
VIEWS

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NO SUFFICIENT REACH – NO SUPPORT

Marking the 34th International Review of Composers in Belgrade (September 27–October 7, 2025)

Abstract: The survival of our only festival of contemporary music, the International Review of Composers, was jeopardized when Serbia's Ministry of Culture decided not to support the 34th edition of this event, whether in terms of funding or organization. This called into question the already defined structure of the festival, marking its founder's jubilee, the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Composers' Association of Serbia. This paper is a presentation of the works performed at the festival, which were selected and included in its concert program by the festival's selector Tatjana Milošević Mijanović.

Keywords: International Review of Composers, most recent Serbian and international music, concert programs, authors and their works, non-compliance.

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An excerpt from an appeal signed by the participants of the First International Review of Composers held in May 1992:

We do not accept isolation, which would mean the end of our culture in general! We do not allow the primitive and aggressive spirit of false myths to represent our tradition, culture, and creativity! [...] We want the review of composers to be an attempt to generate a basis for coming together, for creative interpenetration and collaboration between people dedicated to musical art, which knows no boundaries.

An excerpt from the reply that the institution that organizes the International Review of Composers, the Composers' Association of Serbia, received from the Committee for Distributing Funding of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia in September 2025:

Although this festival, the Review of Composers, dedicated to contemporary music, has a long tradition, in our assessment its programming is aimed at a rather narrow segment of the public, without a broader reach in our society. The committee is of the view that this year's edition may be realized by relying on support from other permanent sources of funding. No support...

And between that May 1992 and September this year, 2025, 33 Reviews took place, which every government – since the Review of Composers is our *only* review of contemporary Serbian art music! – invariably found to be indispensable as an important part of elite culture, whereby a country addresses not only its citizens, but also the world at large, taking pride in its composers and their most recent accomplishments.

Now, it is as if that same government from 1992, 33 years later, were punishing its “disobedient” composers and their association for issuing that old appeal against a tide of destructive primitivism, which has finally reached the Ministry of Culture as well.

It has arrived indeed, false myths have come to dominate, aggression has become part and parcel of everyday life, primitivism informs public space, but music is like water: the more they seek to block and suppress it – the more ways it finds to gush in. The packed halls of the Kolarac Foundation on the opening night and the Belgrade Philharmonic on the closing night of the 34th International Review of Composers demonstrated precisely that. Once again, just like in 1992, the audience, composers, and performing artists came together with the intent of leaving the Ministry that oversees them to its own phony culture.

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This year, when the Composers' Association of Serbia marked its 80th anniversary, the Review comprised as many as 13 concert evenings! Apart from the Kolarac Foundation (the opening night of September 27th), the auditorium of the Belgrade Philharmonic (October 3rd and 7th, the closing), Artget Gallery (September 30th, two concerts), Radio Belgrade's Studio 6 (October 1st and 2nd), the auditorium of the Composers' Association of Serbia (September 28th), the festival could also rely on the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary (October 4th), the Josip Slavenski Memorial Room (October 5th), as well as some newly discovered concert venues that turned out to be very well suited to their new purpose: the Museum of Science and Technology (September 29th) and Czech House (October 6th, two concerts). A total of 57 pieces were performed.

One should note that this year, the festival's repertoire also found room, with ample justification, for several concerts that were, strictly speaking, outside its programming menu, but provided welcome additions, marking the 80th birthday of Milan Mihajlović (October 1st, Radio Belgrade's Studio 6, an evening dedicated to his chamber music); focusing our attention on the development of Serbian electronic music from the mid-1980s to the present (October 2nd, Radio Belgrade's Studio 6, a selection of pieces by Vladan Radovanović, Srđan Hofman, Ana Gnjatović, Maja Bosnić, and Vladimir Korać); presenting less well known music for children by Ludmila Frajt (October 6th, the Czech Center, children's choirs); and a concert presentation of last year's winners of the Composers' Association's Aleksandar Pavlović Award (the auditorium of the Composers' Association, September 28th, featuring Marija Timotijević and Irena Pejoska).

