

šalter ensemble

3 dela

Composing for the New Millennium

The role of a composer contains certain contradictions. It is a role of great freedom but, at the same time, negotiations and coordination between desire and effect. Creativity as such wagers on a break and novelty, but it is also part of continuity. Composing means directing a work, its encoding, form and purpose, and manoeuvring between the desires, expectations and abilities of the work's performers and listeners, between various acoustic and social spaces of listening. In line with Adorno's metaphor of a "message in a bottle", it means surrendering music to its unimaginable future.

The metaphor also suggests that the composer's role is independent, strongly drawing on the notion of composers as autonomous artists, a notion characteristic of a narrow place and window of time in history: 19th-century Western art music. Beyond this framework, composers are more closely and differently involved in the phenomenon of music. Before the 19th century, a finished and written work was not the central concept of musical culture but only one of the factors of a performance or an event. In the 19th century, the emphasis shifted to works that were more precisely written down; instead of using Italian adjectives for tempos, Beethoven, in particular, attempted to introduce measurable metronome markings; performances were supervised by increasingly more important conductors and the criterion of a good performance was its faithfulness to the composer's text, *Werktreue*. In the 20th century, this demand reached its extreme and, at the same time, triggered a series of negations that opened up the composer's increasingly stricter control over the material. The open form and indeterminacy allowed the interpreter not only to make their own decisions, but also to have a deeper, more exploratory relation with the musical work, thus bringing them closer to a composer. The influence of sound art and the installation, performative form could change the composer's view of the ritual of a performance. The invention and general spread of recording technology, phonofixation, threw musical notation into question, even though a special cognitive dissonance prevailed among composers: the search for new sonorities continued to take place on paper and only partly with the use of new sound technology.

In this line of thinking, we have to move away from the canon of Western composers since modernisms were also realised outside it. Jazz composers did not leave behind bodies of works that could simply be reproduced, a sealed cultural treasure, an American version of classical music. They did not submit to musical notation; there was no clear line between the author and the performer, rather a field of searching between the collective and the individual opened up. That does not mean that a jazz musician or arranger worked out the sound any less, but rather that they shifted the emphasis from the notation to the musical personas of their ensemble. With his assistants, Ellington composed for musicians, not instruments. In his arrangements, he did not mark individual lines with instruments but with the name of the musician that would perform the part. Mingus planned his works well, he thought over the polyphony of the lines, but did not write that down; instead, he played or sang to the musicians their line and they had to memorise it and then perform it with the conviction that it was also their music. From the system of composing classical music, in which he was briefly involved, Mingus adopted the mode of an ensemble operating as a workshop where different musicians, instrumentalists and composers can try out their ideas with their colleagues. We also come across this idea in the case of the AACM. Muhal Richard Abrams noted: "Basically, musicians are performers, composers and all, at the same time. You write music when you stand up and practice your instrument."

At the same time, the 20th century was also a century of great social conflicts and political revolutions, which is why composing could hardly remain self-isolated from society. Before the 19th century, the social role of a composer put them in the service of the aristocracy or the church, but, with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes, composers, more than the other musicians, became free individuals, autonomous artists liberated from serving a social authority. In the 20th century, this role of a free decision making and communicating imposed on the composer the role of a social seismograph. Attali explained composing – and, actually, music more broadly – as a symbolic channelling of violence. The extreme, avant-garde line demanded that every composition think about a social problem. At the same time, the mainstream concert sector expected something similar: for a performance or release of a work, the composer must also provide a written commentary, a manifesto, an explanation of their "message".

In the 21st century, composing can therefore hardly persist with the model of 19th-century Western art music. It must take a position on the opening of form and material, decide on the notation and the degree of strictness and freedom in implementing the notation, think about the collectiveness of the phenomenon of music and confront technology and social meanings. In one way or another. By opening, closing, accepting, limiting.

