

Štiri Dela

Šalter Ensemble, Br8

SLO

Nova zgoščenka oziroma digitalni pretok, dostopen na portalu Bandcamp, Zavoda Sploh postavlja v ospredje številna vprašanja, ki jih sproža sodobna glasbeno-ustvarjalna praksa s te in one strani navideznega dualizma med akademskim in alternativnim, ambivalentnega nasprotja, ki bi ga bilo mogoče še dodatno poenostaviti do prave karikature in označiti za konflikt med notiranim/komponiranim in improviziranim. Zgoščenka prinaša Štiri dela (<https://sploh.bandcamp.com/album/tiri-dela>) Šalter ansambla (<https://www.sploh.si/si/glasba/projekti/salter-ensemble>), ki stojijo na presečišču te umišljene dvojnosti. Kot pove že naslov, Štiri dela, imamo vendarle opravka z zaključenimi »umetninami«, torej »artefakti«, ki se, ovekovečeni na zgoščenci, na noben način ne morejo več izogniti najbolj klasičnemu zgodovinenju in so lahko tudi povsem enostavno plen analitičnih in drugih fenomenoloških, »čistih« zrenj, tudi muzikološke ekspertize, torej analize. Toda člani Šalter ansambla, znani improvizatorji različnih žanrskih provenienc, generacij in nacionalnih porekel, se zelo spretno gibljejo ves čas nekje vmes – v »kompozicijo« vstopajo predvsem zizkušnjami izjemnih improvizatorjev, a hkrati svojo svobodo do določene mere zamejujejo. Morda bi bili bolj na mestu izrazi, kot so ukrivljajo, nadzorujejo, tudi izkoriščajo, gladijo ipd. Ob poslušanju zgoščenske lahko prepoznamo tako improvizacijski izvir kot tudi njegovo krotenje, umeščanje v struge, ki pa so še zmeraj dovolj široke in vsebinsko deroče. Skoraj se zdi, da takšen pristop ponuja čudežno rešitev za sodobno glasbo, ki se izgublja v nepreglednem morju možnega repertoarja, ki prav zaradi svoje vseobsežnosti zapada v brezbriznost, in postopkov, prav tako razpetih čez nepregledni ocean, ki se razteza od najbolj dovršenih algoritemskih nastavkov in računalniških procesov do povsem svobodne razvezanosti improvizacije. Zgoščenka me je presenetila zato, ker jo je bilo mogoče poslušati z mnogoterimi ušesi. Sprva se mi je zazdelo, da je ne bi mogel ločiti od sodobne komponirane glasbe, kmalu nato, da jo vendarle lahko postavim v kontekst sodobne improvizirane muzike, na koncu pa se mi je razprla fantastičnost poti, ki prevzema iz obeh svetov najboljšo, kar lahko ponudita.

Velik del odlik gre pripisati smiselni razpostavitvi štirih del, ki kljub vsaj navzven podobnim postopkom – mešanjem improvizacijskega z vnaprej dogovorjenim, morda celo zapisanim (najbrž ne ravno notiranim) – v medsebojni zaporednosti ustvarjajo jasne kontraste, ki se dotikajo tako razpoloženj kot materiala in oblikovalne logike. Prvo delo, skladba Ubiquité švicarsko-francoskega saksofonista, improvizatorja in skladatelja Bertranda Denzlerja, izrašča iz menjavanja in prelivanja tekstur, nekakšnih zastalih zvočnih pokrajin, ki nastajajo s pomočjo zadržanih zvočnosti ali perpetuiranja preprostih zvočnih vzorcev. V zvočnem pogledu je skladba razvita iz homogene celote, v kateri razlika med živimi inštrumentalisti in elektronskimi izvori zvoka postaja vse bolj zabrisana, svoje improvizacijske korenine pa najbolj izdaja na oblikovalni ravni, ki ne sledi logiki jasnejšega zaporedja glavnih vrhov in nižišč. Uporabljeni material je razmeroma raznolik in sega od zadržanih do odrezavih zvočnosti, ki s svojo ostrino ne prizanašajo. Osnovna »pripoved« dela pa ni povezana s sproščanjem in napevanjem izraznega loka, temveč bolj z atmosferskimi kvalitetai zvočnih pokrajin, ki se večinoma zavijajo v gosto sivino.

