

Transparency, bureaucracy at Meridian Festival 2024 Bukarest, Rumania
Adventures inside sound

It is said that the first "colors" verbalized by man were black and white, named after the flow of time, the alternation between light and dark. We remembered this phenomenon on the afternoon of **10.11. 2024**, in the Auditorium of the UNMB, with the debut of the concert-performance ***Transparency, bureaucracy***, performed by **Fie Schouten (bass clarinet)**, **Katharina Gross (cello)**, **Ruud Roelofsen (percussion)** and their guests Teodora Pahonțu and Vlad Polgar (percussion).

More than just a recital, the whole concept was a courageous probing of the interiority of sound, from its association with the essence of sight and hearing, through its computerized processing, its recomposition into meaningful objects and, finally, its temporal envelopment in compositional structures that seemed to include everything that was previously exposed.

Lights dimmed, flashing lanterns flashing, soft, almost gentle, and lots of whispering, this is how **Katharina Gross's "Shadow pieces I-V" (2024)** for 1-5 performers and audience began and continued in a crescendo of alternations. The three performers maintained throughout the piece a state of subtle tension, paradoxically warm and enveloping, creating that welcome curiosity of a receptive audience, with their attention guided and calibrated to the highest levels.

The next work belonged to Dutch composer **Ruud Roelofsen**. The title, **"on intimacy VI 'mozaiek'" (2020)**, fully reflected the internalized, stasis-like but highly vibrated state through the use of extensive instrumental and computer techniques. The amplification (provided technically excellent by Claudiu Roșiu) rhymed with the insistent rain outside, the effect of intimacy thus being created organically, through a sense of well-being given by the simple "being together inside" and the clear construction of the piece.

After more than 30 years, we were able to witness a premiere for almost everyone present in the hall, **Liviu Dănceanu's "Glass Music" (1985)** brought to life by the Austrian-Dutch trio together with their guests, percussionists Teodora Pahonțu and Vlad Polgar. Several pallets of glass objects were needed to realize the work: bowls, glasses, bottles, chimes, pala chimes of various sizes, bottles with glass balls inside. The preparation of the whole arsenal took several weeks, with Ruud Roelofsen giving the organizers precise instructions about the objects needed (the specific model and where to find it).

The work followed a rigorous route. First the water glasses were used, the long, refined sounds then gradually taken over by the tuned bowls, operated with bows. The bowls were in turn operated as Maracas, then as blowing instruments, and chimes of various sizes and sonorities were superimposed in turn with the other "attacks" of the same amazing material. The various combinations led to an almost dramatic enlightenment as the extended bowl sounds grew louder, followed by the finale again exposing all the instruments without overlap. The audience was enthralled and moved from the first sound to the last, the historical rendering of this music being an event in itself at the Meridian Festival. Ruud Roelofsen generously offered the National University of Music in Bucharest the chimes he had made and brought with him, so that the whole arsenal could be used whenever the reinterpretation of this ingenious score was desired.

A new and unique sonic hypostasis was then offered to us by the performance of **Benjamin Patterson's "Paper piece" (1960)**. One of the founders of what we today call Performance Art, B.P. uses paper as a sound and performance medium. Although the instructions are rigorous and contain indications of the type of paper and the gestures needed to play the score, the result will of course never be the same. The sound gradually reveals itself, the ear begins to distinguish between the thickness of the paper and the types of paper handling, the gestures become more and more ample and the three performers create an increasingly relaxed atmosphere in which the audience seems to feel the need to actively participate. The fact that paper is a "consumable" and recyclable good, but also the traditional medium for sheet music, is another paradox that amuses, relaxes and sharpens the sense of hearing.

The last work of the afternoon was **Doina Rotaru's** composition – **“Masks”, (1989/2024)**, a work revived after 25 years for the clarinet-cello duo formula, this version being dedicated to Katharina Gross and Fie Schouten, who also included it on their latest CD. Structured in five sections (prologue and four masks), this music transported us through sound, which became palpable, starting again from its temporal representation, mirroring the beginning of the recital. From the program notes we learn that Katharina Gross's *Shadows* are related to the dark side of the self, which we, Jungian, avoid or repress, the Masks being in this case sound incarnations of a cultural path rendered through techniques such as *ison* [transl. - accompanying drone in Byzantine music], spiral, allusions to well-known music (Bizet's *Carmen*) and, above all, the emotionally charged timbrality specific to the style of composer Doina Rotaru.

It was a recital-performance* that brought us positive tension, curiosity, smiles, admiration and a lot of emotion, rewarded with many applause and many callbacks from the performers, a musical afternoon that proved, once again, that sound lives inside matter and is brought to life by the passion of those who propagate it in the Universe.

* in Romanian we just use „performance” for this type of quasi-theatrical events

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translation to English by Diana Rotaru, director of the Meridian Festival Bukarest

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