WHAT IS HIDDEN BETWEEN THE ACTS?

Entr’acte, фарса-эпизода за оркестар
[Entr’acte, farce-episode for orchestra] by Zoran Erić

Abstract: The text discusses the latest work by Zoran Erić, Entr’acte (Između činova), farce-episode for symphony orchestra. Starting from perception of the work’s morphological aspects – from the structure of the materials and their relationships, to the dramaturgical tissue, to the author’s note to the work – we wanted to discover what is really hidden between the acts, and whether the composition which, in the author’s words, should be ‘performed between some more important things surrounding it’, can and may outshine ‘the main event’.

Key words: Between the Acts, Zoran Erić, theatre, ostinato layer, sound vignettes, fragmentary structure, neutrality, between, farce-episode.

The latest work by Zoran Erić, Entr’acte (Između činova), farса-епизода [Entr’acte (Between the Acts), a farce-episode] for symphony orchestra, composed on a commission by the 40th BEMUS, had its premiere performance at the festival’s opening ceremony, on 3rd October 2008 in the Sava Centre. The composition was performed by the Belgrade Philharmonics conducted by Bojan Sudić.

Looking at the title of the work, I first thought that the theatrical spirit definitely ‘moved into’ Erić’s music and that this must be yet another composition in his more recent opus which directly stems from one or more musical compo-

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sitions he has written for the theatre. Then other associations started to follow one another – Virginia Woolf? Eric Satie? La serva padrona? etc. After becoming acquainted with the score and the composer’s note on the work, I realized I was only partly right. Yes, there certainly is a trace of the theatre, but there are no self-quotations.

Even by a cursory glance at the score, I recognized the distinctive hand – repetitive technique in the material build-up, the simultaneous flow of ostinato layers of different physiognomies, the predominance of the rhythmic component over the melodic one… Everything pointed to Erić’s authorship, yet everything sounded somehow new and original.

First of all, we had not heard a symphonic work by Erić in a long time. Inclined to the chamber genre and renowned in our midst by his masterful treatment of string texture, this author, in his very successful career as a music creator, did not turn to symphony orchestra many times. Therefore one is captivated (but not surprised) by his ease in manipulating the orchestral apparatus, incarnated in finding the ‘right’ measure of expanding and compressing the sonic space, with emphasizing the refined nuances of the orchestral groups, especially those of percussion, complemented by two prepared and amplified pianos and an amplified harpsichord, which are for the most part treated percussively.

The formal concept of the work Izmedu činona can be explained in terms of order and disorder, which Erić was preoccupied with in the cycle Slike Haosa.

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2 Zoran Erić used his musical ideas from theatrical productions in the following compositions: Oberon koncert [Oberon Concerto] (the last work in the cycle Slike Haosa [Images of Chaos]), 1997; Šest scena-komentara [Six Scenes-Comments], 2001; Ko je ubio galeba? (Ti, zar se ne sećaš?) [Who Shot a Seagull? (Don’t You Remember? You SH ot a Seagull)], 2005.

3 Here we refer to the book Between the Acts by Virginia Woolf, written in 1941; the movie Entr’acte from 1924, played between the acts of Satie’s ballet Relâche; and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi’s opera buffa La serva padrona, which was originally performed between the acts of an opera seria, and only later became a ‘serious’ work for separate performance.

4 Erić wrote only a handful of works requiring a symphony orchestra: Iza sunčevih vrata [Behind the Sun’s Door], choreographic image (1973); Koncert za orkestar i soliste [Concerto For Orchestra And Soloists] (1975); Mirage, a concerto for piano, polyphonic synthesizer, electric piano and symphony orchestra (1979); Banović Strahinja, a one-act ballet (1981); Jelisaveta, kneginja crnogorska [Elisabeth, the Princess of Montenegro], for electronics, symphony orchestra and the ensemble of period instruments (1986).

5 The work calls for a big percussion battery: tympani, bass drum, suspended cymbal, metal and glass tubular bells, four snare drums, gong, glockenspiel, marimba and vibraphone.

6 Cf. Marija Nikolić, „Slike Haosa” Zorana Erića. „Ivica haosa” kao izvor umjetničke kreativnosti [„Images of Chaos” by Zoran Erić. „The Edge of Chaos” as the Source of Artistic Creativity], degree essay, manuscript, 2007; Marija Nikolić, ‘Uredenost nereda/neuređenost reda kao modus vivendi ciklusa Slike Haosa Zorana Erića’ [Orderliness of Disorder/Disorderliness of Order as a Modus Vivendi
Outwardly a well laid-out, one-movement ternary form with the recapitulation and transitions (A transition, B transition, A1), inwardly is organized in a mosaic fashion, by concatenation of shorter and longer structural segments. Therefore the complete sonic aspect of the work is built on six different materials, which I designate as a b c d e f, where the materials c and f are the formal pivots and they function as the primary subjects for the parts A and B.7

But what are these materials really like?