Tudi drugo delo, The Šalter Roberta Rože, se pričinja z zadržanimi zvoki, ki se razpotegnejo v prave pedale, v katere potem kot nekakšne kapljice padajo drugi zvočni okruški. Takšno zvočno nižišče se s postopnim zgoščanjem »kapljic« spreminja v punktualistično pokrajino, kar pripelje do zgostitve s tipičnimi jazzovskimi solažami (klavir, saksofon). Skladba nato ponikne v novo nižišče, v katerem lahko razpoznamo telesne

glasove Irene Tomažin Zagoričnik, čemur sledijo drugi raztrgani fragmenti. The Šalter se torej pričinja s podobnimi zvočnimi zamislami, kot smo jih srečali že pri Denzlerju, vendar se Roža odpoveduje linearnosti in bolj zaupa strukturi jasnih dveh vrhov, do katerih glasba vodi iz nižišča prek stopnjevanj/zgoščevanj.

Tretje delo, *Common Ground Altogether* hrvaškega umetnika Roka Crnića, takoj pričinja s kontrastom v materialu. V ospredju je ritmično utripanje glasov, ki pa se postopoma pomikajo vozadje in postajajo matrica za vstopne drugih, bolj ekspresivnih, podaljšanih zvokov. V tem primeru je elektronska narava teh zvočnosti postavljena v jasno odbojno razmerje z začetnimi človeškimi glasovi, medtem ko se v tretjem odseku skladbe glasovi popolnoma umaknejo prelivajočim se zvočnim pokrajinam nasičenih in temnih kvalitet

Zadnje delo je plod Tomaža Groma in nosi naslov *Pet spominov*. Delo je podobno kot Šalter Roberta Rože ujetu med viške in nižišča, pri čemer pa se zdi kvalitativna neuravnoteženost obeh izmenjujočih se odsekov del konceptualnega premisleka. Viški delujejo kot precej tipični izbruhi divje improvizacije, kjer imata gostota in volumen zvoka prednost pred preglednostjo, zato so ti izbruhi precej pričakovani. Medtem ko se zdijo takšni vrhunci mimobežni, pa so veliko bolj subtilno oblikovana nižišča. Ta vsebujejo vrsto filigranskih premikov in odvodov zvočnosti, ki gradijo nežne in izrazito ekspresivne zvočne pokrajine. Na ta način kontrastni foliji druga drugo izpodbijata in ju je mogoče razumeti kot metaforo celotnega ploščka, kot razpetost med svobodo in nujne omejitve, ki vodijo do avtorstva.

Plošča tako v celoti nakazuje, da znotraj nadzorovane improvizacije (namenoma aludiram na kontrolirano aleatoriko) obstaja dovolj prostora za različne formalne, oblikovne in vsebinske rešitve, kar hkrati pomeni, da je mogoče na ta način presegati ozke akademske omejitve in tudi vseenost maksime *anything goes*. Obračuna tudi s pomisleki, da improvizacije ne nosi nikakršna logika, a se hkrati ne podreja popolnemu shematizmu in ujetosti. Zgoščanka je zato več od preproste fiksacije improvizacije – prinaša štiri Dela. Ob bok zapisanemu gotovo ne gre prezreti izjemnega oblikovanja naslovnice, iz katere je mogoče prebrati (ali tudi ne, pri čemer je zadnji dostavek mišljen dobesedno) kako izmed osnovnih ideoloških vodil članov ansambla, kakor tudi ne spremnega besedila, v katerem Primož Trdan smiselno razgrinja proces specializacije nove glasbe, ki je postopoma pripeljal do nekakšne elitističnosti, razločenosti med posameznimi glasbeniški »poklici« in tudi med glasbo in občinstvom. Vendar se ob tem zastavlja vprašanje, ali Šalter ensemble res prekinja s takšno specializacijo ali pa gre le za naslednji odjek iste specializacije – v ansamblu so vendarle nabrani predvsem vrhunski specialisti proste improvizacije. Če je možna tudi ta optika, potem kljub povsem drugačni procesni logiki, vsebinskemu premisleku in morda tudi družbenemu angažmaju tudi v takšnem »žanru« močno odmeva podobna, v temelju modernistična podmena kot v sodobni komponirani glasbi, namenjeni specializiranim ansamblom.

