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**Ivan Brkljačić: *From Musical Flow to Musical Form*. Belgrade: Faculty of Music – Rights and Royalties Publishing Company Ltd., 2022, 353 pp.**

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The author of the book-length study *Od muzičkog toka do muzičke forme* [*From Musical Flow to Musical Form*] is the composer and music theorist Ivan Brkljačić, D.Mus. The book was issued by the publishing division of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade in September 2022. Originally, it was intended to serve as a textbook for undergraduate students taking the course in Musical Forms and it is therefore primarily meant for and dedicated to “former, current, and future” students of music (p. 5). However, bearing in mind that the book’s contents and architecture rest on a rationally structured system elaborating relevant concepts, phenomena, and laws pertaining to musical forms, and given its discussion of the problems encompassed in the formal divisions of the book,<sup>1</sup> as well as its constant surveying of the causal links under-

pinning musical flow and musical form, one may argue that the book constitutes not only a worthy addition to the literature used in the teaching of Musical Forms at institutions of higher education in music, but also qualifies as a sort of theoretical study. However we choose to view this book, its author’s guiding idea was the following: “the sooner we accept that we can only follow the musical flow, and that we certainly should not violate it, seeking to translate it into our own ostensibly more logical *modus operandi*, that is, our own language, the sooner we will understand that musical flow” (p. 9).

Bearing in mind that sound, when it is situated within a certain musical context, becomes a musical flow, and that the latter in turn generates a musical form, “which represents a logical consequence of everything that takes place inside that musical flow, within the confines of a certain amount of musical time” (p. 10) – the narrative thread of this book captures their symbiotic connection and proceeds by elaborating the concept of *musical*

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter I: “Definitions”, 15–107; Chapter II: “Formal Types”, 111–308, and Chapter III: “Aspects of Analysing 20th-century Music”, 311–342.

*flow* observed in the interaction between the various grounds of a musical structure. At one point, this subject converges with defining the concept of *musical form* and thereafter continues on its journey toward the interpretation of musical form, that is, musical forms.

### *musical flow – musical form*

The paramount aim of teaching functional music literacy, including musical forms, is to enable the student to understand musical contents in the broadest possible context, in two directions: from a musical score to sound and back – from sound to the score. Audio examples play an important role in the process of acquiring musical experience, which in turn forms a repository of understood and memorized music. Although the book labels them as audio illustrations of certain definitions and interpretations, the works that were selected and stored on the USB drive that forms an integral part of the publication essentially constitute a sort of musical models, which are invaluable in teaching and training students to form and argue their views about musical forms analytically and express them as such. Therefore, it forms a contribution to an educational process of many years that strives to equip its students with a reliable capability for critical thinking in this domain.

Formally, the book comprises three chapters that are further subdivided into subchapters, themselves comprising smaller thematic sections/divisions. In addition, the final section includes two appendices. Also, the book comprises a list of notated and recorded examples, an Index, and a bibliography list. The USB

digital memory storage contains sound recordings of works from a rich selection of musical literature covering almost every musical style as well as multiple genres.

Apart from addressing his readers in person, the author also fashioned his Foreword as a sort of introduction to the subject matter discussed in the book. Above all, he asserts that the purpose of the book is to highlight “the numerous processes that occur on the path that starts from initiating any musical flow whatsoever, its development and attainment of a compact and well-rounded form” (p. 10). Seeking to formulate the main purpose of teaching musical forms, he underscores his book’s contribution to understanding a work of music in aural, visual, and analytical terms, that is, the entirety of its musical flow.

Discussing the concepts of musical flow, musical form, musical components, elements of musical forms, and the structural grounds of a piece of music in the first chapter, titled “Definitions”, Brkljačić also provides explications and definitions of various modalities of segmenting a musical flow, the concepts of equivalence and musical contrasts, and points to different types of (musical) exposition. According to one of the book’s reviewers, Miloš Zatkalik, “the contents of this chapter exceed its title and offer a detailed discussion of elements of form [...]”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the author uses generally established terminological interpre-

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<sup>2</sup> Miloš Zatkalik, “A Review of Ivan Brkljačić’s Book *From Musical Flow to Musical Form*”, Arhiv Centra za izdavačku delatnost, Belgrade, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2022, 2.

tations of relevant concepts and phenomena, expanding and systematizing them in certain segments.