The composers of the three new works by Šalter Ensemble, who are also its members, bring heterogeneous experiences to the repertoire, from classical studies, researching through improvisation, working with electronics, the practice of sound art and playing jazz to creating in other media. Their works reached their final, performed form through the musicians' cooperation – from the initial idea, which the ensemble tested, developed, adapted and perfected in an intense period of rehearsals, workshops of sorts. In the composition *My Wish Your Command*, Tomaž Grom establishes a relation between a mechanically triggered small drum and the ensemble, which, through the musical and

sound relations, quickly develops into a relation between leading and following, between social hierarchies and forces: "The combining and manipulating of sound elements reflects the complexity of the interactions between an individual and society and encourages one to reflect on how individual initiatives face outside pressures and how one can retain one's autonomy and integrity in this dialogue."

At first, Elisabeth Harnik envisioned a more precisely written work, but discarded the idea after meeting the musicians and created the composition *šum II*, which is based on the creative improvisational abilities of the ensemble's musicians: "The 'skeleton' of the piece is a fixed formal sequence. The verbal instructions for the collective shaping of the given structure allow for extended interpretations that put 'flesh on the bones' of the basic idea. Within the 'defined freedom', the composition experiences a multifaceted colouring through the collective and individual contributions of the musicians. The poem *Mushrooms* by Sylvia Plath functions as a guide-line for the improvisational participation. A remnant – or waste – of the initially planned piece, which provided for fixed pitch material with indications of the noise component including fixed instrumentation, can be heard at the end of the piece: Double stops of the violin, sounding as if from afar, accompanied by breathing sounds of the drum."

Jonas Kocher and Gaudenz Badrutt wrote *Interstices / Interferences* with a text score that enables the musicians to freely decide on the material, which can range from melodic fragments to static sonorities. Their interference in the music that is repeatedly established anew took place through their basic use of technology: "From time to time, a randomly generated light signal tells the musicians to interrupt the music or make it disappear into silence. These events occur at unpredictable moments, each time giving the music the chance to start again in a different direction."

That is how the four composers of the three works respond to the dilemmas of composing today and their responses have a common feature. The technology they use is brought from their home closets or drawers and does not require the cooperation of any large institution. The political moments of the compositions communicate with shared life experiences, rather than with determinable theoretical connections. Musical material is not created on a composer's desk, but in an encounter, an agreement and also improvisation. The creators have a bottom-up way of thinking; they do not seek definite answers but individual solutions to composing for the new millennium.

Komponiranje za novo tisočletje

Vloga skladatelja vsebuje določena protislovja. Je vloga velike svobode, a hkrati pogajan in usklajevanj med željo in učinkom. Ustvarjalnost kot takšna stavi na prelom in novost, a je del kontinuitete. Skladanje pomeni usmerjanje dela, njegovega kodiranja, oblike, namena, manevriranje med željami, pričakanji in sposobnostmi izvajalca in poslušalca dela, med različnimi akustičnimi in družbenimi prostori poslušanja. V adornoški prisposodbi »sporočila v steklenici« pomeni prepuščanje glasbe njeni nezamisljivi prihodnosti.

Ta prisposodba napeljuje tudi k miselnosti, da je skladateljeva vloga samostojna, pri čemer se močno nanaša na idejo skladatelja kot avtonomnega umetnika, na značilno idejo ozkega prostora in časovnega okna zgodovine: zahodne umetne glasbe 19. stoletja. Onkraj tega okvirja je skladatelj tesneje in na drugačne načine vpet v pojav glasbe. Poprej dokončano in zapisano delo ni bil osrednji pojem glasbene kulture, ampak eden od faktorjev nastopa, dogodka. 19. stoletje poudarek prestavi k delu, ki je natančneje zapisano, namesto italijanskih pridevnikov za tempe posebej Beethoven poskusi uporabljati metljive metronomske oznake, nad izvedbo bdi vse pomembnejši dirigent, merilo dobre izvedbe pa je zvestoba skladateljevemu tekstu, *Werktreue*.

V 20. stoletju ta zahteva prispe do svoje skrajnosti in hkrati sproži vrsto negacij, ki vse bolj strog skladateljski nadzor materiala hkrati tudi razklenjejo. Odrta forma in nedoločena interpretu dopuščata ne le lastne odločitve, ampak globlji, razisku-

Primož Trdan



joč odnos z glasbenim delom in ga približujeta skladatelju. Vpliv zvočne umetnosti, instalacijske, performativne forme lahko spremeni skladateljev pogled na ritual izvedbe. Izum in splošno razširjenje snemalne tehnologije, fonofiksacije pod vprašaj postavita zapisovanje glasbe, čeprav v skladateljskih krogih obvelja posebna kognitivna disonanca: iskanje novih zvočnosti se še naprej odvija na papirju in le deloma z novo zvočno tehnologijo.