On the very first listening to the work, it is clear that Između činova does not count on broader, rounded musical entities which could be considered subjects in some generally accepted sense. Hence the motivic world of the work relies on a relatively neutral musical datum, such as a tremolo on a single note, which develops into a pulse layer, comprising the sound space of the orchestra almost completely (introductory material a), pedal notes, glissandos, figurations, runs (materials b, d, e). The absence of the melodic component is also conspicuous in the work’s most expressive segments, c and f, which I have denoted as ‘the first’ and ‘the second’ ‘subjects’ in the formal schematics of the work, aiming to stress their importance as compared to the other materials. Hence the basic motifs of these ‘subjects’ take the shape of rhythmically strikings, but melodically completely neutral bits of sound information, built by repeating one tone (material c), in oscillations of ascending-descending thirds, or by the ‘circulation’ of several tones (material f). Such a sound substance, reduced to a rhythmic parameter, is a characteristic of Erić’s hand and is suitable for shaping ostinato layers and their specific distribution throughout a work, which is exactly the hallmark of the majority of the author’s compositions. However, in this particular case it seems even more important that the neutrality of these six materials emanates from the contextual background of the composition, which, it should not be forgotten, is to be performed between, and that becomes even clearer when we perceive the segments’ structural relationships.

Examining Erić’s composition Sedam pogleda u nebo [Seven Glances at the Sky] from 2007, Zorica Premate noted that ‘stvarajući muziku za pozorište, Erić razvio sposobnost da fragmentarno misli i iskazuje se putem kratkih, gotovo “isećenih” komada osmišljenog zvuka’ [‘creating theatre music, Erić developed the capability to think in fragments and to express himself in short, almost “cut-out” pieces of structured sound’], as well as that ‘veće forme kompozitor “sastavlja”

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7 The materials are distributed as follows: A (aba, c) transition, (debe,d,) B (f) transition, (debd,) A1, (a c). More details can be found in the formal schematics of the work, given at the end of the text.
nadovezivanjem dužih ili kraćih odlomaka...’ ['the composer “assembles” bigger forms by the concatenation of longer or shorter fragments...’]. The same idea could be applied to *Između činova*, where the musical tissue flows in alternation of (predominantly) condensed sound vignettes, defined by all musical parameters. Therefore, the realization of the work’s structural plan undoubtedly resembles the technique of sequencing movie frames (may I say: theatrical scenes?), since the vignettes do not develop or overlap, but are presented one after another, delimited by ‘clean cuts’. This is most obvious in the two transitions, where short time spans are populated by several contrasting sound situations positioned on the principle of growing and waning tension: 1. a contemplative fragment (material d), with an impressionist overtone, where the orchestral sound is reduced to metal and glass tubular bells, glockenspiel, vibraphone, harp, piano and harpsichord in *piano* dynamics (example 1); 2. *subito* change of texture to furious runs and figurations in loud dynamics (material e), with the employment of an almost full orchestral apparatus (example 2); 3. choral atmosphere (material b), realized by compressing the symphonic sound once more, this time into the string section, where the music substance is reduced to several pedal notes and a relatively static line, punctuated by narrow-span glissandos (example 3). After these three vignettes, the ‘bits’ of e and/or d segments are exposed once more.

Thematically neutral and formally fragmentary music of such this, whose segments appear to be ‘remnants’ of some greater imaginary entities, brings me back to the very concept of the work, where it is pointed out that this music should be performed ‘između nekih važnijih stvari koje je okružuju’ ['between some more important things surrounding it’]. Hence the acoustic content of *Između činova* is not designed pretentiously since its purpose is not to outshine ‘the main event’, but one should not think it is unobtrusive and expressionless, because, in the author’s words, its goal is to:

‘gledaočevu pažnju […] po završetku čina nekog pozorišnog događaja privuče, zadriž ili osvoji, a u ime čina koji sledi. Ova muzika, dakle, ispunjava prostor koji bi inače ostao prazan i zauzima vreme prevideno za predah i opuštanje publike u okviru koga će biti izvršena promena dekora, kostima i sl. Funkcionalnost ove muzike meri se tako njenom

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8 Zorica Premate, ‘Sedam fragmenata o beskraju. Sedam pogleda u nebo Zorana Erića’ [Seven Fragments on Infinity. Seven Glances at the Sky by Zoran Erić], Internacionalni časopis za muziku *Novi Zvuk*, 31, 2008, 94.

9 From the author’s programme note.
The author’s note prompts me again to think about the traces of the theatre in this composition – only this time the music is not a part of the play (and the play is not a part of the music), but lies somewhere between. And in that interstice, the dramaturgy of the composition is arranged to animate the listener/spectator, not only by the relatively quick changes of musical situations/vignettes, but also by a deft game of extending and compressing musical time, which is accentuated by the alternation of dynamic and static states. Apart from the parameters of tempo, texture, various rhythmic configurations and the treatment of the orchestral apparatus, this is contributed to by the author’s markings which direct the performers to the characters of the sound vignettes. Hence the moods Brillante (a), Appassionato (b), Agitato (c), Indolente (d), Con slancio (e), Con suono pieno (b), Brillante (f) seem to be some ‘remnants’ of the emotional cycle established in Slike Haosa: the only thing preserved from it is the relationship of the corresponding states of Unawareness and Acceptance (what was not comprehended is now being accepted), which in Izmedu činova is expressed by the equivalence between the parts A and A₁.

Alternation of the vignettes of a varying energy charge, affirms a kinetic aspect of the work, which is one of the characteristic qualifiers of Erić’s opus. The musical tissue culminates in the central part of the composition (part B/material f), where the states of motion and rest are transformed into a kind of turbulence, which points to yet another trace of Slike Haosa in Erić’s latest work. Thus the part B, where the full orchestra is employed, is built by a repetitive technique, with the simultaneous flow of several ostinato layers of various physiognomies. Since each layer travels along its own trajectory, and some of them even have their own metric pulse, a friction between them is created, the accents of the models are shifted (their duration does not correspond with the time signature), and the

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10 ‘A]tract, keep or capture the spectators’ attention […] after the conclusion of an act of a theatrical event, all to the benefit of the following act. This music therefore fills in the space which would otherwise remain empty and takes up the time allotted for respite and relaxation of the audience, when the change of setting, costumes etc. takes place. The functionality of this music is thus measured by its ability to animate, interest and hold the spectators, turning them, for the period of its duration, into (mere) listeners.’ Ibid.


12 For example, in the part B there are layers written in ⅞ time, divided 3+2+2, and in ⅝ time, divided 3+2. In the second segment of the same part of the composition, the ostinato models of
tissue becomes polymetric and turbulent. Should one even wonder whether such a content can be interesting enough to ‘hold the spectators, turning them, for the period of its duration, into (mere) listeners’?13

Although, by the author’s words, this music is expected to fill up the space during the change of setting, it is clearly very far from the compositions for ‘light entertainment’ (potpourris, divertimentos, waltzes etc.) which were once performed between the acts of operas or dramatic plays. Anyway, it could be said (with a tinge of irony) that sometimes it is exactly between the acts when the most important social events take place and that the secondary time between can be promoted into the central development.14 Therefore, having in mind that Erić’s music is critical, seductive and ironic and that it always speaks of its time, I wonder: if the author in the turbulent times of the 1990’s had the need to express himself through Slike Haosa, is it a coincidence that today he wrote a farce-episode, whose title suggests the time between? Is he thus alluding to the current time of transition and the social hypocrisy, calling them a farce? And finally, is the author reminding us of the seriousness of that transition by introducing a dramatic motif in the trumpet part of ‘the first subject’, which in the given musical surrounding has a fateful overtone and is re-exposed in the work’s final segment? Knowing Erić’s poetics, rich in metaphorical discourses, I could say that the answers are positive.15 But being aware of the possibility of getting caught in the web of my own speculations, somewhere between the story about the theatre and the current period of transition, I think that the foregoing trumpet motif is in fact just the author’s need to add flourish to the BEMUS opening ceremony.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

16 semiquavers are superimposed on those lasting 11 semiquavers (divided 3+2+2+2+2) within the common time.

13 From the author’s programme note.

14 Let us remember the book Between the Acts, where Virginia Woolf, in her distinctive manner with many hidden meanings and allusions, described interpersonal relationships in a provincial British town, which are interwoven and unravelled between the acts of a village show, and hence she moved the gravity of the story from the central event to the developments surrounding it.

