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## NEW WORKS

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### CONTEMPORARY ALCHEMY ARHAIČNA SCENA BY DUŠAN RADIĆ

**Abstract:** The composition *Arhaična scena* [*Archaic Scene*] had its premiere on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 in Belgrade, in the Ilija Milosavljević Kolarac Memorial Hall, within the opening of the Belgrade Philharmonic's 2009/2010 concert season. The orchestra was conducted by Uroš Lajovic. The work is a part of the opera *Julijan Otpadnik* (2004). The musical language used evokes the spirit of Byzantine music.

**Key words:** modernism, Neoclassical, simulation, national, Byzantium.

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The debate on the notion of modern<sup>1</sup> in art, still led by many researchers in various scientific branches, seems to return time and again, in spite of all the nuances in the researcher's insights, to one fundamental issue or phenomenon, long time ago perceived and explained by T. S. Eliot, and which is related to paradoxical, inevitable and constant interweaving of old and new (of the past and the

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1 This refers to the problem area of modern, modernity, modernism, Modern, etc., but also to the notions such as 'new', 'contemporary', 'progressive', and so on.

present).<sup>2</sup> Even without the theoretical explications, the phenomenon in its particular form is (again) clearly perceptible today, because it is emphatically pointed at by the creative practice lying within the framework of Post-Modern and Post-Post-Modern art.

Therefore, if the scientists agree that 'the past and the present shape one another' in art, and that 'the past and the present, as well as a poet and an artist, do not have their complete meaning alone', the issues which remain to be considered are the possible reasons and ways for shaping the present by the past, who are those who determine what tradition is and is not, which layers of the past are relevant and which are inconsequential. Finally, we must consider the sense or meaning of the artistic dialogues with the past.

*Arhaična scena* [*Archaic Scene*] by Dušan Radić is among those artistic achievements, which from the first moment stand in a relation with the above mentioned issues. Keeping in mind that the work is but an excerpt from a larger entity – the

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2 'The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.' ['Smisao za istoriju prisiljava čoveka da ne piše prožet do srži samo svojom generacijom, već sa osećanjem da čitava evropska književnost od Homera, i u okviru nje čitava literatura njegove sopstvene zemlje, postoje istovremeno i sačinjavaju jedan simultani poredak. Takav smisao za istoriju, što znači smisao i za bezvremeno i za vremensko, i za bezvremeno i vremensko ujedno, jeste ono što jednog pisca čini tradicionalnim. A to istovremeno kod pisca stvara najoštriju svest o njegovom mestu u vremenu, o njegovoj vlastitoj savremenosti. Nijedan pesnik, nijedan umetnik iz bilo koje umetnosti, nema sam za sebe celovito značenje.'] T. S. Eliot, *Izabrani tekstovi* [*Selected Essays*], Belgrade, Prosveta, 1963. Numerous studies have been written on the phenomenon, from most diverse theoretical standpoints, thus the Eliot's text was chosen here more for its poetic dimension than for uniqueness or astuteness of its insights (to that end, appropriate passages from influential treatises on intertextuality or on Neoclassical and Post-Modern treatment of paradigm would certainly be more useful). In a specific way, almost in the spirit of what Matei Calinanescu calls *avant-garde anti-modernism*', Dušan Radić confirms Eliot's viewpoints: 'Perceiving the past and the future separately leads to a devastating intellectual nothingness' ['Odvojeno doživljavanje prošlosti i budućnosti vodi u porazno intelektualno ništavilo']. Dušan Radić, *Tragovi balkanske vrleti* [*Traces of Balkan Cragginess*], Belgrade, Beogradska knjiga, 2007, 190.

opera *Julijan Otpadnik* [*Julian the Apostate*]<sup>3</sup> – it seems that it cannot give complete answers to the questions raised. However, if we take into account that almost all Dušan Radić's compositions can be regarded as parts of larger wholes<sup>4</sup>, even of the composer's entire 'many-sided and many-stringed' ['raznostranog i raznos-trunog'] opus, as well as the complete Radić's creation can be perceived in an Eliotesque way – in a context wider from the composer's opus itself – then *Arhaična scena* could perhaps be the final little part of the puzzle, which only confirms the completeness of a particular way of compositional thinking, after which we can perceive the entities of higher order.

Although the author himself notes that the idiom of *Arhaična scena* is close to the slow movement of the liturgical drama *Vučja so* [*Wolf's Salt*],<sup>5</sup> we could add that the same circle of expression or ideas also contains some other Radić's compositions, where, for the specific reasons, the composer's interest is directed towards the spirit of the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> So one could say that by the fragments from the chant *Ninja sili* by kyr Stephen the Serb, or the written records of church chants from Karlovci, or the Gregorian chorals in his earlier works, as well as by simulation of the Orthodox church singing in the instrumental part of *Arhaična scena*, Radić builds up a particular sound basis, which the listener perceives as but a (just) one of many facets of the composer's entire musical language.

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3 The opera *Julijan Otpadnik; epsko kazivanje u sedam slika* [*Julian the Apostate; Epic Narration in Seven Scenes*] was composed in 2004. Thus far it has not been staged. The libretto was written by the author himself, after the novel *Smrt bogova* [*The Death of the Gods*], by Dmitry Merezhkovsky. The protagonist is the Emperor Constantine's nephew – the Roman emperor Julian, who ruled between 360 and 363 AD. Since he inherited the love for the Hellenic wisdom and Hellenic gods from his tutor, Neoplatonist Maximus of Ephesus, the emperor Julian became an opponent of Christianity (thus he is known as Julian the Apostate). He proclaimed Mithraism as the official religion, i.e. he officially acknowledged both polytheism and Christianity, but this very quickly led to his demise. The opera 'is about violence' ['reč je o nasilju'], says Radić. 'Violence never leaves sweet memories. Every closed ideological system must suffer a criticism, thus Christian dogmatics as well' ['Nasilje nikad ne ostavlja lepe uspomene. Svaki zatvoreni ideološki sistem mora biti izložen kritici, pa i hrišćanska dogmatika']. Dušan Radić, *Ibid.*, 79.

4 This is the origin of Radić's need to sort his works into opuses not by the chronological criterion but by the kinship of their musical procedures.

5 From the conversation with the composer, 18th January 2010.

6 This refers to: *Čele-kula* [*Skull Tower*], *Uspravna zemlja* [*A Country Standing Tall*], *Učitelji* [*Teachers*], *Smrt majke Jugovića* [*Death of Jugović Mother*]. Composer explains his reaching for the medieval layer of the musical past in the following words: 'This is certainly a reaction to fabrication of sound capers after algebraic equations, i.e. getting free from the rigid patterns of a computerized consciousness. I listen to the call of primeval singing, hence more and more, the basic expressive means in my vocal parts are archaic modes of old Gregorian choral, melodies of Orthodox church chant and two-part singing of our patriarchal rural community' ['To svakako znači reakciju na fabrikovanje zvučnih igrarija prema algebarskim jednačinama, odnosno oslobađanje od krutih obrazaca kompjuterizovane svesti. Osluškujem zov praiskonskog pevanja i zato, sve više, osnovna izražajna sredstva u mojim vokalnim deonicama čine arhaični modusi starog gregorijanskog horala, melodije pravoslavnog crkvenog pjenija i dvoglasno pevanje naše patrijarhalne seoske zajednice']. Dušan Radić, *Ibid.*, 184.

However, no matter how diverse Radić's creation is, it seems that all of his works are in fact based upon a similar principle: melding or intertwining of two or three particular musical idioms, one of which, the constant one, stems from the vocabulary of the 20<sup>th</sup> century music, while the origin of the other, variable idioms can be found in musical folklore, popular music, medieval church music (both Catholic and Orthodox), music of Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism and Romanticism. It would be the simplest to label such a procedure as 'Neoclassical', which, in spite of its ambiguousness, first of all directs towards some junction, most often of 'the old' and 'the new'. But if we have already noted that such junction of 'the past and the present' is a characteristic of all works of art, then it is certainly more important to consider which layers of the past and the present meet each other in Radić's new work.

Radić sculpts the meditative course of *Arhaična scena*, which is occasionally transformed into sections of faster beat and different type of expressivity, thus building a well-balanced form by additional energy impetuses – upon the basis of a classicistically pure texture (Example), recognizable from his other works. Such reduction of texture in *Arhaična scena* is achieved in a particular way, by evoking the sound of Byzantine music: the musical tissue for the most part contains three or four sound layers, most prominent of them being the layer with a vocal-type melodic line for winds of darker timbre and softer sound (English horn, clarinet or bassoon). Only at the end of the work<sup>7</sup> this layer is replaced by a choir texture where the part-writing emulates the early polyphony. Also an important layer is that of percussion (where semanterion is particularly prominent) which however, in spite of the foregoing type of apparatus, is not a rhythmic skeleton but just a particular timbre and symbol.<sup>8</sup> The remaining layers, by long-held notes<sup>9</sup> or by minimalistic repeating of a motive of the same rhythmic design or the same intervallic-harmonic layout,<sup>10</sup> perform the role of an exquisite drone, simulating the role of ison. Lyricism, that 'deeply sensitive thread' which in its various shapes – but never in the form of romantic sentimentality – is present in most of Radić's works, here is thus realized in the simulation of Byzantine chant expressivity. Me-

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7 This of course refers to the adaptation for concert performance.

8 It is known that the bells – due to the great resistance which the new religion was faced with in the Roman Empire – had not been used in the Christian church for a few centuries after the birth of Christ. Only since the time of Constantine the Great, which proclaimed Christianity the official religion, people started to build temples and to call for prayer, though still not with bells, but with wind instruments such as trumpet and horn, as well as by banging semanterions. Bells never fully displaced semanterions, which are used in particular occasions even today. For example, between Good Friday and Easter, semanterions are used instead of bells to mark a great Christian mourning, and then bells are announcing its end. Bells then invite to rejoice in Christ's resurrection. In the Hilandar Monastery, semanterions are used to this day for announcements, warnings and prayer hours. Cf. Radmila Pavičević-Popović, 'Zvono' ['Bell']', *Povelja*, 2007, No. 2, 153–159.

9 Most often in the doubled parts of the strings and the brass instruments.

10 Usually written for the strings, the harp or a horn.

lodic lines of stepwise intervallic motion, with the characteristic dancing around the fundamental tones, are exposed, with frequent modulations, in tonal or modal environments (such as the melody for the English horn which begins in E major with minor sixth, [Example]), while the vertical component presents the recognizable 'Radić's harmony' – the tones from the melodic lines, but in a fourths or a fourths-fifths structure, sometimes with added seconds and sevenths, often softened by an added third. 'There is no rhythmic pulsation', the author said, 'because this is a mild thinking about the nothing'.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the apparent lack of pulse is achieved by typically modernistic superposition of various 'irregular' rhythmic figures, monotonous repetitive rhythmic course and 'a sounding silence' of long-held notes, as well as by applying particularly complex, constantly changing metrics.

However Radić's *Arhaična scena* may be close to the spirit of Byzantine music, the friction induced by the confrontation of 'the essence of the original'<sup>12</sup> and its simulation results in quite an extraordinary sound alchemy. The meaning of that extraordinariness or novelty can and must be looked for, as already noted, in a context broader than the composer's opus itself. It is known that there has been

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11 From the conversation with the author, 18th January 2010. Radić here hints at Miodrag Pavlović's essay 'Govor o ničem' ['Speaking about the Nothing']. Among other things, Pavlović there says: 'I trust the Nothing. This is not the same as 'I trust nothing'. (...) To trust the Nothing, the Nothing (not 'nothing') may be a natural thing, for a natural man, who dies as he lives. (...) To trust the Nothing is to feel love in general, to feel a deep compassion and sympathy for everything. (...) Those who trust the Nothing, I think, are in the realm of divine... Novalis, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Buddha... building upon the nothing, they created the most sublime cosmologies... people in the past had been more ready to accept the undetermined and to kneel before the nothing...'. ['Ja imam poverenja u Ništa. To ne znači isto što i 'ja nemam poverenja ni u šta'. (...) Imati poverenja u Ništa, u Ništa (ne ni u šta) možda je prirodna stvar, kod prirodnog čoveka, koji umire kao što i živi. (...) Imati poverenja u Ništa, znači imati ljubav uopšte, znači imati duboko sažaljenje, i samilost prema svemu. (...) Ko ima poverenja u Ništa, mislim da se nalazi u prostoru božanskog... Novalis, Kirkegor, Niče, Buda... zidajući na ničem, stvorili su najuzvišenije kosmologije... ljudi su nekad bili spremniji da prihvate neodređeno, i da kleče pred ničim...']. Miodrag Pavlović, 'Govor o ničem', in: *Govor o ničem*, Niš, Gradina, 1987, 296.

12 Regarding the composition *Uspravna zemlja*, Gorica Pilipović paraphrased and quoted Dušan Radić's words: 'This is not the past re-examined, the past resuscitated by a new contemporary content. This is, in author's own words, simply an imitation – mildly refracted through the treat-er's prism, and which completely calls forth the essence of the original, but, as an association to a time long gone, obfuscated by a layer of temporal perspective (by the treat-er's prism), it acquires a new dimension – a meaning within the context' ['To nije prošlost koja se preispituje, kojoj se udahnuje novi savremeni sadržaj. Radi se jednostavno o imitaciji, kako autor kaže – blago prelomljenoj prizmom obrađivača, koja (imitacija) u potpunosti dočarava suštinu originala i, kao asocijacija na neko davno prošlo vreme, zamagljena slojem vremenske perspektive (prizmom obrađivača), dobija novu dimenziju – značenje u kontekstu']. Gorica Pilipović, *Pogled na muziku Dušana Radića [A View to the Music of Dušan Radić]*, Belgrade, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 2000, 39.

an array of artists,<sup>13</sup> which by the excellence of their work promoted the Byzantine art into a cornerstone of Serbian culture, and whose works are correspondent to certain Radić's compositions, both aesthetically and poetically. Such choice of a particular past to lead a dialogue which speaks not only of a need for, as usually quoted, 'conserving the past', 'returning to the primeval origin', 'having the whole artistic tradition of one's nation in one's bones' et cetera. It points to an active 'imagining' the cultural identity of one's own community, in a way Benedict Anderson spoke about,<sup>14</sup> but also to a constant re-examination of art, its boundaries, powers, achievements and meaning.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

Валентина Радоман

САВРЕМЕНА АЛХЕМИЈА  
АРХАИЧНА СЦЕНА ДУШАНА РАДИЋА

САЖЕТАК

Композиција *Архаична сцена* Душана Радића премијерно је изведена 23. октобра 2009. године, у сали Задужбине Илије Милосављевића Коларца, у оквиру отварања концертне сезоне 2009/2010 Београдске филхармоније. Оркестром је дириговао Урош Лајовић. Дело је фрагмент опере *Јулијан Отпадник* (2004). Писано је музичким језиком којим се евоцира дух византијске музике.

*Архаична сцена* (концертна верзија) јесте једноставна композиција у којој музичко ткиво чине три или четири звучна слоја, међу којима се истиче слој са мелодијском линијом вокалног типа, у изведби дувачких инструмената тамније боје, меког звука (енглески рог, кларинет или фагот). Такође је битан слој који изводе ударачки инструменти. У овом слоју нарочито истакнуту улогу има клепало, због особите боје и симболике коју овај инструмент има у православном богослужењу. Преостали слојеви, због дуго држаних тонова или минималистичког понављања мотива исте ритмичке контуре или истоветног интервалског, односно хармонског склопа, имају улогу апартног бруја, симулирајући улогу византијског исона. Хармонски језик композиције чине мешавина дура, мола и црквених модуса (у хоризонталу) и тзв. радићевске хармоније (у вертикали) – квартни или квартно-квинтни склопови са понекад додатим секундама и септимама, а често умекшаним додатим терцама.

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13 Suffice it to mention the poetic achievements of Miodrag Pavlović, Vasko Popa, Ivan V. Lalić, the paintings by Lazar Vozarević, Mića Popović, Milorad Bata Mihailović, and the musical opus of Ljubica Marić, although the number of domestic artists inspired by the Byzantine heritage is much greater than this.

14 Benedict Anderson, *Nacija: zamišljena zajednica. Razmatranja o porijeklu i širenju nacionalizma [Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism]*, trans. Nata Lengić and Nataša Pavlović, Zagreb, Školska knjiga, 1990.

Нема ритмичке пулсације у мојој композицији“, каже Радић. Такав утисак одсуства пулсације постиже се типично модернистичким наслојавањем разноврсних неправилних“ ритмичких група, равномерног репетитивног ритмичког тока и звучне тишине“ дуго држаних тонова, као и применом нарочито сложене, стално изменљиве метрике.

Трењем замишљеног византијског оригинала и његове симулације настаје сасвим особита савремена звучна алхемија. Смисао те посебности или новине, могуће је и неопходно тражити у ширем контексту од самог композиторовог опуса – у контексту српске националне културе. Због тога, *Архаична сцена* указује на Радићев активан вид замишљања“ (у значењу овог појма о којем говори Бенедикт Андерсон) културног идентитета своје националне заједнице.

**Кључне речи:** модернизам, неокласично, симулација, национално, Византија.



Radoman, V.: Contemporary Alchemy. Arhaična Scena by Dušan Radić (58-65)

Example

Lentamente  $\text{♩} = 60$

Ob 1 2

C. ingl. 1 2  
1. solo  
*mf* *a* *f* *mf*

Cl 1  
in Sib 2  
*a 2*  
*p* *f*

Cl b  
in Sib  
*p* *f*

Cfg.  
*p* *f*

Cor 1  
in Fa 2  
3  
*a 3 senza sord.*  
*p* *f*

Tr-ba 1  
in Do 2  
*senza sord.*  
*p* *f*

Tr-ri 1 2  
*p* *f*

Perc.  
Kleinale (ir daljine) *ad libitum* *p*  
F.tto saxon. *mf*  
Gong *p*  
Surnaji *f*

Lentamente  $\text{♩} = 60$

Vn I *colla parte* *pp*

Vn II *colla parte* *pp*

V-le *colla parte* *pp*

Vc *colla parte* *pp*

Cb *pp*