry. The seven poems that constitute this cycle display a mature compositional expression, in which the composer does not hesitate to use folklore idioms and recognizable musical figures, with the purpose of re-contextualizing the 'archaic expression'. Marković's conception was carried out very well by the performers. The one objection can be addressed to the somewhat poor articulation of the text, which could have demonstrated the sonic richness and diversity of the Serbian language and poetry.

Bearing in mind the importance of promoting young composers' music, I would like to point out that the KoMA festival, in this edition, as well as the previous ones, proved to be a place of very successful cooperation of student from different departments (Composition, Performing departments, Conducting, Musicology). That being said, this festival provides a much needed impulse of solidarity and students' team work, thus making it an important lighthouse in the sea of individual cultural struggles for attention, promotion, and audience.

¹⁷ Marković (1987) graduated in composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, in the class of Prof. Zoran Erić.