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Branka Popović*

University of Arts in Belgrade

Faculty of Music

Department of Composition

ENTR'ACTE

An Interview with Zoran Erić



Zoran Erić began his music training in his earliest childhood days, playing the piano and the violin, and acquired his BA and MA degrees from the Department of Composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade. He pursued further training at the Orff Institute in Salzburg and in Witold Lutosławski's master class in Grožnjan, Croatia. He is also active in electronic music, focusing on so-called "live electronics", advocating a more active role for live electronics in performance. In this domain, he is active as a performer as well. Erić's oeuvre comprises

works in various genres, written for various ensembles and soloists. His major works comprise ballets *Banović Strahinja* and *Jelisaveta*, *Slovo Siluana* for baritone, women's choir, and tape, *Off* for double-bass and strings, *Cartoon*, *Talea Konzertstück* for violin and strings, *Velika crvena mrlja Jupitera* (The Great Red Spot of Jupiter) for amplified harpsichord, percussion, and live electronics, *Abnormalni udarci Dogona* (The Abnormal Beats of the Dogon) for bass clarinet, piano, percussion, bass harmonica, and live electronics, *Helijum u maloj kutiji* (Helium in a Small Box) for strings, *Nisam govorio* (I Did Not Speak) for alto saxophone, bass harmonica, actor-narrator, and mixed choir, *Oberon* for flute and in-

* Author contact information: branka@branka.rs

strumental ensemble, *Šest scena – komentara* (Six Scenes – Comments) for three violins and string orchestra, *Ko je ubio galeba* (Who Shot a Seagull?) for 12 cellos, *Sedam pogleda u nebo* (Seven Glances at the Sky) for string sextet, *Entr'acte* for symphonic orchestra, *B&R* for double bass and string quartet, etc. His works have been performed by renowned domestic and foreign ensembles, such as the string orchestras *Dušan Skovran*, *Guildhall Strings*, *St. George Strings*, *Kreisler London Strings*, *Zagreb Soloists*, *12 Cellisten der Berliner Philharmoniker*, *Detroit Chamber Orchestra*, *Kremlin String Orchestra*, *Camerata serbica*, *Banatul philharmonia*, *RTS Symphony Orchestra*, *Collegium musicum*, *Belgrade Philharmonic*, and *Irish Chamber Orchestra*. He has collaborated with the most prominent Serbian and foreign performers, including Aleksandar Pavlović, Živojin Zdravković, Kenneth Jean, Pavle Dešpalj, James Judd, Uroš Lajovic, Bojan Suđić, Darinka Matić Marović, Ksenija Janković, Lidija Pilipenko, David Takeno, Bernard Lansky, So-Ock Kim, Malachi Robinson, Jon Bogdanescu, Marija Špengler, Dejan Mladenović, Aleksandar Madžar, Arisa Fujita, Nebojša Ignjatović, Miloš Petrović, Slobodan Gerić, Emanuel Pahud, Ljubiša Jovanović, and many others. Works by Erić have been performed in almost every European country, the US, China, and Australia.

In Erić's oeuvre a special place is occupied by an extensive cycle of theatre and film music. He has collaborated with some of Serbia's most prominent figures in this domain, such as Sonja Vukićević, Gorčin Stojanović, Nikita Milivojević, Vida Ognjenović, Nebojša Bradić, Ivana Vujić, Milan Karadžić, Haris Pašović, Dejan Mijač, Boro Drašković, Egon Savin, and others, and written incidental music for many theatre plays, including *Medeja* (Medea), *Magbet* (Macbeth), *Proces* (The Trial), *Ptice* (Birds), *Hamlet* (Hamlet), *Kralj Lir* (King Lear), *Majka Hrabrost* (Mother Courage), *Sedmorica protiv Tebe* (Seven against Thebes), *Život je san* (Life is a Dream), *San letnje noći* (A Midsummer's Night Dream), *Čekajući Godoa* (Waiting for Godot), *Kralj Ibi* (Ubu the King), *Simon čudotvorac* (Simon the Sorcerer), *Dama s kamelijama* (Lady with the Camelias), *Karolina Nojber* (Carolina Neuber), *Koreni* (Roots), *Ravangrad*, *Antigona u NY* (Antigone in NY), *Maksim Crnojević*, *Zver na mesecu* (Beast on the Moon), *Frederik*, *Pogled u nebo* (A Glance at the Sky), *Egzibicionista* (The Exhibitionist), *Galeb* (The Seagull), *Posetilac* (The Visitor), *Mala trilogija smrti* (A Little Trilogy of Death), *Don Krsto*, *Transilvanija* (Transylvania), *Car Edip* (King Oedipus), *Harold i Mod* (Harold and Maude), *Prokleta avlija* (The Damned Yard), as well as the film music for *Ubistvo sa predumišljajem* (Premeditated Murder), *Stršljen* (The Hornet), and *Senke uspomena* (Shadows of Memories).

