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Closeness of View: *

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman
Pred muzičkim delom
**Ogledi o međusobnim projekcijama estetike, poetike i stilistike muzike 20. veka:
jedna muzikološka vizura**

Facing a Musical Work
**Essays on Mutual Projections of Aesthetics, Poetics and Stylistics of
20th Century Music: A Musicological View**

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Pred muzičkim delom is one of those rare books which ponder the enigmas and problems of creativity *itself* in a *creative* way, both critically and personally – referring, in this case, to 20th-century music. Whereas the question *what* is the nature of a musical thing – of that enigma which throughout history, including the 20th and 21st centuries, inevitably implies or presumes the questions of *understanding*, *sense* and *meaning* of music – is as old as music as a form of creating in or by means of sound. Therefore, comprehension of musical creativity, i.e., thinking about sound, and the very idea of musical creativity stemming from that comprehension, historically were and are sharing the fate of musical creativity itself.

So, the book *Pred muzičkim delom*, irrespective of the time of its origination and the period of musical creativity with which it deals, becomes part of that genre of extraordinary books, or *The Book* (*Le Livre*) in Mallarméesque sense, which have been constantly written since the dawn of time, always starting afresh or continuing at some point, but never coming to an end. *The Book*¹, or its part of the riddle regarding musical creativity or any other creative genesis, apparently cannot or should not be written or solved by any individual. At best, individuals can gradually stratify and/or unveil its secrets. And any disclosure or unveiling seems to uncover new ‘seven veils’ of the unknown. As if through the ‘last’ ever-remaining veil ‘music “silently writes *your* vision out in a manner of a sign” which is music’². Just as in

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¹ [U]n *livre* ni commence ni ne finit; tout au plus fait-il semblant ... Tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un *livre*.’ [The Mallarméesque vision of wonderful edifice of a *work*, a project which is ‘remaining’ only in ‘sketches’, is *Le Livre*, that ‘spiritual instrument’ – *The Book* which encompasses the entire world]

² After Hugo Friedrich, *Struktura moderne lirike* [Struktur der modern Lyrik], trans. Truda Stamać, Ante Stamać, Nikola Milićević, Antun Šoljan, Vjeran Zupan and Nada Zupan, Zagreb, Stvarnost, 1969, 121; the nested quotation after: Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Ballets’, 1891, in: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, 1951, 306.

music itself, it is as if every fragment of that perpetually (in the future) open and continuous music *Book* and/or *Book* about music has a premonition of the entirety – that unreachable, avoided or impossible, ‘elusive’ completeness.

The title, *Pred muzičkim delom*, and subtitle, *Ogledi o međusobnim projekcijama estetike, poetike i stilistike muzike 20. veka: jedna muzikološka vizura*, clearly define the coordinates of consideration of those vital issues of music, and the thought about music is deepened, widened and multilaterally enriched by new insights and interpretations. In the context of comprehending the nature of sense and necessity of human musical dimension, the author’s standpoint is unambiguous. From a musicologist’s angle (*jedna muzikološka vizura*), in her book Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, PhD – whose scientific interests focus particularly on European and Serbian avant-garde and post-modern music³ (...*muzike 20. veka*), as well as numerous theoretical questions which, related to these music periods, stem from the author’s conception of musicology as an interdisciplinary science⁴ (*ogledi o međusobnim projekcijama estetike, poetike i stilistike...*) – confronts and interprets the statements of those creators (artists as well as theoreticians and scientists) whose views on the phenomenon of a ‘musical thing’ were formed predominantly by immediate preoccupation with music – i.e., creators who were or are *facing a musical work* according to the traditional European comprehension.

Hence the only gateways (as an entrance, exit, point of transition *in/from*, contact, or joining/separation) that the author uses are, first and foremost, music as *opus perfectum et absolutum*, dealing with a work itself, (i.e., the immediate experience *of* music, *in* music or *from* music), and, finally, musicological competence and interdisciplinary interpretation. In that context, all the other ways, access roads and approaches to the issues related to, as the author puts it, ‘the autonomy of music, forms of its existence, the ways music enters our conscience, manners of our experiencing, commenting and interpreting it, as well as the relations between music and the social environment in which those issues are

³ That is exactly the domain of the author’s previous books: *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avangarde u nas*, Beograd, Univerzitet umetnosti, 1983; *Umetnost i izvan nje – Poetika i stvaralaštvo Vladana Radovanovića*, Novi Sad, Matica srpska, 1991; *Fragmenti o muzičkoj postmoderni*, Novi Sad, Matica srpska, 1997 (the book is published abroad in German translation: *Fragmente zur musikalischen Postmoderne*, Frankfurt am Main /etc/, Peter Lang, 2003).