In the second and largest chapter of the book, titled “Formal Types”, the author elaborates on concepts, phenomena, and laws pertaining to musical forms in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century music. In this chapter, he discusses the form and formal typology of musical works ranging from Baroque binary and ternary forms, via Scarlatti’s sonata form, the song form, variations, sonata form, rondo, so-called “unclassified formal types”, to the suite and cyclical, that is, multi-movement formal types. At the same time, Brkljačić is consistent here in implementing his methodology in an “itemized” way, which includes defining the formal type under consideration, its application, history, and formal characteristics. His text includes instructions and suggestions of requisite analytical steps one must take in order to identify and interpret a given musical form.

In the third chapter, the author discusses “aspects of analysing 20<sup>th</sup>-century music”. Without delving into the issues of categorizing and systematizing 20<sup>th</sup>-century musical forms, in two subchapters titled “General Remarks” and “Analytical Understanding of Select Examples from 20<sup>th</sup>-century Music”, he discusses musical works composed in a timeframe extending from before the Great War (1914–1918) to the 1990s, following the idea that “on the eve of World War I certain works of music were written that changed the world as it was at the time” (p. 311). Interestingly, this chapter provides no musical examples, unlike the preceding two chapters. Brkljačić “replaced” them

here with corresponding schematic representations, using them to direct the reader at the sound content of the pieces he chose. Only in this chapter did the author include appendices: the first appendix deals with the “Classification of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Music” – extended tonal and modal music, atonal music, serial music, punctualism, electronic music, chance music, reductionist music, and spectralism – while the second appendix surveys the musical oeuvres of Serbia’s leading 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers.

For decades, Serbian-language literature for teaching Musical Forms as a university-level course has boiled down to the well-known and well-regarded textbook *The Science of Musical Forms*<sup>3</sup> by Dušan Skovran and Vlastimir Peričić, which first came out as early as 1961. Another book that was often included in the curriculum was Berislav Popović’s *Music Form or Meaning in Music*,<sup>4</sup> published in 1998, but on account of its content and purpose it has tended to figure as an additional or supplementary reading in the teaching of Musical Forms. By contrast, the book by Ivan Brkljačić, as a result of his multiple decades’ worth of accumulated theoretical and empirical knowledge and experience, is shaped in line with the current syllabus for teaching musical forms, attesting not only to his profound familiarity with musical form

<sup>3</sup> Dušan Skovran, Vlastimir Peričić, *Nauka o muzičkim oblicima* [*The Science of Musical Forms*], Belgrade, Univerzitet umetnosti, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> Berislav Popović, *Music Form or Meaning in Music*, Belgrade, Clio – Belgrade Cultural Centre, 1998.

as a discipline of music, but also to his accomplishments as a creator of music whose pieces invariably feature well thought-out and solid micro- and macro-forms. According to the author himself, who is therefore a composer in terms of his professional training and primary vocation, his process of working on this book was identical to that of creating his musical works. It begins from an initial idea and a vision of the whole, proceeding through the construction of a macro-whole, working with motives informing the micro-divisions of the text, all the way to “listening out” for and choosing the most representative audio examples. Last but not least, there is the knowledge and experience of Ivan Brkljačić as a pedagogue of music. This breadth of a musical author and pedagogue helped him “form a general view on issues in musical form, which informs this textbook” (p. 9).

From a linguistic perspective, the book is characterized by precision in expression, which is a key factor in enabling one to “understand the aims of the course, survey a musical flow within musical time, and define the specific formal type in a given example from musical literature” (p. 10).

By defining the concepts of musical flow and musical form, their interaction, ways of segmenting them and systems of their (mutual) operation, as well as by interpreting concepts, phenomena, and laws pertaining to musical forms, their characteristics, boundaries, equivalences, musical contrasts, types of (musical) exposition and ways of using them, Ivan Brkljačić fashioned the mosaic of his book, *From Musical Flow to Musical Form*, for the benefit of students studying

at the Faculty of Music. In doing that, he left them with the following motto:

In music,  $2+2$  does not equal 4, but 3.

Whenever we find something in a musical flow that seems illogical, we should return to the equation shown above. It will always remind us that music simply follows different rules (p. 9).