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Passion & Devotion
Ljubiša Jovanović, flute
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[CD 1 – 75'; CD 2 – 76']¹

My approach to the work of Serbian composers is full of love, passion and commitment, and playing their music makes an important part of my life. My dealing with their work does not derive from a simple need of spending one's everyday life in one's own social milieu. Beyond that, it is a desire to search for esthetic and artistic nuances and shades of our great music. I can say with great joy and pride that this has been my intense preoccupation for the past more than forty years.

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² Ljubiša Jovanović, flute, *Passion & Devotion*

The quoted statement by Ljubiša Jovanović (1957) resolves idiosyncratic harmony with the title of the double audio compact-disc release *Passion & Devotion* published in 2020 by the Metropolis Music Company (Belgrade, Serbia),³ featuring the flute works of Serbian composers performed by this renowned flutist and pedagogue, professor of the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade. Likewise, these intimate and auto-poetical words sum up the perennial artistic effort of the interpreter, which, among other things, implies “passion” towards and “devotion” to Serbian flute music, or – in Miodrag Azanjac's (1932–1997) words – “Serbian flute art”.⁴

Bravely following the path paved by his professor and director of the eminent Flute Choir – the source of inspiration for numerous domestic authors (Enriko Josif [1924–2003], Ivana Stefanović [1948], Ingeborg Bugarinović [1953], etc.) – as well as principles of the influential French flute school, Ljubiša Jovanović “committed” himself to contemporary Serbian music for the flute, thus establishing collaboration with a vast number of composers, commissioning and premiering their pieces and expanding the contemporary flute repertoire, moreover, to Ser-

[double compact-disc], Belgrade, Metropolis Music Company, 107, 2020.

³ The edition was supported by Sokoј – Serbian Music Authors' Organization.

⁴ Миодраг Азањац, *Српска уметности флауџе (фрула – флауџа од искона)* (приређ. Зоран Рајичић), Чачак, Туристичка организација Чачка – Савет Сабора фрулаша Србије “Ој Мораво”, 2018. [Miodrag Azanjac, *Serbian Flute Art (The Pipe – The Primordial Flute)*]

bian music *en général*, simultaneously playing the role of the flutist, pedagogue, conductor and organizer of the music festival *BUNT* (*Belgrade New Artistic Territory* [*Beogradska Umetnička Nova Teritorija*]).⁵

It was the Closing Ceremony of the *BUNT 6.0* festival, which was the birthplace of nine flute 'fantasies', authored by the same number of our composers. During his recital – or, better to say, grandiose venture⁶ – called *Fantasies for solo flute* [*Fantazije za flautu solo*], which took place in Belgrade's Lola Hall on November 9th 2018, Ljubiša Jovanović performed for the first time Ivana Stefanović's *Canto*, Milan Mihajlović's (1945) *My melodies*, Zoran Erić's (1950) *Dedication to Nature* [*Posveta prirodi*], Jugoslav Bošnjak's (1954–2018) *Fantasy for solo flute* [*Fantazija za flautu solo*], Tatjana Milošević's (1970) *Carousel*, Svetlana Savić's (1971) *Fantasy in D* [*Fantazija in Re*], Milana Stojadinović-Milić's (1962) *A Little Cloud on Top of Mount Athos* [*Oblačić na vrhu Atosa*], Draško Adžić's (1979) *Study No. 5*, and Branka Popović's (1977) *The Beam*.

Creating the pieces commissioned by Ljubiša Jovanović for the aforementioned occasion was inseparable from the

explicit or implicit dedication of compositions to the same performer, from the *fantasy* phenomenon (set before the composers in the form of a peculiar 'task'), as well as from the musical language of Telemann's (1681–1767) *Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass* (1732). Namely, the dramaturgical course of this concert represented the alternation between works by Serbian authors (the premieres were 'complemented' by the pinnacles of Serbian flute opus, such as Petar Konjović's [1883–1970] *La flûte de Pan* [*Satirova svirala*, 1945], Dejan Despić's [1930] *Partita* [1975], Dušan Radić's [1929–2010] *Improvisation* [*Improvizacija*, 1986], Enriko Josif's *Ballade* [*Balada*, 1970]) and Telemann's *Fantasias*. The recording of the performance of these compositions during the recital was the starting point of the first CD (recording and master: Dobrivoje Milijanović; producer: Ljubiša Jovanović) titled *Solo Flute* [*Flauta solo*], which, omitting the listed pieces by Konjović, Despić and Telemann, contains eleven solo flute works in total.⁷

The *Passion & Devotion* opens with *Canto* which, according to Ivana Stefanović's own words, represents "a 'retrospective' composition, in many ways", comprising allusions to Telemann's baroque motives and her works previously performed by Ljubiša Jovanović. These words are familiar to us thanks to the programme booklet, published in both Serbian and English (translated by Ranka Gašić), containing the biography of Lju-

⁵ In 2017, Ljubiša Jovanović was awarded the "Aleksandar Pavlović" Award of the Composers' Association of Serbia, for his decade-long activity in promoting Serbian music.