The Review's program selector, composer Tatjana Milošević Mijanović, with much creativity and skill, put together one of the best Reviews in recent years, with as many as 13 concert events, nine of which featured her selections, organized in programs according to the performing forces required by the works submitted to the Composers' Association of Serbia. In that sense, the Review's opening sounded like a spectacle of Serbian music, with a selection of works for choir and orchestra, as well as works for organ by contemporary foreign authors that are seldom performed here, the invariably attractive pieces for chamber ensembles and electronics, as well as a concert dedicated to the double bass accompanied by a string ensemble, featured on the closing night.

This year, too, the Review was a fitting ground for the presentation of the Composers' Association's main awards (which were stripped, by the decision of the Ministry mentioned above, of their – otherwise symbolic anyway! – financial “equivalent”): the Stevan Mokranjac Award (to Milica Đorđević for her orchestral work *Little Firefly between Two Flickers* [Мали свиџац између два џиџа]); Pavle Stefanović Award (to musicologist Ksenija Stefanović, for her essay “The Audio-visual Composition *Water* by Vladimir Korać – Nomen est omen”,¹ published in the Serbian-language version of the *New Sound International Journal of Music*), and the Aleksandar Pavlović Award (to the musicians Slobodan Gerić, Nikola Peković, Kata Stojanović, and Jasmina Janković). Also, the Review found room for a presentation of *The Engine of Serbia's Music Life* (Моџор музичкоџ живоџа Срџије), a monograph about Sokoј's (the Organization of Music Authors of Serbia) Cultural Grants Fund authored by Stefan Cvetković.

Traditionally, like in previous years, special praise was reserved for the musical artists who carried all the concerts on their shoulders. In that sense, over the years, the Review has “raised” several excellent ensembles and multiple prominent instrumentalists who always return to “their” festival. In some cases, the hiatus was quite a long one, as in the case of Dušan Skovran Belgrade Strings; sometimes it was short, in the case of the RTS Symphony Orchestra, which is the Review's only reliable carrier of full orchestral sound; and sometimes there is no hiatus at all, as in the case of the Construction Site New Music Ensemble, a mainstay of the festival for two decades now, whose concert is invariably one of the Review's high points, in content and performance alike. This ensemble often spawns smaller chamber forces as well (this time the Four Strings quartet). In artistic terms, this year's Review benefited invaluablely from numerous individual musicians as well, including the conductors Olga Biserčić, Rade Pejčić, and Srđan Sretenović, organist Maja Smiljanić Radić, and especially four double bass players whose skill and expressivity were truly impressive: Zoran Marković, Slobodan Gerić, Fahrudin Strojil, and Ljubinko Lazić. Vladimir Korać, always reliable, controlled the computers in multiple acoustic-electronic performances; one must also mention the violinists Mirjana Nešković, Jelena Dimitrijević, and Dušica Mladenović, harpists Milena Stanišić and Ivana Pavlović, flutist Stana Krstajić, oboist Ivana Dakić, clarinetists Veljko Klenkovski and Ilona Janović, pianists Bojana Dimković and Neda Hofman Sretenović...

¹ <https://ojs.newsound.org.rs/index.php/NS/article/view/171/281>

The 34th International Review of Composers opened with a full-evening concert at the Kolarac Foundation, which also served as a festive way to mark the 80th birthday of the Composers' Association of Serbia, featuring a selection of works for choir and orchestra by Serbian composers. The RTS Choir and Symphony Orchestra had been solidly prepared and firmly led by Olga Biserčić, who has served as a reliable interpreter of contemporary Serbian music on multiple occasions. They performed works by authors from several generations, diverse and for the most part likable in the postmodern-eclectic way. Their composers had mostly relied on the local tradition of oratorio music from the period of Yugoslav social modernism and/or academism, without venturing into deep explorations of sound, the relationship between music and text, and especially the links between the vocal and instrumental parts of the score, with a conspicuous lack of contrapuntal textures. Sensitized to tragic and heroic content (and its canonized stereotypes), for the most part they treated them with overheated emotions and explicit romanticization/naturalization of musical narration.

The young composer Igor Andrić had intended his oratorio *Sleeping Letters* (Уснула љисма) for a performance at the Great School Class in Kragujevac (this time we heard an abridged version), hence the tragic, solemn, and pathetic quality in his otherwise quite maturely shaped sound, based on oratorio works by Ljubica Marić and Igor Stravinsky. Exciting, sometimes imposing, traditional in concept and context alike, this work re-evoked the old days, when composers wrote solemn oratorios in memory of the victims of fascism. This was only fitting for a Great School Class, because something along those lines is what is expected there anyway.