Even in his earliest works, Erić already demonstrated a penchant for clarity, formal precision, and synthesis of a "different image", setting the foundations of his musical expression in *Iza sunčevih vrata* (Behind the Sun's Gate), a choreographic scene for orchestra and *Concerto for Orchestra and Soloists*. His need to shape his musical expression as his own synthesis of the overall sound surrounding him, present already in *Mirage*, was developed in Erić's pieces composed a few years later: the ballet *Jelisaveta* and the choral piece *Subito*. His 1980s opus was defined by three key works: *Off*, *Cartoon*, and *Talea Konzertsück*. As a sort of philosophical model, thesis–antithesis–synthesis, these works accomplished the most consistent postmodern expression in Serbian music: *Off* – as a piece of music outside of his vocabulary up to that point, represents an awareness of the vivid specificity of his own personal acoustic world, features an immediacy and sharpness of musical

experience, and its perfect string setup and masterfully constructed form, juxtaposing sections of contemplation and quick movement, is an echo of baroque compositional procedures; *Cartoon* – as a thoroughly conceived dance, with the basic emotional clichés and rudimentary states of movement, acceleration, and stasis, reaches a superb degree of communication, conciseness, and clarity; *Talea Konzertstück* – as one of the most complex string scores in Serbian music – is based on the music's "slipping" toward an open sensibility and thereby introducing the domain of emotion into the idea of dance. Erić sharpened and sublimed the principles of his mature musical expression in his cycle *Slike Haosa* (Images of Chaos), comprising five pieces: *Velika crvena mrlja Jupitera*, *Abnormalni udarci Dogona*, *Helijum u maloj kutiji*, *Nisam govorio* and *Oberon koncert*. Modelling chaos, "a process rather than a condition, becoming rather than being" served as a paradigm of Erić's striving to create his own image of an opaque and chaotic entity – the world. In his view, the world is "processed" through a total of several stages that analogously link substance, the laws of physics, and the human mind: Incomprehension, Resistance, Rage, Amazement, and Acceptance.

Erić has won a number of awards and prizes for his work, most notably the October Prize of the City of Belgrade, the YUSTAT Grand Prix for theatre music, two Golden Mimosas for film music, two Sterija Prizes for incidental music, and the Great Gold Medal of the University of Arts in Belgrade. He is a triple laureate of the chief music award in Serbia – the Mokranjac Prize. For a number of years, he has also been active as a pedagogue.

He is Full Professor at the Department of Composition of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade and has taught master classes and seminars at renowned European conservatories, such as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and Iressia in Athens. Between 1992 and 1998, he served as a vice-dean of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade and between 2000 and 2004 as a vice-rector of the University of Arts in Belgrade and Chairman of the Board of SOKOJ, the Serbian organization for the protection of intellectual property in music. Since 2007, he has served as Chair of the Department of Composition at the Faculty of Music in Belgrade.

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We used the time between composing, teaching, and many other activities that Zoran Erić engages in to reflect with the composer on some of the main principles that guide his work. The occasion for this interview was the author's long-term presence on the contemporary music scene, above all in the capacity of an artist and pedagogue. With his achievements, Erić has enriched contemporary artistic, applied, and electronic music, where his poetics stand out as one of the most readily recognizable "voices". Inspired by many musical and extra-musical phenomena (past and present alike), which he, in his own specific

way, builds and translates into his own “musical language” and thereby forms a characteristic compositional system, Erić creates works where dance plays a dominant role. Still, navigating “musical waters” that are not too accessible to a wide auditorium, as pure sound, Erić’s works nonetheless achieve a high degree of communication with the listener. What follows is an insight into the composer’s reflections about the time in which he creates, his own poetics, and contemporary trends in music.

In your compositions, one may occasionally hear echoes of some already existing musics... carefully chosen... What is it that a given music should have in order to be “commented on”, taken as a source of inspiration, or as the basis for a new piece?

Yes, there are occasional paraphrases, sometimes also simulations, but never quotations. One may surmise the reason why a certain music was chosen by looking at what exactly is paraphrased (or simulated). That procedure of choosing a musical pattern to quote or paraphrase is somewhat similar to choosing a theme for a set of variations. The choice is made so that the theme you choose offers you various possibilities of interpretation and transformation. In that way you make your variations more interesting. Speaking of this analogy, I should mention that, if you’ve decided to write a set of variations you’re also obliged to choose your theme in advance. However, if it’s a paraphrase it is not necessary to decide in advance what musical pattern you’ll paraphrase. It (the paraphrase) may simply “appear” and get going by itself. Uninvited and unplanned. In such cases, the paraphrased musical object comes directly from the “repository” of the musical subconscious and has the same characteristics as any other musical idea. Therefore, such a musical object is on the same level as any other *music* in which it emerges and its “commentary” is therefore neither sought nor planned. That music simply appears and after a while – it goes. When it comes to simulation, one must say that, by contrast, it does entail a more thoroughly conceived environment and relationships in that environment. It takes longer and is not spontaneous. It does not come “uninvited” or leave suddenly.

Speaking of my own work, I’d emphasize that I find such moments more interesting than when I know in advance what I’ll “comment on” or “paraphrase” in my music. I view my pieces *Helijum u maloј kutiji* for strings and *Šest scenakomentara (Cavatina nuova)* for three violins and string/symphonic orchestra as sound simulations transferred from one time and space into another time and another ambiance. I’ve always been attracted to that procedure. I presume that my fascination with time machines “played a part” in this case, although that cannot be the only or the main reason. In fact, I’m convinced that the music that

is made today by reverting to its form from another era (simulating and taking it on) is re-signified and refracted at the moment of its transfer into the present age in an entirely different way than, for example, music that was made in a certain age and is performed today.

In relation to musical heritage, three distinct approaches have been identified in your newer pieces: quoting, paraphrasing, and simulating. In your opinion, what innovations did postmodernism bring in working with musical material itself, in comparison to neoclassicism?

I'll paraphrase Baudrillard: "They've slapped that label, 'postmodern', on me, which has only confused matters. I met post-modernity in America. We've become its hostages. Here (he probably means Europe or France) it means nothing..."

He defines post-modernity as, among other things, a sort of "overlapping" of (seemingly) incompatible styles and genres. That is not a feature of neoclassicism. Also, in the total span or duration of a, say, postmodernist work, one may also often notice various technologies, with which it was realized. However, one couldn't argue that such a procedure is an exclusive feature of post-modernism, because it may be found (albeit in different forms and degrees) in other styles as well.

Concerning quoting, paraphrasing, and simulation, I'd say that there is some overlapping only when it comes to paraphrasing and simulation. Quoting is self-evident. In a musical work, it always appears in a "witness" capacity. Neoclassicism is simulation in itself. All of it. I find paraphrasing the most interesting as a procedure, although in the preceding century it was disqualified as forging and an attempt at a banal simplification of the original. By contrast, for centuries before that (all the way from ancient Greece and Rome), it was considered an indispensable practice in oratory, for example. Therefore, I see paraphrasing as a procedure of developing an original expression wherein the main idea momentarily (usually without quoting) corresponds with its newly written and processed derivation. This "retelling" enables a presentation of the original, through creative interpretation, in another perspective, that is, bringing it into a new position and thus re-signifying it into a desired *other*.

In the opinion of postmodernists, in a world marked by cultural diversity, there are no correct answers, no universally applicable rules or viewpoints. There is diversity, fragmentation, change, and variation. As Pauline Marie Rosenau argues in her book *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions*, the "postmodern human being" creates its own reality, which favours spontaneity to a set plan, the extraordinary to the ordinary, the personal

to the common. Also, imagination, fascination with tradition, antiquity, and the exotic are some of the important features-qualities of the postmodern human.

In my opinion, every ideology that rests on some universal norms and seeks to provide legitimacy at any price to a given position is basically totalitarian. That's why in my mind, integral serialism, for instance, as a specific (but still) structuralist procedure, is a product of a totalitarian system, where (almost) everything is subjected to the normative and determined in advance. In response, post-structuralism argues that nothing is constant, that there is heterogeneity, deconstruction, fragmentation, change, lack of continuity, unpredictable processuality.

Without adhering to that division too strictly and without taking it too seriously (I suppose that's another postmodernist trait, which Rosenau neglected to mention), I would argue that in relation to neoclassicism, postmodernism brought an entirely new way of elaborating musical material in a work of music. A postmodernist work "works" (even insists) on a certain form of deconstruction and decomposition of a given (perhaps classical) pattern, while a neoclassical work (preserving the classical ideal) usually doesn't. The context and ambiance in which a postmodernist work is placed are entirely different from the context and ambiance of a neoclassical work.

The Anthology of Serbian 20th-century String Music, comprising works premiered and recorded by the Belgrade Strings – BGO "Dušan Skovran" between 1977 and 2003, under the leadership of one of our most renowned musicians both in the country and abroad, Professor Aleksandar Pavlović, who also published the Anthology, includes three of your works: Off, Cartoon, and Talea-Konzertstück. They were written during the 1980s and brought a new compositional method, unlike the dogmatic avant-garde trends of the time, which also resulted in a different sound, as well as a new type of communication with the audience. Musical works are realized in interaction between a compositional conception, interpretation, and the listener; how significant for the creative process is knowing exactly who's going to perform your piece? Also, do you envisage the listener in your creative process?

Most works of music in history emerged as a result of collaboration and direct contact between composers and performers. One needn't detail how useful and fruitful this collaboration is and how it affects the quality of the work itself. This is especially true of virtuosic solo and concert pieces, which would be impossible without a creative collaboration between the composer and the soloist.

Off and *Cartoon*, along with some other works, were indeed written during the 1980s, at a time when an excellent ensemble, the Belgrade Strings – BGO "Dušan Skovran", led by the excellent violinist, pedagogue, and conductor

Aleksandar Pavlović, performed new works. That was the most intimate collaboration that I've accomplished with an ensemble and with performers in general. I could say that that collaboration and trust, along with the certainty that every performance was going to be top quality, were an immense stimulus for producing new pieces. It was similar with the *Konzertstück* for violin and strings, dedicated to Aleksandar Pavlović. He premiered that work with the Belgrade Strings on 18 October 1989 at the Kolarac Foundation in Belgrade. Then there was *Ko je ubio galeba?* for 12 violoncellos. This kind of ensemble may be imagined and heard as the most immediate and natural echo of the simple musical pattern used in this composition, which essentially rests on the universality of its Slavic melodic-rhythmic peculiarity. This work was performed by the *12 Cellisten der Berliner Philharmoniker*. In this listing, I'd be hard-pressed to find a work that did not emerge as a result of creative collaboration between a composer and a performer. Many times I've come to realize that only a superbly performed composition may form a basis on which a composer may construct his artistic convictions and that only exquisite musicians are able to affirm all, even the most arcane messages of a work of music. For that I'm infinitely grateful to them. Without such brilliant musicians, we, composers, do not exist.

As for the audience, I must say that I don't "envisage" them when writing music. Perhaps I think about them indirectly, concerning formal structure, dynamic tension, and harmonic progression/digression, bearing in mind that the proper adjustment of these parameters conditions the favourable reception of a work. By that I mean comprehension, not necessarily acceptance as well. I also think that the audience are always already "marked" by knowing what to expect from individual types of music (and composers). If a listener hears something that is unexpected in any way, that doesn't necessarily mean betrayal, but may be accepted as an unexpected, welcome surprise. Every listener will adjust their reception and judgement with their emotions and overall perception, whether or not I try to address them in a special way or (perhaps) satisfy them. Since, in my opinion, accepting or rejecting a work of art is a strictly personal matter, when I write, I'm not capable of thinking about some majority common impression that might be realized.

The cycle Slike haosa, through five pieces, brings the sound blend of an acoustic ensemble and live electronics, and its form, in addition to fully notated sections, also features improvised passages, which enables a sort of flexibility in terms of sonority as well as musical dramaturgy. When you wrote the piece, were you able to envisage all of its sonic and formal outcomes?

In *Slike haosa*, I explored various forms of improvisation. Improvisation encompasses all that constitutes a poststructuralist work: deconstruction, fragmentation, change, lack of continuity, unpredictable processuality. Not all parts of this cycle feature the same intensity of improvisation. In fact, I sought to reduce the uncertainty of the outcome (which is, by the way, quite certain in improvisation) as much as possible in the movements written for large ensembles (*Oberon*, *Nisam govorio*, *Helijum u maloj kutiji*). In large ensembles, improvisation boils down to controlled aleatorics and such sections are somewhat hermetic and burdened with the conductor's directions and his feeling for time flow and concrete situations. That "doesn't fit" my idea of free communication between performers – improvisers. Therefore, I opted for improvisation in the movements written for smaller ensembles, where I, too, could participate in the realization of the sound as a member of the ensemble (with sampler and live electronics).

Of course, the sonic outcome of improvisation that is not fully notated is not very predictable. Moreover, in cases where improvisation is absolutely free, there is no predictability at all. In such pieces (*Velika crvena mrlja Jupitera*, *Abnormalni udarci Dogona*), I provided the performers with precise guidelines as to the direction that the improvisation should take and the duration of those (improvised) sections. I even used certain "directions" that constituted a sort of revoking of the performer's right to determine the duration of improvisation (setting the number of times a certain motive could be repeated, what kinds of transposition were allowed, the order in which musical models should be performed, etc.). That was, it seems, fear on my part of the unpredictability of the outcome and a desire (still) to control the process of improvisation up to a degree. I once spoke about what the rehearsals looked like. Every rehearsal produced a different, but (still) unexpected sonic result. The outcome was sometimes good, but at other times, the formal structure "did not quite hold". I wasn't happy with the overall sound result either. Moreover, such outcomes were becoming increasingly frequent. At those moments, the thought certainly crossed my mind that it might've been better, had I precisely written down everything, so that the score could be faithfully realized. Besides, I wouldn't be alone, had I decided to convert my works containing improvisation into precisely notated pieces in order to "ensure" a desired sound outcome for them. I haven't done that (which doesn't mean I won't), because I was extremely happy with some performances, convinced that the sound outcome in those cases was good because improvisation was successful. By the way, my directions also stipulate that the performers must be experienced improvisers. You can't expect such a piece to be performed by musicians whose experience mainly comes down to a precise interpretation of a fully notated score. Since you can't control it, there

emerges the need for a score wherein one possible improvisation will be written down and performed always in that form. At the same time, that means that that piece will no longer feature improvisation.

Applied music occupies a significant part of your oeuvre and some of your musical conceptions in this genre have also found their place in concert works that were not written for the stage. Šest scena – komentara for three violins and string orchestra from 2001 had its beginning in incidental music and then underwent another transformation, into a symphonic piece. That is the 2003 version, which, it seems, stresses some features of your “musical language” even further, precisely due to the characteristics of the medium itself. A similar transfer of material from one medium to another may also be found, for instance, in the oeuvre of Luciano Berio, who composed a series of compositions titled Chemins on the basis of his Sequenze. To what extent do the medium and genre shape musical conceptions and vice versa, how much does a musical conception adapt the medium and genre to itself?

I would say that modifying a genre to fit a given musical conception and, vice versa, modifying a musical conception in the framework of a given genre, are “reversible” processes. The starting point and aim of this process is allowing the musical conception to transcend every obstacle and realize itself, with its best qualities, in any genre or medium. Here I’m probably saying that a musical conception should adapt the genre to itself. From the composer’s perspective, that is certainly the aim one should pursue. However, every genre has properties and rules of its own and ignoring them would simply mean abandoning that genre. In itself, that is neither unusual nor wrong. It just means that a given genre did not suit a fully conceived and consistently realized musical conception and that that musical conception shaped it according to its own needs by simply turning it into another genre.

In *Šest scena – komentara* for three violins and string/symphonic orchestra, the movements *Antigona u N.Y.*, *Banović*, *Cavatina nuova*, *Kolce* (A Little Round Dance), *Venera* (Venus) and *Proces* are there in order to evoke the music-thematic content used in that work as the basis of metamorphosis, associated with certain scenes from theatre plays (*Antigona u N.Y.*, *Banović Strahinja*, *Karolina Nojber*, and *Proces*). All of the selected situations feature a relationship between *three* parties, so the contact that is established between three soloists is suitable for constructing an autonomous musical dramaturgy. With its laws, it conditions a musical expression different from that conditioned by the needs of theatre. Besides, that is the only real reason why the musical essence of this work is built on a thematic basis associated with certain dramatic texts.

Namely, during a theatre act, musical material interacts with all elements of the stage, while as autonomous, it assumes another form and acquires a different and new effect.

In that sense, perhaps the longest was the path crossed by *B&R* for double bass and string quartet, which moved from its initial condition represented by the number “Prvi susret u avliji” (The First Encounter in the Yard) in the theatre play *Prokleta avlija* to the concert stage and, finally, affirmed its “double identity” in the dance performance *Prokleta avlija*, in which both versions found a place.

In what kinds of musics have you found inspiration for your compositions? Are there any specific works that have significantly affected your poetics?

I must say that I have never sought nor found inspiration for my music in other *musics*. More often, I have sought (and found) inspiration outside of music. I will now mention some of the pieces that I consider significant for the shaping of my poetics, which are inspired by extra-musical events.

Thus, the piece *Entr'acte, farsa – epizoda za orkestar* (Entr'acte, Farcical Episode for Orchestra) was inspired by René Clair's eponymous short film from 1924, made for showing in the interval between the two acts of Francis Pica-bia's ballet *Relâche*, with music by Erik Satie. For this particular music of mine I would also say that it's *insignificant*, that it constitutes a sort of noisy and aggressive furniture music, that it inhabits the “interim” between *black* and *white*, *up* and *down*, *yesterday* and *today*... and that it's meant to fill the time between *something* and *something else*, preventing the audience from relaxing.

In *Senario* for two violoncellos, the inspiration came from a harmonic concept that served 16th-century composers and stemmed from their obsessive search for numerical proportions that would provide corroboration to a system based on the idea that the interval, as a harmonic element, represents a “harmonic” proportion that supports the laws of nature and literally imitates them. From that point of view one explained the fantastic and numerous phenomena that support the harmony and universality of the number six: the six signs of the Zodiac in each hemisphere, the six possible changes of position or location – upward, downward, to the left, to the right, forward, and backward – the six sides of the cube, the six ancient modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Ionian), etc. The expressions *piu piena* and *piu vaga* are fictional (Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche*) and in this system represent two types of intervallic accumulation in relation to the unison (one closer and one more remote). In a certain way, this is also associated with the overall sound “registration” of the work. Namely, its sound flow unfolds at the limits of the

instrument's available register (harmonics and the violoncello's bottom register). Otherwise, the work does not strive to restore that system, neither in harmonic nor in any other terms. It takes its cue from and relies on the seemingly naïve ethical meanings of music in this system, or, as Zarlino put it: "Music excites the mind, moves the feelings, calms the storm, renders the passage of time perfect, especially if ordered in the right way".

Cartoon for 13 strings and harpsichord represents animated musical objects; it was inspired by a modification of the definition of animation in Webster's Dictionary: When you're watching (and listening to) musical objects in quick succession, you may see "moving images that appear to show moving figures".

Subito for women's choir, two basses, and electronics was inspired by haiku poetry by Vladislav Bajc, Leonhard Cohen (*The Energy of Slaves*), and Paul Reps (*Zen – Telegraphs*), while *Abnormalni udarci Dogona* for bass clarinet, percussion, and electronics was inspired by and dedicated to the Dogon people of Mali, who believe their ancestors originated from the planet Sirius B.

The inspiration for *Konzertstück* for violin and string orchestra came from a compositional procedure akin to the 15th century technique known as *isorhythm*. The procedure was based on repeating rhythmic and melodic units (*talee* and *colores*). Their basic and derived forms are not necessarily in a fixed relationship; instead, different forms of repetition turn into a musical flow, in which all units are (always) recognizable and their mutual relations (almost always) different. Likewise inspiring to a degree were mannerism and exhibitionism, as well as other "impurities" as categories that accompany every "pure" style. In the *Konzertstück*, they're presented in full light and emphasized up to a degree that renders them legitimate. The work's vocabulary of (mostly musical) tools is noticeably made up of elements whose marginality is unmistakable.

While in *Helijum u maloj kutiji* for string orchestra a similarity was "found" between music and liquid helium, based on a scientific experiment (A. Libchaber and J. Maurer, "A Rayleigh Bénard Experiment: Helium in a Small Box; Nonlinear Phenomena at Phase Transitions and Instabilities", ed. T. Riste, NY, Plenum, 1982, p. 259), in *Artes liberales* for a mixed choir, piano, timpani, and gong the source of inspiration was found in medieval mnemo-technical rhymes used for teaching the liberal arts (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy).

When it comes to works of music that affected the formation of my musical expression, I'll mention the following: Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Ravel's *Bolero*, Witold Lutosławski's *Book*, and Ligeti's *Lontano*.

Your works, in various genres of music, almost unmistakably reveal their author. Though categorizations are unnecessary, would you rather describe your oeuvre as modernist or postmodernist?

I would emphasize that when working on a piece, I never think about what style or genre that piece belongs to (or will belong to, when complete). If I thought about that more, I would avoid some of the “traps” into which I’ve carelessly and spontaneously fallen. I consider my oeuvre modern, contemporary. It is in harmony with the age in which it was made. It deals with what is or what was. It does not engage in foretelling. It’s not headed forward. It belongs to modernity neither by the time it was made, nor by any other features that might define it as modernist. Its greater (and for me, more significant) part happened after modernity, thus already in those terms, it could be (post)modern. Since a postmodern work is not determined by that trait alone, but also by a whole series of characteristics, I would say that my oeuvre is sufficiently in harmony with a set of traits that may define it as postmodern, although I would rather say – poststructuralist.

Therefore, I’d say that some of the characteristics of my oeuvre are the following: the deconstruction of a given (chosen) logical musical system (the delicate sound of the harpsichord as played by English virginalists / an aggressive, “mega” harpsichord) and its redefinition, that is, “re-composition”. Also, a sort of “permeable” boundary between art and popular music (using representative musical models and “riffs” from popular, more precisely, rock music; *Cartoon, Off*), extra-musical phenomena (*Velika Crvena mrlja Jupitera, Helijum u maloj kutiji, Abnormalni udarci Dogona*), as well as the aesthetic potential of the “banal” (*Konzertstück, Venus, Cavatina nuova, Helijum u maloj kutiji*).

Regardless of my oeuvre, I consider originality and authenticity (or the lack thereof) in a work of art far more important than its belonging to a particular style or genre. This originality, which I invoke here, cannot be substituted, not even with indubitable or (even worse) dubitable innovation. To be sure, innovation (in proportion with other traits) is indeed a subset of originality, but cannot constitute or substitute it by itself. This is especially true of works that were specially and deliberately constructed at a given moment (which can certainly be determined, from a reasonable time distance) in order to occupy their place in an age that was ongoing, passing, or is yet to come. Such works are mentioned in chronicles (which pretend to bring relevant value judgements) for a while and to those chronicles also remain confined. Ultimately, both those pieces and such chronicles are forgotten. An entirely different fate is that of original works of art, which affirm their value and originality before an audience, readers, spectators, in a gallery, while at the time of their making they go

entirely unnoticed, because they don't "fit" the rules that the chroniclers of innovation consider valid at that moment.

From today's perspective, following a long career in pedagogy and a large number of students at all levels of study, and with the ability to assess the development of their creative careers as independent musicians, what do you think one may teach a student of composition?

The pedagogical process is a beautiful, interesting, and not very easy journey. It takes a long time and, sometimes, it is really hard. At the end of the road, you always forget the difficulties that beset you, but in order to reach that end, you must negotiate and overcome many obstacles. My career in pedagogy has been going on for a long time. I have worked with different students, many of whom were extremely talented. Since teaching composition is individual, in direct contact between the student and the professor (even when other students and colleagues are present), I can say that the form and content of these contacts were in certain aspects firmly defined and did not change from one student to the next, while some aspects did depend on the individual traits and needs of each student. That is certainly an advantage of tutorial teaching and a privilege of which both students and professors should be aware at all times and make the best of this form of teaching. That has also been the rule of my career in pedagogy. Without mentioning any of my former students by name, today our prominent and most prominent artists, I will say that they belong to a group of privileged, renowned, and respected creators and may (along with me) be satisfied with that fact.

On what have I based my work in pedagogy and what is it, in fact, that students could take from that work?

I'll mention a few things. I think that from the very beginning it is rather important to keep providing students with new horizons. When those horizons become wide enough, students will manage to create images for themselves that will feature enough perspective, light, and colour. At the same time, you must present them with options and alternatives. In life, one often needs a "second opinion", another way, a different perspective. You can have that only if you have the possibility of choice, that is, if that possibility was presented to you before it was too late. What follows is responsibility, perseverance, and self-discipline. During studies, these traits are very important and one must emphasize and insist on them. But during studies, one may also get around them in multiple ways. The problem occurs later, after graduation, when the student is no longer a student and when s/he begins her/his independent artistic career. If those traits (responsibility, perseverance, and self-discipline) are not activated

then, no amount of talent or good will will suffice to achieve the desired objective. That is why perhaps the most important thing ultimately (before graduation) is to inform your students about all the types and levels of experiences you have. Only then (maybe) you can rest assured that you've done everything (or most) that is needed to prepare those young people for the uncertain and thorny road that awaits every artist.

Your oeuvre comprises compositions written in various genres, for various media, ranging from works for string orchestras, concertante works, several symphonic pieces, to chamber works, ballets, applied and electronic music. Would you say that music is, nonetheless, only one?

Certainly. The genre diversity of my oeuvre and its media is no reason to perceive it necessarily as a "collection" of different *musics*. It's always the same face, only with different expressions on it. It would be hard to abandon your own principles just in order to fit inside a given genre. Of course, there are times when that's impossible, due to the specificity and exclusivity of a given genre. You'd have to change your entire musical expression altogether. Then one simply shouldn't venture into such genres, because the demand to abandon all that makes your music special and only yours is simply too steep. One shouldn't acquiesce to that. This "danger" typically occurs when you're writing applied (theatre or film) music. The demands of that genre sometimes go too far and one should approach them with special caution. From the perspective of the needs dictated by the situation, they may be justified, but meeting them may bring you into conflict with what makes your music special. Since accepting such demands would result in the loss of genre and every other kind of singularity, it's clear that one must strive to preserve the authenticity of one's own musical thinking, i.e. reject such demands, however justified they might be.

Music is closest to itself when it's emotive and inspired. There has been no era when such music could be replaced by that other kind of music, music with no effect or trace, however hard it tried, in various ways and with various means, to impose itself as expected and desired.