

cal method of resemantization is not applicable in all cases; however, in situations where its application is justified – i.e. in 20th-century works in which one or more tonal centres are clearly distinguished, but which are not based on traditional tonality and hierarchies within it – this method gives relevant results, because it can explain the essence of linguistic-stylistic relations in the observed work and “strategies of reassignment that can turn a certain stylistic constellation into a meaningful statement” (pp. 209–210).

What certainly contributes to the quality of this monograph is the fact that Teparić has been one of the most distinguished music critics in Serbia in recent years, and that he approaches writing about music not only as a music theorist, but also as a curious listener, erudite author and arbiter of musical taste. His work in the domain of music criticism presented through the waves of Radio Belgrade has certainly contributed to the profiling of Teparić’s writing style, which is clear, concise and free of digressions and empty phrases. We hope that this monograph will be translated into English in the foreseeable future, so that its results become available to readers outside of the Balkan region.

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**CD Review: Milan Mihajlović –
Orchestral Works,
cpo, 2019 (cpo 555 296-2), [63:06]**

Last year, the continued interest that the German label cpo has taken in Serbian music for over than 20 years now produced a new CD release dedicated to the Serbian composer Milan Mihajlović (b. 1945). This album, which came out in 2019 under the title of *Milan Mihajlović – Orchestral Works*, provides a cross-section of Mihajlović’s oeuvre featuring works composed from the mid-1980s up to the present and including première performances of several new versions of more recent works by this esteemed composer.

The fact that the album features a selection from the composer’s oeuvre does not diminish the breadth of the insight it provides into his work, because it rests on a sound strategic choice of pieces spanning all three phases of Mihajlović’s mature work, illuminating individual aspects of the postmodern journey he embarked on several decades ago. In that

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sense, the album presents key junctures in Mihajlović's creativity, with a selection of 1980s works based on exploring Scriabin's mode, followed by a selection of works from the 1990s and 2000s based on the introduction of quotation procedures, and rounded off with works from his current, synthetic period. Dispensing with a chronological structure in favour of intertwining the selections foregrounds precisely the continuity of Mihajlović's high artistic achievements in this overall creative retrospective, as well as his unyielding commitment to those character spheres of music that are close to him.

The album opens with the 1986 cycle of *Bagatelles* (Багатели) for violin, strings, and harpsichord – one of Mihajlović's works based on his creative relationship with the Scriabin mode as the generic nucleus of harmonic, thematic, and even colouristic consequences that Mihajlović has used to construct a unique type of musical expression of his own. An eclectic confrontation between idioms hailing from various musical traditions (rhythmic sequences and ostinatos in the harpsichord part surrounding folk-like motives developing in the strings, in movements bearing Baroque labels) is performatively permeated with an expressive charge that, ranging from melancholy to drama, establishes the wide range of characters that is evident in this and later works by Mihajlović. Along with the stylistically close *Elegy* (Елегија) for string orchestra composed three years later (1989), the album also sheds light on other peculiarities in Mihajlović's poetics from this creative period, resting on a sophisticated type of lyricism, resignation, and a need to express, from a post-

historical vantage point, his creative arbitrariness in referencing various strands of musical heritage, confronting folk-like (for the most part in individual motives, often only in terms of association) with artistic idioms, the latter present in the overall orchestral image likewise stemming from resorting to some historically rooted orchestral principles, such as ostinato.

The contemplative character of *Melancholy* in the version for oboe, piano, and string orchestra, composed in 2017 (the piece was originally composed in 2014, in a somewhat different scoring), serves as the album's rest area, as it were, although it could symbolically also act as a sort of *postmodern core* or – along with *Fa-Mi (ly)* from 2013 in its 2017 version for viola, piano, and string orchestra – as the centre of gravity for the surrounding recordings of pieces from earlier stages in Mihajlović's career. If one viewed melancholy as an embodiment of the spiritual condition of the postmodern era, and even as a peculiarity in the emotional profile of Mihajlović himself as its musical spokesperson, one could then argue that in this tellingly titled work, *Melancholy*, sublimating from his experience as a composer, Mihajlović perhaps comes closest to himself. In his recent works, the striking qualities of his melodic lines, his procedures of thematic layering, and his gradual building up toward points of culmination, as constants in Mihajlović's compositional thought, appear hand in hand with a confessional-sounding type of melody, including further refined sonic ideas that gain a special kind of colouristic subtlety in the vibrant movements of the string apparatus.

On this album, melancholy and drama (especially of a tragic slant) as the two character poles of Mihajlović's music are perhaps best organically linked in the processes of intensifying the musical flow and reaching culmination plateaus used in *Memento*, which has already attained a special status in his oeuvre and even in contemporary Serbian art music in general. Dedicated to the memory of Mihajlović's colleague Vasilije Mokranjac (1923–1984),¹ this work further deepens the procedures of postmodern referencing through an intimate kind of interference that Mihajlović sets up with the sonic world of his elder colleague. Still, for a listener unfamiliar with the origins of this work, its captivating quality owes to its wondrous colourism and ethereal flow of musical time, which the composer rather skilfully transforms into a tension-ridden climax in formally clearly delineated waves of a distressed lyric alternating with an open drama. Regarding *Memento*'s complex sonic procedures, it would be pertinent to say that on this album they get a *musically correct* execution in a rather precise reproduction of Mihajlović's musical text, which faithfully evokes the suggestive emotional tension that informs his musical thinking in general...

The new readings of Mihajlović's music that are brought here by the Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt led by the British conductor Howard Griffiths² stand out by the high degree of

tone culture that they demonstrate, as well as their full commitment, which is evident throughout the album in their faithful understanding of the author's intentions and engaged characterization of the musical material. One should emphasize that the universality of Mihajlović's work is affirmed by the evidently pronounced communicative quality of the music itself, which especially comes to the fore on this album by a suggestive performative materialization of this music's best qualities.

Bearing in mind that over the past several years, the music of Milan Mihajlović has attained a more concrete presence on the international music stage (among other things, Mihajlović was composer in residence at the 2014 Chamber Music Festival in Kempten, Germany, and the 2016 Chamber Music Festival in Dijon, France) and that his scores have become more broadly available thanks to the editions of the Cologne-based MVB-Brandstätter, one may conclude that this cpo release constitutes a further contribution to the affirmation of Mihajlović's music beyond the confines of Serbia. Support for this fact has already arrived in the guise of Richard Whitehouse's highly positive review published in *Gramophone* magazine, which begins with the following rhetorical question: might a different geopolitical context have accorded Mihajlović's music greater prominence on the international stage?

¹ In 2016, cpo released a sound recording of a selection of Mokranjac's chamber works (cpo 777 893-2).

² The sleeve notes also list the following soloists: Jan Mráček, violin; Yoriko Ikeya, harpsi-

chord; Juliana Koch, oboe; Robert Starke, piano; and orchestral soloists: Thomas Georgi, violoncello and Klaudina Schulze-Broniewska, violin.