In her piece titled *The Kiddo from the Carousel* (Мала од вртешке), Dragana Jovanović likewise foregrounds antiwar content (setting verses by Aleksandar Milanković), but from the unusual perspective of mixing the views of an adult person with those of a child, that is, a form of musical speech that combines academic seriousness with childishness. Hence some commonplaces in this music (syllabic recitation in the choral part resembling a nursery rhyme, sublime moments with emphasized emotions and percussion, which signals gunshots...) as opposed to soft oases of lyricism and even a miniature quotation from a well-known evergreen song by Goran Bregović – a musical grimace introduced in order to capriciously blur the signifiers before the end of the piece.

V.R. *Ibi coram oculis nostris* by Zoran Komadina is likewise programmatically oriented against violence and crime in today's world, based on its

author's selection of some of the most familiar lines from Latin and Christian Orthodox liturgy. This work employs an academically understood breviary of technical procedures and typical gestures from "canonic" 20th-century oratorio music and starkly evokes the tragedy of today's world by means of this already depleted vocabulary, including even the "hackneyed" *Dies irae* sequence.

One of the two works whose fresh and unconventional approach marked the evening was *Milje* by Branka Popović. Entirely in line with her personal style, it showed how a fully developed poetics may be reflected in a large vocal-instrumental ensemble that is outside of its author's usual habitat. The work is based on several haiku lines by Bashō and demonstrates a reflexive approach to and lyrical refinement of Popović's compositional procedures, as simple as they are uncommon and authorially sovereign. The work's large performing forces are used economically, with color and clarity, along with well-placed and never exaggerated delicacies, and with controlled tutti. This music found its semantic range in natural sounds, in the humming of wind against rocks and the echo of a robust landscape, where choral voices in their reciting of the text blend with instruments and become a murmur. An intimate piece in a large format.

The Flight of Doves from the Palace (Беј њолубова из њалаџе), a work by a member of the youngest generation of our composers, Damjan Jovičin, combines verses by Minja Jovičin with the approach of the famous American postmodern author of short prose Donald Barthelme, with the composer embracing his surrealistic and parodic expression, fragmentary speech and form, and play with signifiers approaching the absurd. This gives rise to light and cheerful music, which for the most part parodically evokes the style of Philip Glass and his compositional and technical procedures, but in an entirely unique atmosphere playing with "vocalisms" (џласизми; flickering figurations, repetitive phrases, prominent vibraphone, piano, and harp parts in the orchestra), and the heritage of French oratorio neoclassicism. This is wit, faced with an abyss of seriousness.

Unlike this authorially strong piece, Milorad Marinković treated us to a "reminiscence" devoted to his professor Rajko Maksimović and his academically lofty oratorio music. Still, his *Hymn* setting of verses by Miloš Crnjanski sounded too eclectic, aggressive, and even tasteless. Too much drama, wailing, and ecstasy per unit of musical time.

The second concert of this year's International Review of Composers (September 29th) took the festival's audience into the beautiful and acousti-

cally perfect setting of the Museum of Science and Technology, featuring works for small instrumental ensembles. The accordionist Marija Ratkov had little trouble with *Against the Shapes*, a repetitive and smooth etude by the Canadian Tom Lachance, while the violinists Katarina Kovačevski and Kornelija Stamenković had to invest more effort to perform *Relation*, a hermetic piece by the Israeli composer Ruth Alon. Miloš Raičković, with his uncomplicated ideas and technical solutions, this time chose to weave together musical emblems from Serbia and Japan, Serbian round dancing (коло) and the timbre of the Japanese instrument shamisen, giving rise to the tender, warm, and witty *Japanese Round Dance* (коло јайанско) for harp and guitar. The domain of the mellifluous provided a home for Svetlana Maksimović as well with one of her most accomplished pieces, *Enchanted* (Зачарано), where she subtly forged the simple lyrical flows of three distinct lines, along with an oft-present motive that “enchants” this dreamlike atmosphere, performed by the excellent Karolina Bäter on the recorder, Stana Krstajić on the flute, and Predrag Nedeljković on the clarinet.