15 In favour of this observation, I quote a part of the programme note: ‘U tom među-vremenu nastaje i postoji ovo delo koje je između crnog i belog, između dole i gore, između levog i desnog, između napred i nazad, između juče i sutra…’ [‘That between-time is the point of origin and existence of this work, which is between black and white, between up and down, between left and right, between forward and backward, between yesterday and tomorrow…’].
Марија Николић

ШТА СЕ КРИЈЕ ИЗМЕЂУ ЧИНОВА?
Entr’acte, фарса-епизода за оркестар Зорана Ерића

САЖЕТАК

Најновију композицију Зорана Ерића, Entr’acte (Између чинова), фарса-епизода за симфонијски оркестар, премијерно је извела Београдска филхармонија под диригентском управом Војана Суфића, на свечаном отварању 40. Бемуса, 3. октобра 2008. године у Сава центру.

Иако композиција није на директан начин повезана са Ерићевом позоришном музиком, сам наслов дела подстакао нас је на размишљање о присуству трага позоришта у овом остварењу. Тако смо нека од значења Entr’acte настојали да откријемо сагледавањем статуса/функције ове музике која, према речима аутора, треба да се изводи „између неких важнијих ствари које је окружују“, а са циљем да „гледаочеву пажњу [...] по завршетку чина неког позоришног догађаја привуче, задржи или освоји, а у име чина који следи.“

Већ приликом првог слушања композиције, било је јасно да она не рачуна на шире заокружене музичке ентитете који би се могли сматрати темама у неком општеприхваћеном смислу. Мотивски свет дела је оложен на релативно неутралне музичке податке, попут тремола на једном тону, из кога се гради пулс трака која заузима готово читав звучни простор оркестра, педалних тонова, глисанда, фигурација, пасажа. Поред тога, музички ток се одвија сменљиво једновремено (претежно) сажетих звучних сличних, дефинисаних по свим параметрима музике. Тако реализација структурног плана композиције подсећа на технику ређања филмских кадрова (смемо ли рећи позоришних сцена?), будући да се сличнице не развијају, нити настојавају, већ се постепном „штритих резова“ пласирају једна за другом.

Упркос чињеници да је композиција Entr’acte мишљена тематски неутрално и формално фрагментарно, као извесна потврда тезе о музици која „само“ треба да попуни простор за време промене декора, јасно је да је ово дело веома далеко од композиција „лаког садржаја“ (попутриса, дивертимента, валцера и сл.), које су се некада изводиле између чинова оперских или драмских представа. Стога, имајући у виду да је Ерићева музика критичка, завојђивана и иронијска, те да увек прогоовара овом времену, упитали смо се: Ако је у турбулентно доба, деведесетих година прошлог века, аутор имао потребу да се изрази кроз Слике Хова, да ли је случајно што данас има потребу да пише фарсу-епизоду, која у наслову сугерише време између? Да ли тако он алудира на актуелно транзиционо доба и хипокруzu друштва називајући их фарсом? Познајући Ерићеву поетику, богату метафоричним дискурсом, могли бисмо рећи да су одговори позитивни. Алли свесни могућности да упаднемо у клопку сопствене спекулације, негде између приче о позоришту и актуелном транзиционом тренутку, оставили смо ова питања отвореним, пишувшћући да је све наведено само случајност.

Кључне речи: ИЗМЕЂУ ЧИНОВА, Зоран Ерић, позориште, остататна трака, звучне сличнице, фрагментарност, неутралност, између, фарса-епизода.
Formal schematics of *Entr’acte*

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<th>A →</th>
<th>introductory materials</th>
<th>1st subject</th>
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<td>a (t.1)</td>
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<td>b (t.16)</td>
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<td>aₙ (t.25)</td>
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<td>Треманто</td>
<td>Appassionato</td>
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<td>( \frac{\theta}{2} = 96)</td>
<td>( \frac{\theta}{2} = 112)</td>
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<td>d (t.59)</td>
<td>e (t.96)</td>
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<td>( \frac{\theta}{2} = 66)</td>
<td>( \frac{\theta}{2} = 76)</td>
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<td>Indolente</td>
<td>Con slancio</td>
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<td>B →</td>
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<td>Brillante</td>
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<td>Come retro</td>
<td>Ancora con suono pieno</td>
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<td>introductory material</td>
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Example 1

*Entr'acte, farce-episode, t. 90-95*
Example 2

*Entr'acte, farce-episode*, t. 96-98
Example 3
*Entr’acte, farce-episode*, t. 99-106