⁶ See: Марија Томић, "Слушај музику – чувај разум" [приказ фестивала БУНТ 6.0], *Полиџика*, 24. XI 2018, 37.729, CXV, додаток *Култура – уметности – наука*, 33, LXII, 6–7, 6. [Marija Tomić, "Listen to Music – Keep Your Mind" /review of the *BUNT 6.0* festival/]

⁷ One should emphasize that *Study No. 5* by Adžić involves an electronics part, since it is a "study of the generative music for flute and electronics", as noted in the score.

biša Jovanović in addition to the remarkable notes on the works, mostly written by composers themselves, to which we will be referring throughout our text. *Canto* resumes the organic type of the flute – voice relationship, which is the source of inspiration for Ivana Stefanović's 'flute oeuvre'.⁸ It is important to note that CD 1 closes with *Ballade* by Enriko Josif, whose favorite instrument was the very flute, to which he allocated his "singing narrations" ["pesmena govorenja"]. Thus, the circle from the first to the last track is completed, linking, in the most natural way, the courses of the following collaborations – Stefanović & Jovanović and Josif & Azanjac, already implying the fact that this edition was thoughtfully prepared in every sense.

And, in between – postmodern playing with citation techniques *par excellence*. For example, the work *My melodies* is a collection of several Mihajlović's themes from his various compositions, including 'Mozart[1756–1791]-like' *Eine kleine Trauermusik* [*Mala žalobna muzika*, 1990], played by Ljubiša Jovanović, among others, at its premiere performance, which makes this piece an important 'dedication' to the inspiring partnership. Melodic phrases and gestures from Telemann's *Fantasy No. 6* are recognizable in Bošnjak's *Fantasy*, "the last work" of the composer, persisting therefore as the historically significant trace of the author's final musical thoughts, as well as in *Carousel* by Tatjana Milošević, inspired

by "mental conditions of vertigo, intoxication, abandon, panic, spasm, ecstasy, or voluptuous disorder – emotions triggered by ecstatic dances".

Three works listed on CD 1 are characterized thanks to the invocation of nature. In Erić's *Dedication*, composed after the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (23–79), it is praised "in all its manifestations". Special attention is also paid to the air/wind, as a source of the flute sound and one of the four natural elements. "In order to build a new nest" from the "flickering notes" of Telemann's *Fantasy No. 7*, Svetlana Savić incorporated in her *Fantasy in D* Nedeljko Terzić's (1949) poem *Tragic Play of Words* (*Tragična igra reči*, 2017), which the flutist recites/whispers along with playing. In the composition *A Little Cloud on Top of Mount Athos* by Milana Stojadinović-Milić, the wind is treated as a phenomenon that "keeps trying to 'banish' [from the top of the Mount Athos] the little cloud, a symbol of peace and quiet – but to no avail", which results in a specific dialogue of this piece with Telemann's *Fantasy No. 8*, distinguished by vocalization.

The first CD also contains Branka Popović's *The Beam*, an 'image' of "a ray of light that breaks through micro rifts, refracting and creating various shapes from lightness and darkness", Draško Adžić's *Study No. 5* as "a result of a software arrangement" of Telemann's *Fantasy No. 1* "reminding on popular fast dance electronic music" where the flute part brings a layer of quarter-tone melody, and Dušan Radić's *Improvisation* – created originally for flute and harp – whose "fluidity with no tonal center" illuminates "elusiveness of a filigree in its airy, lyrical

⁸ See: Stanislava Vuksanović, *Flauta u srpskoj umetničkoj muzici*, Beograd, 1998, author manuscript, 14. [Stanislava Vuksanović, *The Flute in Serbian Art Music*]

flickering”. Radić’s *Improvisation* and Josif’s *Ballade* form a peculiar epilogue of the CD 1, reviving the world of myth, due to the fantasy, improvisational, ballad, and monody principles, resembling, in that sense, Konjović’s piece as well, which strongly resonates with *Syrinx* (1913) by Claude Debussy (1862–1918).