Pri tem razmišljanju je nujen odmik od zahodnega skladateljskega kanona, saj se modernizmi uresničujejo tudi zunaj njega. Jazzovski skladatelji ne puščajo opusov del, ki bi jih preprosto reproducirali, zapečaten kulturni zaklad, ameriško različico klasične glasbe. Ne podrejajo se zapisu glasbe, med avtorjem in izvajalcem ni jasne meje, ampak se odpre polje iskanja med kolektivnim in individualnim. Zato jazzovski skladatelj ali aranžer nič manj ne domisli zvoka, a namesto v notacijo poudarek prestavi na glasbene osebnosti svoje zasedbe. Ellington je s svojimi asistenti skladal za glasbenike, ne za glasbila, v aranžmajih posameznih linij ni označeval z glasbili, ampak z imenom glasbenika, ki je igral part. Mingus je svoja dela dobro načrtoval, premislil je polifonijo linij, a tega ni zapisal, temveč je glasbeniku zaigral ali zapel njegovo linijo, ta si jo je moral zapomniti in nato igrati s prepričanostjo, da je to tudi njegova muzika. Iz kratke vpetosti v klasično kompozicijo je Mingus prevzel način delovanja zasedbe kot delavnice, workshopa, na kateri lahko različni glasbeniki, instrumentalisti, skladatelji preizkusijo svoje ideje s kolegi. To idejo med drugim srečamo pri združenju AACM. Muhal Richard Abrams je razmišljal: »V bistvu so glasbeniki izvajalci, skladatelji, vse to istočasno. Glasbo pišeš takoj, ko greš vadit svoj instrument.«

Hkrati je 20. stoletje tudi stoletje velikih družbenih trenj, političnih revolucij in njihovega globalnega medijskega širjenja, zato tudi skladanje težko ostaja v samoizolaciji, ločeno od družbe. Družbena vloga skladatelja pred 19. stoletjem postavlja v službo plemstva ali cerkve, nato pa z vzponom meščanstva in srednjega sloja skladatelj bolj kot ostali glasbeniki postaja svoboden posameznik, avtonomen umetnik, rešen služenja družbeni avtoriteti. Ta pozicija svobodnega odločanja in sporočanja v 20. stoletju skladatelju naloži vlogo družbenega seizmografa. Attali skladanje – in v resnici glasbo širše – razlaga kot simbolno upravljanje z nasiljem. Skrajna, avantgardna struja postavlja zahtevo, naj vsaka kompozicija premisli problem družbe. V istem momentu pa nekaj podobnega pričakuje tudi sredinski koncertni pogon: skladatelj mora za izvedbo ali izdajo dela predložiti še zapisan komentar, manifest, pojasnilo svojega »sporočila«.

Komponiranje v 21. stoletju zato težko vztraja pri modelu zahodne umetne glasbe 19. stoletja. Opredeliti se mora do odpiranja oblike in materiala, se odločiti glede zapisa, stopnje strogosti in svobode pri izvrševanju zapisa, premisliti kolektivnost glasbenega pojava, se soočiti s tehnologijo in družbenimi pomeni. Na takšen ali drugačen način. Z odpiranjem, zapiranjem, sprejemanjem, omejevanjem.

Skladatelji treh novih del Ansambla Šalter, člani zasedbe, v repertoar prinašajo raznorodne izkušnje: od klasičnega študija, raziskovanja skozi improvizacijsko dejavnost, dela z elektrono, pa do prakse zvočne umetnosti, igranja jazza ali ustvarjanja v drugih medijih. Njihova dela so do končne, izvedene oblike prišla skozi sodelovanje glasbenikov – od prvotne ideje, ki jo je ansambel v intenzivnem obdobju vaj, nekakšnih delavnic, preizkušal, razvijal, prilagajal in dodeloval. Tomaž Grom v skladbi Moja želja, tvoj ukaz vzpostavi razmerje med mehansko sprožanim malim bobnom in ansamblom, ki se skozi glasbene in zvočne odnose hitro razvije v razmerje med vodenjem in sledenjem, med družbenimi hierarhijami in silnicami:

»Združevanje in manipuliranje zvočnih elementov odražata kompleksnost interakcij med posameznikom in družbo ter spodbujata k razmisleku o tem, kako se individualne iniciative soočajo s pritiski od zunaj ter kako lahko v tem dialogu ohranjamo svojo avtonomijo in integriteto.«

Elisabeth Harnik si je sprva zamislila natančneje zapisano delo, kar pa je po srečanju z glasbeniki zavrgla in ustvarila skladbo šum II, ki temelji na ustvarjalnih improvizacijskih sposobnostih glasbenikov ansambla:

»'Skelet' skladbe je določena oblikovna sekvenca. Ustna navodila za skupinsko oblikovanje določene strukture dopuščajo razširjene interpretacije, ki dodajajo 'mesa na kosti' osnovne ideje. Kompozicija znotraj 'definirane svobode' s skupinskimi in posameznikovimi glasbenimi prispevki izkusi večplastno barvanje. Pesem Gobe Sylvie Plath deluje kot vodilo za improvizacijsko udeležbo. Preostanek – ali odpadke – prvotnega načrta skladbe, ki je vključeval določen tonski material z oznakami za elemente hrupa in instrumentacijo, lahko slišimo ob koncu skladbe: dvojemke violine, ki zazvenijo kot iz daljave, pospremljene z zvokom dihanja iz bobna.«

Jonas Kocher in Gaudenz Badrutt sta delo Interstices / Interferences zapisala z besedilno partituro, le-ta glasbenikom omogoča prosto odločanje o gradivu, ki se lahko giblje med melodičnimi okruški in statičnimi zvočnostmi. Njun poseg v vsakič na novo vzpostavljeno glasbo pa se zgodi skozi osnovno rabo tehnologije:

»Od časa do časa naključno generiran svetlobni signal z računalnika sporoči glasbenikom, da naj prekinajo glasbo ali naj ta ponikne v tišino. Ti dogodki se zgodijo nepredvideno in vsakič puščajo možnost, da se glasba začne znova v drugačni smeri.«

Tako štirje skladatelji treh del odgovarjajo na dileme skladanja danes in za te odgovore je nekaj značilno. Tehnologija, ki jo rabijo, je prinesena iz domačih omar, predalov in ne terja sodelovanja katere velike institucije. Politični momenti skladb komunicirajo s skupnimi izkušnjami življenja, mimo določljivih teoretskih povezav. Glasbeni material ne nastane na skladateljevi delovni mizi, ampak v srečanju, dogovoru, tudi improvizaciji. Avtorji razmišljajo »od spodaj navzgor«, ne iščejo dokončnih odgovorov, ampak posamezne rešitve komponiranja za novo tisočletje.

1. Moja želja, tvoj ukaz (Tomaž Grom) 15:39

2. Interstices / Interferences (Jonas Kocher in Gaudenz Badrutt) 18:26

3. "šum II" (Elisabeth Harnik) 16:08

Gaudenz Badrutt (elektronika), Estelle Beiner (violina), Ilia Belorukov (saksofon), Tomaž Grom (kontrabas, elektronika), Elisabeth Harnik (klavir, objekti), Josef Klammer, (bobni, elektronika), Jonas Kocher (harmonika); Samo Kutin (hurdy gurdy), Alfred Lang (trobenta), Irena Z. Tomaziin (glas), Špela Trošt (produkcija, zunanje oko)

Umetniško vodstvo: Kocher in Badrutt, Harnik, Grom

1. in 2. Posnela na Forumu nove glasbe v Filharmoniji v Ljubljani RTV Slovenija. Produkcija fonogramov 2 in 3: © RTV Slovenija
3. Posnel na koncertu v La Singeu, v Bielu/Biennu, 25. maja 2023 Cyril Hassler.
1. Zmiksal: Tomaž Grom
2. in 3. Zmiksal: Ilia Belorukov; Masteriral: Ilia Belorukov

Spremno besedilo: Primož Trdan
Prevod: Maja Lovrenov
Oblikovanje: Matej Stupica in Emil Kozole
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