⁴ Besides the aforementioned books, that is attested to by the author’s numerous published studies, analyses and scientific essays. See, for example, ‘Smisao mimesisa u poetici Gustava Mahlera’, *Muzikološki zbornik*, XXIII, 1987, 79–88; ‘Muzika i dekonstrukcija – zapis na marginama Deridine teorije’, in: Miško Šuvaković (ed), *Izuzetnost i sapostojanje*, Beograd, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 1997, 11–17; ‘Zapis kao muzika sama u digitalnoj tehnologiji’, *Novi Zvuk*, 11, 1998, 33–41; ‘Kontekstualnost muzikologije’, in: Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (ed), *Poststrukturalistička nauka o muzici*, special edition of *Novi Zvuk*, Beograd, SOKOJ – MIC – FMU, 1998, 13–20; ‘Ontološki predznaci u estetici nekih srpskih kompozitora 20. veka’, in: Mirko Zurovac (ed), *Srpska estetika u XX veku*, Beograd, Estetičko društvo Srbije, 2000, 179–189; ‘The Ethical Nature of Musicological Fractals’, *Tijdschrift voor Muziektheorie*, VII, 3, 2002, 202–206; ‘Musicology vs. Musicology from the Perspective of Interdisciplinary Logic’, in: Nico Schüller (ed), *On Methods of Music Theory and (Ethno)Musicology: From Interdisciplinary Research to Teaching*, Frankfurt – New York, Peter Lang, 2005, 9–38; ‘Towards a Secondary Level Inherence in the Relationship Between Music and Society – An Attempt to Reconcile one of the Adornian Inconsistencies’, in: *NewMusic SA Bulletin – the South African JSCM Section*, Pretoria 2006, 3–17; ‘Silence As a Hermeneutic Oasis of Music’, *Musicological Annual*, XLIII/2, *Rationalism of a Magic Tinge. Music as a Form of Abstract Perception*, Ljubljana, Oddelek za muzikologijo Filozofske fakultete v Ljubljani, 2007, 333–360; ‘Aspects of Oppression and Resistance in European Music of the 20th Century (consequences of cultural policy)’, *Muziki*, 2, 2007, 21–33.

manifested, articulated and solved’, are completely open and free. So, the ‘*plus ultra*’ situation, as a critical call to step over any boundary (in fact, any limits, particularly those imposed and constructed, either from a blinding *short range* or a great *distance*, which could even be aberrant and manipulative) – which, in the foregoing problem area, often aims, unilaterally and unequivocally, to shut down any possibility of mutual reasoning, dialogue and surpassing (which are especially necessary when they appear unfeasible or ostensibly unsurpassable) – is a persevering characteristic and charm of this book.

That trait of the book is especially prominent if we keep in mind the basic impulse for its inception. Namely, the manuscript of Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman’s book is based on the lectures that the author, as Professor of Musicology at the Belgrade Arts University Music School, taught to graduate students of musicology and postgraduate students of composition within the Aesthetic, Poetics and Stylistics of 20th-Century Music curriculum. As a challenge, occasion and motive, the book attests to the non-standard, non-dogmatic, authentic reading and interpretation of carefully chosen fragments related to the development of thought on 20th-century music, but also to an utterly specific way of articulating chosen sources, i.e., the communication, emphasis, expression of unique conclusions and the criteria of their networking.

Besides giving an insight into an array of thoughts about last century’s music, some of the important tangents of this book open and model latent space for unencumbered motion, significantly larger than that which is normally ‘provided’ for possible individual responses, *different* participations, and superstructures. This shows the obvious and immediate utilitarian (in the noblest sense) dimension of the book. On the other hand, as a result, aim and achievement of an endeavour, it attests to the freedom from any outside dictates (artistic, theoretic, scientific, socio-political), doctrines, ideologies, interests, utilitarian functions, opportunistic fashionable trends, stencils and stereotypes (although all of these, as phenomena, are taken into consideration). It, therefore, attests to the disbelief in prejudiced thinking, definitions and ultimate stipulations. In fact, from the existential *nearness* of the place and the moment when *facing a musical work*, the book delves deeply into the essential issues of its objectness, ontological and phenomenological aspects, and hermeneutical and sociological connotations in a non-manifest, non-aggressive, non-destructive way, yet one which is frank, unabashed and staunch. This renders its effect stronger, more lasting and more valuable. Hence, from a musicologist’s perspective, i.e., with musicological competence and, as the author herself points out, ‘with no intention to assume competences of aestheticians, music sociologists and philosophers’, the book, within the domain of the foregoing problematic of 20th-century music, discusses ‘theoretical statements of composers, musicologists and those among aestheticians and sociology theoreticians which formed their views primarily through immediate experience with music’.