The end of the evening was reserved for Nataša Bogojević who, aided by Adriana Spasojević and the Dandelion (Маслачак) string quartet, in her sovereign postmodernist way, commemorated the first known female composer in the history of music, in *Kassia* for soprano and string quartet. Every work by Bogojević occupies a noticeably personal perspective on an extra-musical subject, which it articulates as though it were poetry or a powerful metaphor. That is why for her “less is actually more”, in this case with subtle sonorities and tangles between the instruments and solo vocal part, which are led with delicacy, control, lyrical poetics, always with that precious “surplus” of poetical sense that links contemporary sound and the fate of Kassia (or Kassiani), a Byzantine abbess and composer from the 9th century. The impression is also enhanced by the fact that the vocal part is textless, reduced to vocalisms (Byzantine *jubili*?) as well as other, non-traditional modes of vocalization (hissing and growling as a perennial symptom of a frustrated female artist?), with the overall result – supported by an unimposing string quartet (the ison?) – of a peculiar and indeed rare phenomenon in our music: a spiritual yet not religiously prayerful (доїомољачки) sound.

Presenting music for small instrumental ensembles in concert was resumed at Artget Gallery of the Cultural Center of Belgrade (September 30th). On that occasion, we heard a tender, witty, and diatonic, repetitive creation by Andrija Andrić, *Cloudspotting* for violin (Dušan Panajotović) and piano (Bojana Dimković), as its author’s conceptual invocation of the Zen atmo-

spheres of Arvo Pärt and a counterpart to the serene infinity voiced with tintinnabuli. Ana Kazimić submitted *Contraforte*, a piece for double bass (Ljubinko Lazić) and piano (Bojana Dimković), highly “gregarious” and aggressively virtuosic, but without a deeper meaning save for gushing narration as such. In his *Inharmonic Refractions* for piano (Dimitrije Nikolić), Mateja Nikolić presented his fascination with a physical situation in the harmonic series – and made sure that this experiment of his be literally registered by the audience as well. However, that is possible only in *fortissimo* dynamics and with much use of the sustain pedal, resulting in a rather aggressive and disharmonic sound without aesthetic justification.

Veljko Nenadić retained a firm grasp over the performance of his *Two Movements* for two violins (Mirjana Nešković and Jelena Dimitrijević) and piano (Veljko Nenadić) in his own skillful hands and thus lent his personal pianist *brio* and charisma to this striking and inspired music. Even though the piece is “classical”, everything in it is contemporary, while its contrasting confrontation of lyricism and drama, encompassing the entire work, is enthusiastic and exciting enough to maintain a high level of tension throughout. That applies especially to the second movement, “Perpetuum mobile”, which flies by in a single breath, carried by the wings of invention, brilliance, wit, and the postmodernist paronomasia of signifiers.

It appears that Svetlana Savić is most at home with select Serbian poetry, entrusting it to a female voice in her subtle and unique way. This time, we heard *Nocturnal Songs* (Ноћне јесме) for voice (Mina Kovač Marković) and piano (Dušan Marković), a setting of verses by Jelena Marinkov. Topics related to solitude, incomprehension, anxiety, and melancholia had long occupied the very core of her style, where maximum effect is generated by minimal means: from a lapidary musical speech, from a translucent and simple texture, succinct expression, the power of a single well-placed sonic gesture. This is a melancholy, calm, and “highly polished” sophistication.

In his *Bagatelles* for violoncello and piano (Đorđe Milošević and Bojana Dimković) the Hungarian composer Balázs Kecskés provided an exciting and interesting conclusion to the concert precisely by means of postmodernist modelling and paraphrasing in relation to the imposing shadows of Béla Bartók and European neoclassicism, within the compact formation of a series of miniatures.

Radio Belgrade’s Studio 6 (October 2nd) hosted the retrospective evening of Serbian electronic music mentioned above, featuring a selection of works by its pioneers, Vladan Radovanović and Srđan Hofman, as well as by younger

composers: Ana Gnjatović, *A Space That Cannot Be Thought* (Простор коју се не може мислити) and Maja Bosnić, *there is not nothing.sgs*. The evening was concluded with ample effect with *Orontea MIX* by Vladimir Korać, one of the best composers of his generation, who took a creative approach to a recording of *Orontea*, an opera by Antonio Cesti, and produced a sound replete with effects from old vinyl recordings: cracking, ticking, various soft murmurs and distortions. The opera's musical content is reduced to bare materials and construction blocks, almost entirely "dismantled" and digitally processed, only in a few places shining through, as though from the deep waters of time covering the world, like a precious artifact. It is proof that electronic music can have a narrative poetic meaning and effect.

A concert of electro-acoustic music took place in the Auditorium of the Belgrade Philharmonic (October 3rd), featuring members of the Construction Site Ensemble led by Srđan Sretenović. The evening will be remembered by *Voices No. 1*, a work by Predrag Milojković for vibraphone, two small gongs, and chimes (Milorad Balić), which reflected in a ragged and cracked mirror an image of an imaginary Tibetan ritual. In his exciting work titled *Ocean Dandelion*, Kamil Grzegorz Polak from Poland both united and juxtaposed oboe and live electronics, with computer effects and sound (Vladimir Korać) distorting, multiplying, and extending the oboe's simple line (Sanja Romić), treating us to a strange oboe sound enhanced by digital steroids. Talia Amar (Israel) submitted *Labyrinth*, an ambient and not particularly striking work for a group of instruments and live electronics, while Ivan Božičević had composed *Rig Veda X.129:4* for bass clarinet (the exquisite Ilona Janovič) and electronics (Vladimir Korać), where the subject of artistic elaboration appeared to be juxtaposing diatonic (!) electronics and a surly bass clarinet, all of which was inspired by verses from the Rigveda's Hymn of Creation.

To this Review Miloš Zatkalik submitted a nonet titled *Evolution of a Monster* (Еволуција чуговишћиа). The subject of the author's thinking was the phenomenon of a "mechanical monster", that is, the problem of the mechanical/mechanicist that in music morphs into the monstrous/monstrosity. For the author, it was also a question of stasis and dynamism in the musical flow, with alternation between those two states in the progression of momentum and stasis until, at the end of the work, a mechanically rough pulse, in an onslaught of theatricalization, permeates the work's texture up to the apex of this wave of expression, before all of this blithering mechanical loquacity dissipates and scatters into the ending or vanishing of the work.

Matteo Maria Salvo from Italy authored his witty and brilliantly devised *Promenade électronique* for five instruments and electronics (V. Korać), which celebrates the joy of playing with sound as a mosaic of all sorts of things, as a cheerful noise and entropy of music. Less noteworthy was *Nysa* by the Greek composer Kostas Zisimopoulos, a work for five instruments that, in a pretty banal way and with several explicit tone images, evokes the pre-Arcadian parts where Dionysus spent his childhood, a god known for dying and being resurrected twice. Gerson Batista from Portugal had written *Superimposable* for an unusual ensemble (flute, guitar, piano, percussion) and electronics (Vladimir Korać) as a combination of classically produced, digital, and computer-enhanced sound. It was yet another pretentious work dealing with the subjects of humanity, existence, the place of humans in the universe, and their fragile mortality.

New organ music (at the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary, October 4th) was presented by Maja Smiljanić Radić along with her class (Veljko Nenadić, Simonida Atanasković). They performed works by authors from countries where composing music for organ has a long tradition (Leonids Lobrevs, Friedrich Jaecker, Brian Andrew Inglis, João Pedro Oliveira, Carlotta Ferrari), diverse in expression, which, perhaps also as a result of that tradition, was postmodernist, mindful of that mighty instrument's overall sound, but also relatively innovative, and sometimes also witty in relation to the works' program titles: from a tonal image of polar lights (the Latvian Lobrevs), via a contemporary invocation of Christian motives (the German composer Jaecker) or their eclectic elaboration (the UK-based Inglis); via experimenting with form and its smallest elements (the Portuguese Oliveira), to an entire poem inspired by *Wuthering Heights* (the Italian Ferrari). Regrettably, none of our Serbian composers had submitted an organ piece to the call of the Composers' Association, so we cannot make a comparison. That said, one ought to commend Maja Smiljanić Radić for returning to the Review and hope that next time she and her students will also play music by Serbian authors on the beautiful and mighty organ of Belgrade's cathedral.

In the auditorium of the Josip Slavenski Memorial Room (October 5) the program included music for solo instruments and duos. The evening opened with the famous clarinet doyen Ante Grgin's unpretentious *Three Pieces* for solo clarinet (performed by Veljko Klenkovski) and then the excellent Miodrag Đorđević played *Horizontal* (Хоризонтала) for accordion, a work by the young composer Olga Janković focused on a pretty formalized and forced exploration of sound in the orbit of second (post)modernism. This was fol-

lowed by *qubits of blue*, a flute piece by Marko Vesić (performed by the excellent flutist Jelena Šarenac Španović) with unclear authorial ideas but with explicit procedures, and then by *Toque a Eshu Eleggua*, a work for solo oboe by the Cuban composer Louis Franz Aguirre (performed by the excellent Ivana Dakić), demonstrating the author's extensive familiarity with extended performance techniques on the oboe.

Peter Durkó from Hungary submitted an eclectic work for double bass (Filip Dokljanov), *Landscape and Reminiscence*, while Victor Arul from the United States composed *Nonmeagre* for solo bassoon (Goran Marinković) as a longwinded musical narration about a conflict between an abstract individual and their surroundings, deploying familiar academic tools. Geoffrey Gordon from the US answered the Composers' Association's call with *Jeux de Création* for harp (Ivana Pavlović) and used his musical language and means to make an homage to French music from a hundred years ago. This extensive and pretentious work appeared to be meant to exhaust all the ways that a contemporary harpist could use the instrument, and was successful in that pursuit.

The evening was concluded by a piece by Draško Adžić, *A Drind, Bucolics, and Trans* (Дринг, дуколика и ѿранс) for two violins (Mirjana Nešković and Jelena Dimitrijević), easily the high point of the entire concert. The author had turned to Vlach music for inspiration and modelling, but with good taste and control, more as an evocation of the old folklore contrast of singing/dancing, which in his interpretation gained an energy boost as a singing/dancing competition. Formally devised as a series of diverse miniatures, this inventive duo-drama demonstrated all the things that two inspired violins are capable of, at a Vlach party or a concert of art music.

On the penultimate day of the Review (October 6th), the auditorium of the Czech Center assembled an audience interested in string quartet sound, with the "4 Strings Quartet" (D. Panajotović, P. Živadinović, V. Popović, and S. Sretenović) carrying the entire program. The ensemble performed pieces by Faruk Mehić from Bosnia and Herzegovina (his somewhat self-absorbed and unremarkable *Mosaic III*, op. 20); Teodora Stepančić ("Kolman's Work" [Колманов раг] – inexpressive but subtle music in the postmodern condition); Petra Strahovnik from Slovenia (*Attack!* – music as a metaphor and metonymy of the work's title); Carl Schimmel from the United States (tone images and contemporary compositional procedures pursuing the content suggested by the work's title: *Two Poems by James Tate*); Dario Argentesi from Italy (his quartet *Hagaki*, a poetic and striking musical link between the

sound traditions of Europe and Japan), and Matthew Lam from Hong Kong, who in his *Peculiar Voices* approached the experimental idea of pursuing the limits of a string quartet's sound/sounding in a traditional, systematic, and transparent way, while the Canadian composer Willyn Whiting submitted *Two Pieces*, likewise an extensive work examining the accomplishments and possibilities of post-postmodernism.

For the conclusion of this concert, the Review's selector Tatjana Milošević Mijanović had wisely reserved Jug Marković's *Psalm* for voice (Milena Damjanović, soprano) and instrumental ensemble (M. Nenadović, flute; V. Klenkovski, clarinet; M. Balić, cymbal; and D. Krsmanović, violoncello; conductor: S. Sretenović). For several years now, Marković has affirmed time and again that he is at his creative zenith, having finely chiselled out unique style and poetics of his own that combine the postmodernist poetics of multiple signification with the most cutting-edge explorations in sound. The lyrics, selected from two poems by Ingeborg Bachmann, achieved a wonderful blend with the music, which embraced and supported them rather than delivering them, given that the vocal part was deliberately quite simple and sonically "marginalized". This diptych unfolded in the *sotto voce* (уопыінацје) of a compositional and technical scheme whereby, by means of repeating a simple diatonic structure, it is slowly eaten away by dissonances, coupled with an "early Baroque" sounding ensemble, thanks to a peculiar tuning scheme. The second poem is set to "fantastic blabbering" in the flute, clarinet, and cymbal, which only toward the end provoke the singer to sing out, take over, and conclude the piece.

This year's International Review of Composers ended with a concert in the fully packed Auditorium of the Belgrade Philharmonic (October 7th), which smartly combined the presentations of the Composers' Association's awards mentioned above (the Pavle Stefanović and Aleksandar Pavlović Awards) with marking what would have been the 75th birthday of the composer Zoran Erić and a presentation of the most recent compositions for double bass and string ensemble.