Another work by the same French author also ‘sounds throughout’ the second CD (master: Zoran Jerković; producer: Ljubiša Jovanović). Namely, *Prélude à l’avant-midi d’un faune* for flute and string orchestra [*Preliđ za prepodne jednog fauna za flautu i gudački orkestar*] by Rajko Maksimović (1935), the most performed of all his instrumental compositions around the world, is a “paraphrase” of Debussy’s well-known orchestral piece with the prominent flute part, composed in 1994, that is one century after the premiere of the *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*. Accordingly, the CD 2 is ‘reserved’ for the flute accompanied by the (string) orchestra. In *Concerto sereno* for flute and string orchestra, Op. 110 [*Concerto sereno za flautu i gudački orkestar op. 110, 1993*] the academician Dejan Despić treats the flute in order to create “a musical image of serenity and light”, bearing in mind “all its sound, dynamic and articulating capacities”. The *Unusual scenes from Homer’s grave in Smyrna – New additions to Hans Christian Andersen*, Op. 44, concerto for flute solo, piano, harpsichord, accordion, percussions, string orchestra and a narrator in nine scenes [*Neobične scene sa Homerovog groba u Smirni – novi prilozi za Hansa Kristijana Andersena op. 44, koncert za flautu solo, klavir, čembalo, harmoniku, udaraljke, gudački orkestar i naratora u*

devet slika, 2005] by Ivana Stefanović is an interesting transposition of Andersen’s (1805–1875) fairy tale *A Rose from Homer’s Grave* (1842), whose main characters are a Rose, a Nightingale, and a Poet from the North, i.e. Andersen himself.

Zoran Erić’s *Oberon concerto – Images of Chaos V* for flute and instrumental ensemble [*Oberon koncert – Slike haosa V za flautu i instrumentalni ansambl, 1997*] is based on “transforming the elementary (music) substance in time”, during eight movements performed *attacca*; it is a matter of “stable chaos [...] a self-organizing system”. The whole edition concludes, symbolically, with *Ljubiša’s Flute Antiqua* [*Ljubišina flauta antika*], that is the first movement of Zoran Hristić’s (1938–2019) *Six Belgrade concert images* [*Šest beogradskih koncertnih slika*], the “programmatic orchestral composition which in fact is the author’s homage to geographic and historic ‘sites of memory’ in Belgrade, his birthplace, and to the artists with whom he, during his lifetime, had successful cooperation and created a bound of friendship”, according to Zorica Premate. Thus, the framework of the second CD⁹ be-

⁹ In addition to the soloist, the second CD consists of performances by our prominent ensembles and orchestras, including the Belgrade Strings “Dušan Skovran”, conductor: Aleksandar Pavlović (Track 1 – Maksimović), the “St. George Strings”, conductor: Biljana Radovanović (Track 2 – Despić), the “St. George Strings” and the “Construction Site” Contemporary Music Ensemble, conductor: Biljana Radovanović (Tracks 3 and 4 – Stefanović and Erić), and the Radio Television of Serbia Symphonic Orchestra, conductor: Bojan Sudić (Track 5 – Hristić).

comes more than obvious – a Debussy-like beginning and an ancient-like ending bring us again to the origin of Pan's music, together with the fact that all tracks released on this edition were recorded during live performances.

Speaking about the *Passion & Devotion*, it seems that “passion” and “devotion” are two sides of the same coin. Inspired by the ‘magic flute’ of Ljubiša Jovanović, i.e. the passion engraved in every note he has played, our composers devoted their opuses to the flute, writing – in this case 16 – works particularly for this performer. In that regard, the playing of the mentioned works by Ljubiša Jovanović becomes exemplary, thus making the *Passion & Devotion* a point of reference for their further interpretation. To the stated intersection of different areas, which manifests multiple connotations of this edition, we add one more: creative/interpretative and pedagogical/enlightenment aims. Also, Jovanović's devotion to the every present moment, as the fundament of live performances, complies with his profound commitment to the duration/tradition/vocation. In the first place, it means an understanding of the language of authors from different generations, diverse poetics, styles, genres, and expressive states, although always with

the same focal point – the flute idiom, even if the new sound dimensions were reached through the usage of the extended flute techniques. Besides the glorification of Jovanović's artistic endeavors, the *Passion & Devotion* is a tribute to contemporary (Serbian) flute art, as well as to Serbian music/heritage/history, which is why it represents a valuable contribution to music discography nowadays.

Translated by the author

The recordings took place in Belgrade – in the Sava Center Hall Atrium during the *International Review of Composers* in 1994 (Track 1), the National Museum Atrium during the 75th Anniversary of Dejan Despić's birth in 2005 (Track 2), the Hall of the National Bank of Serbia during the *International Review of Composers* in 2014 (Tracks 3 and 4), and the Ilija M. Kolarac Endowment during the same manifestation held in 2008 (Track 5).