Thus in the first chapter (Ka delu: metod. 1. Muzikološko klatno: *Nova muzikologija*, pitanja kritizma i tekstualnog žanra – interdisciplinarni model’ muzikološke kompetencije [Towards a Work: The Method. 1. Musicological Pendulum: *New Musicology*, Issues of Criticism and Textual Genre – Interdisciplinary “Model” of Musicological Competence]), based on a critical discussion of those

musicological orientations (e.g., those of J. Kerman, W. Horn, R. Rosengard Subotnik, G. Tomlinson, Lawrence Kramer, T. DeNora, L. Goehr, N. Cook, S. McClary, L. Treitler, A. Whittall, S. Bernham, J. Samson, K. Agawu) which are, as Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman puts it, positioned ‘on a very taut arch between *advocacy* and *condemnation* of absolutistic views, both positivist-formalist and hermeneutical’, she concludes in no uncertain terms that a musicological process and/or musicology as an interdisciplinary science unfold and come to realization only in the space comprising both ends of the arch, i.e., in the space *between* a fact (historical and/or analytical) and its interpretation (conclusion and contextualization). If either of those two layers is missing, there can be no musicological accomplishment.

With respect to that, the author discusses dealing with a musical work as a decisive starting point of every musicological research endeavour in the second part of the book (Delo: objektnost, doživljaj, svest [A Work: Objectness, Perception, Awareness]). The shape of a musical work’s objectness is determined, first of all, by its material existence, ‘by *the work’s score* ... as a palpable object’, and thus in the book’s second chapter (2. Objektivizam u muzici: Vidovi ispoljavanja autonomne muzičke logike [2. Objectivism in Music: Forms of Emergence of Autonomous Music Logic]), she studies and problematizes aspects of objectivism in music, based on thought resulting from the compositional poetics and musicological-aesthetical statements which, in the author’s opinion, ‘significantly determined the problematic and sound context of 20th century music’ (e.g., those of H. Schenker, A. Halm, F. Busoni, A. Von Webern, P. Hindemith, A. Schönberg, I. Stravinsky, E. A. Lippman, I. Focht, T. W. Adorno, P. Boulez, K. Stockhausen, J. Cage).

In the third chapter, (3. Ontologija muzike: Mogući rasponi utvrđivanja ontoloških ‘centara’ muzike [3. Ontology of Music: Possible Ranges of Establishing Ontological ‘Centres’ of Music]), in a logical continuation of the previous problem area, the author considers ideas about shapes of musical work’s existence, analyzing, commenting on and interpreting texts of aesthetical, poetical or stylistic provenance, both those in which ontological views of music are clearly stated and those in which its ‘ontological ‘habitations’ are just latently suggested or implied (e.g. those of H. Schenker, F. Busoni, A. Von Webern, P. Hindemith, D. Gostuški, A. Schönberg, I. Stravinsky, V. Radovanović, P. Boulez, S. Hofman, Lj. Marić, E. Josif, G. Ligeti, M. Milojević, R. Ingarden, L. Goehr, C. Dahlhaus, J. Cage). The author here advocates ‘ontological pluralism, as a form of interpreting music’s existence closest to its ‘elusive’ nature’. In this matter, one of the targetted ‘ontological “habitations”’ of music is a notion of the musical work’s existence in the realms of human conscience.