This was one of the most successful concerts of this year's festival and, therefore, it should receive a separate review of its own, just like the opening evening. An innovative blend of excellent compositions and superb double-bass soloists (Zoran Marković, Slobodan Gerić, Ljubinko Lazić, Fahrudin Strojil) with Erić's old associates – Dušan Skovran Belgrade Strings (conducted by Rade Pejčić) – was a move that allowed, in Erić's own unimposing, light, and witty way, the poetic legacy of this great composer to echo through

this year's Review. Following his *Blues & Rhythm* (F. Strojil), a work for double bass and string quartet from 2009 that opened the concert, the audience heard works by Erić's colleagues and former students. In his canonized style – which had long ago switched from minimalism to a version of new simplicity – Vladimir Tošić presented his *Altos* for double bass and strings (F. Strojil).

Lazar Đorđević wrote a serious and lengthy *concertante* work, *(R)evolution*, which demands from the soloist a broad technical range of non-traditional playing and virtuosic techniques. We listened to active, energetic, and colorful music, ruffled by the double bass and string ensemble "fighting" each other, the constant dynamism of a now thickening, now diluting texture, brilliant, dramatic, chilling effects, a veritable fireworks of fervor with brief points of rest furnished by general pauses and islands of cadential solos.

In her *Eight Sensitive Fragments* (*Осам осећајних фрагмената*) Tatjana Milošević Mijanović offered an amalgam of a "concertino" and a suite-like mosaic, where each fragment had its thematic grounding in one of eight characteristic situations. Along with several (unintended?) reminiscences of Erić's music, we heard an impressive dramatic flow teeming with wit, caricature, energy, cheerfulness, grotesque, melancholy, the decadence of ambivalent feelings, from irony to nostalgia; a flow intersected with peculiar and effective solo cadenzas (the excellent Slobodan Gerić), which fit perfectly into this carousel of sonic images and flamboyant whirling signifiers serving as its source of energy. This game, in which Erić was an uncontested master, takes over musical time in this piece, with its luxuriant aesthetic effect.

Aleksandar Sedlar devised his *Gera Concerto* as a traditional three-movement form, but on this occasion we only heard its second movement (Slobodan Gerić), mellifluously lyrical music with standard orchestration and eclectic quoting of Wagner's chord progressions. All of that had already been done a long time ago, and much more effectively, by classical Hollywood. Inadequate for a Copernican twist of ridiculing clichés.

At the end of the concert and the 34th International Review of Composers as a whole we heard a 43-year-old piece, *Off* for double bass and 12 strings by Zoran Erić. The soloist Zoran Marković had a different idea from what double bassists usually do in this single-movement concerto, indulging in "gregarious" and lengthy cadenzas intended to accomplish an extreme degree of delicacy and interpretive virtuosity where other soloists do not pursue them, which added an inertia to the orchestral part and dulled the legendary dynamic and energetic, razor-sharp repetitive sections. However, we thereby

discovered a different *Off*, where the complementary relations between the fast and slow sections, tuttis and solos, energy and stasis yielded to the extravagance of an authentic authority.

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The Board of the Composers' Association of Serbia decided in March 1991 that "in support of the students' demands and protesting against repression and every kind of suppression of freedom, members of the Association will not permit any public performances of their music, especially on the radio or television, until the students' demands have been met in full and until the public is allowed fully free and unbiased access to information".²

Princes and lords, our natty official culture commissars entrusted with performing exorcisms in art and culture, have relegated themselves among the marginalizers of our contemporary art music. But art music feels good even when surrounded by social injustices, even better inasmuch as it transcends their humiliating practices.

Summary

This year, the International Review of Composers did not receive its usual funding support from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, which jeopardized its survival. These circumstances are reviewed in the text by focusing on the following questions: How did the Review fare faced with the possibility of discontinuation and how did its organizers respond to that plausible threat? How good were the concerts that featured the selections of Tatjana Milošević Mijanović and did we get to hear multiple outstanding works by Serbian composers this year as well? Did Serbian music prove once again that it is stronger than any kind of institutional repression and torture?

² Minutes from a meeting of the Board of the Composers' Association of Serbia held on March 12th, 1991.