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New CD or digital stream, available on the Bandcamp portal of the Sploh Institute brings to the fore a number of questions raised by contemporary music-creative practice from this and that side of the apparent dualism between the academic and the alternative, an ambivalent opposition that could be further simplified to a veritable caricature and labelled as a conflict between the notated/composed and the improvised. The CD presents *Four Works* (<https://sploh.bandcamp.com/album/tiri-dela>) by the Salter Ensemble (<https://www.sploh.si/si/glasba/projekti/salter-ensemble>), which stand at the intersection of this contrived duality. As the title, *Four Works*, suggests, we are dealing with complete

"works of art", i.e. "artefacts", which, immortalised on CD, can in no way escape the most classical historicization and can also quite easily fall prey to analytical and other phenomenological, "pure" gazes, including musicological expertise, i.e. analysis. But the members of the Šalter ensemble, well-known improvisers of different genre provenances, generations and national origins, very skillfully move all the time somewhere in between - they enter "composition" mainly through the experience of outstanding improvisers, but at the same time they limit their freedom to a certain extent. Perhaps terms like bend, control, exploit, smooth, etc. would be more appropriate. Listening to the CD, one can recognise both the improvisational source and its taming, its placement in currents, which are still sufficiently broad and content-rich. It almost seems that such an approach offers a miraculous solution for contemporary music, which is lost in an opaque sea of possible repertoire, which, precisely because of its all-encompassing nature, is sinking into indifference, and procedures, also stretched across an opaque ocean, which stretches from the most sophisticated algorithmic setups and computer processes to the completely free unbundling of improvisation.

The CD surprised me because it could be listened to with many ears. At first I felt I could not separate it from contemporary composed music, soon after that I could still place it in the context of contemporary improvised music, and finally the fantasticness of a journey that takes the best both worlds have to offer revealed itself to me. Much of the merit can be attributed to the sensible arrangement of the four movements, which, despite being at least superficially similar procedures - mixing the improvisational with the pre-arranged, perhaps even the written (probably not exactly notated) - in their mutual sequence create clear contrasts that touching on moods as well as material and design logic.

The first work, *Ubiquité* by Swiss-French saxophonist, improviser and composer Bertrand Denzler, grows out of the alternation and overlapping of textures, a kind of frozen soundscapes created by means of suspended sonorities or the perpetuation of simple sound patterns. Sonically, the piece is developed from a homogeneous whole, in which the distinction between live instrumentalists and electronic sound sources becomes increasingly blurred, and its improvisational roots are most betrayed at a formative level that does not follow the logic of a clearer sequence of main peaks and troughs. The material used is relatively varied, ranging from restrained to cutting sonorities that do not spare in their sharpness. The basic 'narrative' of the work, however, is not about relaxing and stretching the expressive arc, but rather about the atmospheric qualities of the soundscapes, which are mostly shrouded in dense greyness.

The second work, Robert Rosa's *The Šalter*, also begins with restrained sounds, which unfold into real pedals, into which other pebbles of sound then fall like droplets. This sonic low point gradually thickens as the "droplets" turn into a punctualist landscape, which leads to a thickening with typical jazz solos (piano, saxophone). The piece then sinks into a new low point, in which we can recognise the bodily voices of Irena Tomažin Zagoričnik, followed by other fragmented fragments. The Šalter thus begins with similar sonic ideas to those we have already encountered in Denzler, but Rosa abandons linearity and trusts more to the structure of clear two peaks, to which the music leads from the low through gradations/thickenings.

The third work, *Common Ground Altogether* by Croatian artist Roko Crnić, starts immediately with contrast in material. The rhythmic pulsation of the voices is in the foreground, but gradually moving into background and become a matrix for the entrance of other, more expressive, extended sounds. In this case, the electronic nature of these sonorities is placed in a clear reflective relationship with the initial human voices, while in

the third section of the piece the voices are completely withdrawn to the overlapping soundscapes of saturated and dark qualities

The last work is by Tomaž Grom and is entitled *Five Memories*. The work, like Robert Roža's *Šalter*, is caught between highs and lows, but the qualitative imbalance of the two alternating sections seems to be part of the conceptual reflection. The highs come across as fairly typical bursts of wild improvisation, where density and volume of sound take precedence over transparency, so these bursts are rather expected. While such peaks seem to be out-of-bounds, the lows are much more subtly shaped. These contain a series of filigree shifts and discharges of sonority that build delicate and highly expressive soundscapes. In this way, the contrasting foils challenge each other and can be seen as a metaphor for the whole record, as a split between freedom and the necessary constraints that lead to authorship.

The album as a whole thus suggests that within controlled improvisation (I am deliberately alluding to controlled aleatorics) there is room for a variety of formal, formative and contextual solutions, which at the same time means that in this way it is possible to transcend both the narrow academic constraints and the omnipresence of the maxim anything goes. It also addresses the concerns that improvisation is not carried by any logic, but at the same time is not subject to complete schematism and entrapment. The CD is therefore more than a simple fixation of improvisation - it brings four Works. This aside, one should certainly not ignore the exceptional design of the cover, from which one can read (or not, the last addition being meant literally) one of the basic ideological precepts of the ensemble members, nor the accompanying text, in which Primož Trdan sensibly unravels the process of specialisation of new music, which gradually led to a kind of elitism, a distinction between individual musical "professions", and also between music and the audience. However, this raises the question of whether the *Šalter Ensemble* is really breaking with such specialisation, or whether it is just another echo of the same specialisation - the ensemble is, after all, made up primarily of top-notch free improvisation specialists. If this optic is also possible, then, despite the completely different procedural logic, conceptual reflection and perhaps also social engagement, also in such a "genre" resonates strongly with a similar, fundamentally modernist undercurrent as in contemporary composed music intended for specialised ensembles.

Gregor Pompe, Presežnost vmesnosti

SLO

Pred nami je zvočni zapis špila dvanajstčlanskega kolektiva, ki je nastal po njegovem večletnem obstoju in razvoju in v svoji zasnovi stoji na več glasbenih presečiščih. Pisec spremnega besedila **Primož Trdan** ga na primer umešča v mešan kontekst protislovnih razmerij med sodobno komponirano glasbo in njenimi orkestri na eni ter velikimi zasedbami improvizatorjev na drugi strani. Novinarja pričujočega radia sta ob sicer navdušenem komentarju nastopa **Šalter Ensembela** na festivalu **Jazz Cerkn** leta 2017 na kratko potožila o občasni kompozicijski omejenosti žive improvizirane igre. Na pogovoru ob isti priložnosti pa so nekateri akterji ob nastajanju projekta spregovorili o nekakšni napetosti med kompozicijskimi postopki in nepopolnim poznavanjem članov kolektiva, v katerega so vstopili iz različnih glasbenih okolij.

Šalter Ensemble je eden od produktov dolgoletnih sodelovanj švicarskega glasbenika **Jonasa Kocherja** z glasbeniki širšega prostora Balkana, osnoval pa ga je skupaj z vodjo srbskega festivala **Ring Ring** ter lokalnimi organizacijami, kot so **Zavod Sploh**, Jazz

Cerkno in **Studentski centar Zagreb**. Sodelovanje mnogih koproducentov je povezano z dejstvom, da je v zasedbo vključen širok spekter glasbenikov in glasbenic iz Švice, Slovenije, Hrvaške in Srbije, kar logistično pomeni redke in intenzivne priložnosti za zbiranja, vaje in nastope.

Med prvim, ki se je zgodil maja 2017 v Zagrebu po tednu intenzivnih vaj in priprav, in zadnjim nastopom januarja 2019, ki je bil posnet v **Španskih borcih**, posnetek pa izdan pred dobrim mesecem dni, se je z enoletnim premolkom zvrstilo še šest, večinoma festivalskih nastopov. Če beremo nekatera pričevanja tako z gostovanj kot s samih priprav ob nastanku ansambla, izstopa ravno v kolektiv in njegovo spoznavanje usmerjena pozornost. Kar je sicer pomemben poudarek ob dejstvu, da je ta nastal z namenom izvajanja kompozicij, saj so njegovi člani vešči predvsem glasbene improvizacije.

Zanimivo bi bilo vedeti, kako se je vključevanje slednje v skladateljske zamisli odražalo v dosedanjem življenju ansambla oziroma predvsem v njegovih koncertnih izvedbah, v katerih naj bi se po začetni fleksibilnosti material v večji meri ustalil v enotnih formah. A že s samega posnetka je razvidno ne le, da te ohranjajo razgibanost, ampak tudi, da presegajo zbanaliziran razmislek o razmerju med kompozicijo in improvizacijo. V nekaterih drugih primerih se pogovori o tem razmerju znajo zavrteti celo okoli procentov in kvantitativnega merjenja, a se Šalter tovrstnim banalnostim izogne tudi z jasno karakterizacijo svojih štirih skladb, ki jih nosijo razlike predvsem v osredotočanju na zvočnost, trajanje, časovno dinamiko, pa tudi razgibanost v glasnosti.

Časovnost ali kar pulz je, na primer, v ospredju v kompozicijah **Ubiquité Bertranda Denzlerja** in **Common Ground Altogether Roka Crnića**. Prvi je na ta način elegantno reševal svoje nepoznavanje vpletenih in jim določil le trajanje vpadov, ti pa se vsebinsko še dodatno razpenjajo med neprekinjene zvone, na primer Kochovega akordeona ali vokala **Irene Tomažin**, in perkusivne oziroma repetitivne vzorce, pri katerih še posebej dramatično učinkujejo klavirske fraze izpod prstov **Marine Džukljevič**. Kljub blokovski razbitosti skladba dosega dinamiko predvsem s hitrimi odzivi na predhodne odločitve, monotona celota pa tako dobi izredno živahno strukturo v notranjih povezavah polminutnih kosov. Kompozicija Roka Crnića pa si, na drugi strani, za izhodišče izbere počasen dramatičen lok od začetnega zborovskega kolektiva, iz katerega se ansambel počasi razpusti v kolektivno instrumentalno stopnjevito dromljanje.

Če na ta način kompozicija *Common Ground Altogether* odpre možnost kolektivni improvizaciji z minimalnimi sredstvi počasnega razvoja, pa na razpon improvizacije in vnaprej določenih vlog še najbolj stavi skladba **The Šalter Roberta Rože**. Srbski elektrofonik je svojo grafično kompozicijo blokovsko razdelil na posamezne podzasedbe, v njihovo stopnjevano prelivanje pa zareže nekaj na plošči sicer redkih solističnih trenutkov sredi ognjevite prostojazzovske kombinacije bobna, klavirja in saksofona. Podobno je na bolj odprti kolektivni vključenosti ansambla gradil **Tomaž Grom**, ki pa je v skupinsko ustvarjanje vključil dele svoje elektroakustične kompozicije in ob tem poskrbel za po glasnosti najbolj dinamičen kos celotne plošče. Ta morda ni mogla zaobjeti vseh zvočnih zamisli, s katerimi Šalter Ensemble še vedno deluje predvsem kot za oder in skupinsko delo zasnovan organizem. A s prepoznavnimi kompozicijskimi karakteristikami in skupinsko uigranostjo posnetek ponudi izdelan in širok zvočni razpon tudi po tej poti.

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Here is the sound recording of a twelve-member collective, formed after its existence and development over several years, which is based on several musical intersections in its conception. The author of the accompanying text, Primož Trdan, for example, places it in the mixed context of the contradictory relations between contemporary composed music and its orchestras on the one hand, and large ensembles of improvisers on the other. The two journalists of this radio programme, while commenting enthusiastically on the performance of the Šalter Ensemble at the Jazz Cerkno festival in 2017, briefly lamented the occasional compositional limitations of live improvised music. In a conversation on the same occasion, some of the players at the time of the project's creation spoke of a certain tension between compositional processes and the incomplete knowledge of the members of the collective, which they had joined from different musical backgrounds.

Šalter Ensemble is one of the products of Swiss musician Jonas Kocher's long-standing collaborations with musicians from the wider Balkans, and was founded by Kocher together with the head of Serbia's Ring Ring festival and local organisations such as Zavod Sploh, Jazz Cerkno and Studentski Centar Zagreb. The participation of many co-producers is linked to the fact that the ensemble includes a wide range of musicians from Switzerland, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, which logistically means rare and intensive opportunities for gatherings, rehearsals and performances.

Between the first, which took place in Zagreb in May 2017 after a week of intensive rehearsals and preparations, and the last performance in January 2019, which was recorded at the Spanish Fighters Ljubljana and the recording released just over a month ago, there have been six more, mostly festival performances, with a gap of one year. Reading some of the testimonies, both from the tours and from the preparations at the time of the ensemble's creation, it is the focus on the collective and getting to know it that stands out. This is an important emphasis, given that the ensemble was created with the intention of performing compositions, as its members are primarily skilled in musical improvisation.

It would be interesting to know how the integration of the latter into the composer's ideas has been reflected in the ensemble's life so far, or especially in its concert performances, in which, after initial flexibility, the material is supposed to have settled down to a greater extent into uniform forms. But it is clear from the recording itself not only that these retain their variety, but also that they go beyond a generalised reflection on the relationship between composition and improvisation. In some other cases, discussions of this relationship can even revolve around percentages and quantitative measurements, but Šalter avoids such banalities by clearly characterising his four compositions, which are characterised by their differences, above all, in their focus on sonority, duration, temporal dynamics, as well as their variegation in loudness.

Temporality, or pulse, is, for example, at the forefront in Bertrand Denzler's *Ubiquité* and Roko Crnić's *Common Ground Altogether*. The former elegantly resolves his ignorance of the people involved in this way, assigning them only the duration of the invasions, while the latter are further stretched in content between continuous sounds, for example of Kocher's accordion or Irena Tomažin's vocals, and percussive or repetitive patterns, in

which the piano phrases from under Marina Djukljević's fingers have a particularly dramatic effect. Despite the block-like fragmentation, the piece achieves dynamism mainly through quick reactions to previous decisions, and the monotonous whole thus acquires an extremely lively structure in the internal connections of the half-minute pieces. Roko Crnić's composition, on the other hand, takes as its starting point a slow dramatic arc from the initial choral collective, from which the ensemble slowly dissolves into a collective instrumental stair-step rumble.

If in this way *Common Ground Altogether* opens up the possibility for collective improvisation with minimal means of slow development, Robert Rosa's *The Šalter* relies even more heavily on the range of improvisation and predetermined roles. The Serbian electrophonist has divided his graphic composition into individual sub-sections in a blocky fashion, and cuts into their graded overlapping with some solo moments, otherwise rare on the album, amidst a fiery free-jazz combination of drum, piano and saxophone. Tomaž Grom similarly built on the more open collective involvement of the ensemble, incorporating parts of his electroacoustic composition into the group creation, while providing the most dynamic piece of the whole album in terms of volume. It may not have been able to encompass all the sonic ideas that still make the Šalter Ensemble function primarily as a stage and group organism. But with its distinctive compositional characteristics and group coherence, the recording offers an elaborate and wide sonic range even along this path.

[Aleš Rojc](#), Radio Student Ljubljana

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Инициатором проекта Šalter Ensemble, в котором занято двенадцать человек из четырех стран, стал швейцарский аккордеонист Йонас Кохер. Его организаторские способности поражают, и вот почему. Во-первых, больших составов, играющих подобную экспериментальную электроакустическую импровизационную музыку, в принципе не очень много. Во-вторых, участники ансамбля, преимущественно люди с импровизационной сцены, исполняют написанные заранее композиции друг друга, а это требует репетиций и взаимопонимания. В-третьих, найти общую почву под ногами музыкантов из Словении, Хорватии, Сербии и Швейцарии — хотя бы в буквальном смысле, для тех же репетиций — не так легко. Зато при успехе удастся не только познакомить участников ансамбля между собой, но и дать шанс малоизвестным музыкантам стать услышанными за пределами своих стран.

Состав ансамбля окончательно утрамбовали весной 2017 года, после чего коллектив дал несколько концертов. Одно из них, выступление для Словенского национального радио в январе 2019-го, и превратилось в альбом «Štiri dela». Открывается он пьесой «Ubiquité» швейцарского саксофониста Бертрана Денцлера, которая сразу настраивает на серьезный лад. Музыканты внимательно следуют партитуре композиции. Она держит исполнителей в напряжении и предлагает поработать с отточенными фразами небольшой длины, вплоть до отдельных звуков, которые стремительно и решительно сменяют друг друга. Через некоторое время на первый план выходит монотонная структура, образуемая этими фразами. Каждый музыкант получает возможность проявить себя в небольших сольных фрагментах и найти свое

место в коллективном звуке. Материал помогает раскрыть и личности двенадцати человек — исполнители, как и извлекаемые ими звуки, очень разные, но тем не менее вместе создают единую картину.

Композиция «*The Šalter*» принадлежит руке электронщика Роберта Рожи. В ней музыканты по-хорошему расслаблены и чувствуют себя вольготно. Музыка дрейфует от текстурных длинных звуков к свободной импровизации через короткий фри-джазовый всплеск с мощным соло Денцлера на тенор-саксофоне. Следующий номер «*Common Ground Alltogether*» по замыслу его автора, хорватского бас-гитариста Роко Црнича, показывает точки соприкосновения музыкантов с необычной стороны — через ритмичные коллективные паттерны голосом. Потихоньку голоса перемешиваются со звуками инструментов, а ритм превращается в гудящую массу, стирающую какие бы то ни было границы между участниками ансамбля. Завершающая альбом композиция словенского контрабасиста Томаша Грома «*Pet spominov / Five Memories*» и убаюкивает, и оглушает — слушателю надо быть готовым к неожиданным динамичным сменам фактур и настроений. Этот номер словно закольцовывает альбом: если вначале сосредоточенность требовалась только от музыкантов, то к финалу и аудитория неизбежно включается в активное слушание.

На протяжении всей записи Šalter Ensemble не только оперирует классическими приемами свободной импровизации, но и забирается в структуры академической музыки, и экспериментирует с электроникой — а главное, играет легко и изящно, что дорогого стоит. Именно сфокусированность и заинтересованность такого большого числа музыкантов в коллективной игре делают эту запись впечатляющей.

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The Šalter Ensemble, with twelve members from four countries, was initiated by the Swiss accordionist Jonas Kocher. His organisational skills are astonishing, and here's why. Firstly, large ensembles playing this kind of experimental electro-acoustic improvisational music are not very numerous in principle. Secondly, the ensemble members, mostly people from the improvisational scene, perform each other's pre-written compositions, and this requires rehearsals and mutual understanding. Thirdly, finding common ground among musicians from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland - at least literally, for the same rehearsals - is not easy. However, if they are successful, they not only get the ensemble members to know each other but also give lesser-known musicians a chance to be heard outside their own countries.

The ensemble's line-up was finalised in the spring of 2017, after which the group gave several concerts. One of them, a performance for Slovenian National Radio in January 2019, turned into the album *Štiri Dela*. It opens with *Ubiquité* by Swiss saxophonist Bertrand Denzler, which immediately sets the mood for seriousness. The musicians closely follow the score. It keeps the performers in suspense and invites them to work with honed phrases of short length, down to individual sounds, which change swiftly and decisively. After a while the monotonous structure formed by these phrases comes to the fore. Each musician is given the opportunity to express himself in small solo fragments and

find his place in the collective sound. The material helps to reveal the personalities of the twelve persons - the performers as well as the sounds they produce are very different, but nevertheless together they create a unified picture.

The composition *The Šalter* comes from electronic musician Robert Roža. In it the musicians are nicely relaxed and feel at ease. The music drifts from textured long sounds to free improvisation through a short free-jazz splash with Denzler's powerful tenor saxophone solo. The next number, *Common Ground Altogether*, as conceived by its author, Croatian bassist Roko Crnic, shows the points of contact between the musicians from an unusual angle - through rhythmic collective patterns of voice. Slowly the voices mingle with the sounds of the instruments, and the rhythm becomes a buzzing mass, blurring any boundaries between the band members. Slovenian double bassist Tomas Grom's *Pet spominov / Five Memories* concludes the album, both lulling and deafening - the listener should be prepared for unexpected, dynamic shifts in textures and moods. This number seems to close the loop of the album: if at the beginning the sole focus was required from the musicians, then by the finale the audience inevitably becomes an active listener.

Throughout the entire recording, the Šalter Ensemble not only operates with the classical techniques of free improvisation, but also delves into the structures of academic music and experiments with electronics - and, most importantly, plays with ease and grace, which is worth the trouble. It's the focus and interest of so many musicians in playing together that makes this an impressive recording.

Ilija Belorukov, Jazzist