How a musical work penetrates the structure of conscience, how it is perceived and experienced, as stated in the book, is dealt with in the fourth chapter (4. Fenomenološki aspekti muzike: Vidovi i vremenska dinamika slušanja muzičkog dela [4. Phenomenological Aspects of Music: Forms and Temporal Dynamics of Listening to a Musical Work]). The author discusses those phenomenological standpoints stemming from the aesthetical and compositional-technical insights and statements in the 20th century which, in Veselinović-Hofman’s opinion, ‘touch from the utter proximity the problematic of the compositional act itself; which, therefore, point to the immediate experience with music, and particularly,

with the practical issues of its creation'; which are, as such, 'stylistically valid and/or verifiable' (e.g. those of R. Scruton, B. Popović, C. Dahlhaus, I. Stravinsky, G. Brelet, P. Boulez, I. Focht, Jonathan D. Kramer, F. Busoni, A. Schönberg, L. B. Meyer, T. Clifton, R. Ingarden, A. Berlian. V. Radovanović, K. Stockhausen). At the same time, using one of the initial phenomenological facts – that 'the listening to the sound (...) as a work of music (...) is made possible by its ontology in score' – the stress is put on 'the firm unity of autonomously musical, ontological and phenomenological'. On the other hand, it is pointed out that although the way of perceiving a musical work depends on the music material, the way it is experienced, remembered, recalled or thought about depends on the material 'not entirely musical', and that begins to differentiate hermeneutical layers in the foregoing 'firm unity'.

That, of course, paves the way for the fifth chapter (5. Hermeneutika muzike: Razumevanje, smisao, značenje [5. Hermeneutics of Music: Understanding, Sense, Meaning]), in which the author discusses the notions of understanding, sense and meaning, 'as hermeneutically crucial for music ... from the angle of the relationship between aesthetical and cognitive understanding of a musical work' (e.g., H. Kretzschmar, A. Schering, H. H. Eggebrecht, R. Scruton, V. Jankélévitch, L. Treitler, P. Stefanović, S. Langer, E. A. Lippman, K. Stockhausen, P. Boulez), intertwined with various hermeneutical theses (e.g. M. Dessoir, R. Barthes, W. Dilthey, K. Huber, J. O. Young, C. Dahlhaus, J. Levinson, F. E. Maus, A. Newcomb, J. Robinson). Within this framework, she establishes that emotions and expressive content in music are interpreted in a multitude of ways (as an integral part of musical structure, as a cause and effect of musical conventions and symbols, as a member of iconic relations with musical contents, as a carrier of different characters of music, as an immanent quality of sound), that the sense of music resides in the form itself ('it gets comprehended immediately by listening, and it exists in reality if it can be analytically represented and validated as a particular musical structure'), and that the meaning of music is not only musical, but extramusical and symbolic, too. In fact, the author concludes that 'the meaning is asymptotic by nature, hence ultimately leaves music permanently faced with "magic" of its own elusiveness', and defines it, in terms of a musical work's meaning, 'as a symbolic surplus of a work's structural order', even if, or especially if, 'those structures have the status of musical conventions.'

It is the third and final part of the book (Delo u društvu: društvo u delu [The Work in the Society: The Society in the Work]), coinciding with the last, sixth chapter (6. Sociološka pitanja muzike [6. Sociological Issues of Music]), in which the standpoint that 'a musical convention in fact most clearly indicates the extent of connection between music and the social factors, especially regarding its meaning' is projected through specific theoretical concepts about the 'social nature and role of its sense, meaning and value' (e.g. those of Z. Lissa, T. W. Adorno, H. Eisler, K. Weil, V. Vučković, L. Nono, M. Kagel, P. Boulez, D. Schnebel). Thus the sociological aspects of 20th-century music are understood as the indicators of, as the author underlines, 'the context without which music as an art would not be existent', of the context 'without which the autonomous nature of music would have no sense, because there would be no reference whatsoever to which that autonomy could be identified'.

The proximal point of *facing a musical work* (from where music is talked about, looked into and reflected from in a specific way based on autonomous interpretations of musicological, poetical, aesthetical, stylistic and sociological statements in the 20th century, and certainly projected through the domain of sound as a musical work and everything that a musical work is and is not), focuses and globally correlates two predominant features and types of human spirit: the Promethean fire of creation and the Faustian criticality of spirit. From that and such proximity, choosing between those two, or giving advantage to either, become redundant. The inseparability of creativity and criticality (with all the ‘above’ and ‘below’ symbolic and meta- layers) i.e., most diverse projections of that inseparability (from an unresolved dissonance to a perfect consonance, from objectness, to ontological and phenomenological, to hermeneutical tapestry), are getting ever closer, or becoming more distant – all the way, one would say, to the orphic notion of chant, where singing is one with thinking, and knowledge with mystery. That focal point of the book is its extraordinary interpretative breakthrough and transcendence.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović