CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN ODESSA: THE FESTIVAL "TWO DAYS AND TWO NIGHTS OF NEW MUSIC" IN APRIL 2017

n April 22-23, 2017 a notable event happened in Odessa, Ukraine, - namely, the 23rd contemporary music festival "Two Days and Two Nights of New Music." This festival has been organized since 1995 by composer Karmella Tsepkolenko and her husband Oleksandr Perepelitsya, who are the directors of the Odessabased Association for New Music. Every year for two days in April the concerts of the festival have started at 4 PM and have continued non-stop until late at night, about 3 or 4 AM, with merely short 15-minute intermissions between each concert. According to Ms. Tsepkolenko, the idea for setting up a festival of such a peculiar format was conceived by her, when she attended one of the first contemporary music festivals of European avant-garde music to be held in the Soviet Union - in Leningrad in 1988 - and after the concerts of the festival finished she and her colleagues met and discussed actively during the wee hours of the night the music heard by them at the festival's concerts. Perhaps this has also been one of the leading factors for the very generous and warm bohemian atmosphere inherent to the Odessa festival, the congenial environment for bringing together composers and performers from different parts of Ukraine, from Russia, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, and from many other countries of Europe, Asia and America. Usually prior to these two days there has been an opening concert (at a regular time format), conferences, master-classes and meetings with some of the guest composers. This has created numerous opportunities for the participants of the festival to meet each other and to develop professional and creative contacts and friendships. Add to this the unforgettable atmosphere of Odessa in its historical center, and then we can fully appreciate the wealth of impressions the participants and attendees of the festival have received upon coming to the numerous musical events of this great artistic endeavor. Since Karmella Tsepkolenko is the president of the Ukrainian section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) and attends the annual World Music Days festivals in the different cities of the world that they are organized, she has developed contacts with some of the most significant composers and performers of contemporary music from many countries. Many such musicians have been invited

to the festival "Two Days and Two Nights of New Music" to perform or to have their music heard there. In various years such composers as Jean-Luc Darbellay from Switzerland, James Clarke of England, Ghennadie Ciobanu and Vladimir Beleaev from Moldova, Mikhail Kokzhayev from Yerevan, Armenia, Dmitri Kapyrin from Moscow, Russia, Rashid Kalimoullin from Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia, Volodymir Huba, Alla Zahaikevich and Alexander Shchetynsky from Kiev and many others have been the participants of this festival. Such performers as Joel Sachs and the Continuum Ensemble from New York and cellist Ivan Monighetti from Switzerland have performed at the festival. One important participant of the festival, who serves as its president, is German percussionist and composer Bernhard Wulff, who comes to Odessa every year to perform at the festival and takes a most active part in the festival's organization. He frequently brings other percussionists with him, including his students, and together they present a lively addition to the festival's program by performing intriguing music by new European and American composers for percussion instruments. The Association for New Music has also hosted other events, including a conference in memory of the famous professor of orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory Yuri Fortunatov, which was organized by Odessa-based musicologist Iouri Semenov, to which many composers and musicologists from many former Soviet republics came, including Fortunatov's former students.

This year the festival presented a broad assortment of trends of contemporary music as exemplified by brilliant performers playing the music of various composers. The first event, which took place on April 21, 2016 was a pre-festival concert in the concert hall of the Odessa Music Academy, performed by musicians from Lviv violinist Lydia Shutko and pianist Oleksandr **Kozarenko** (the latter being primarily a composer). The program consisted of Dmitri Shostakovich's Sonata for Violin and Piano, opus 134 from 1968, the Sonata for Violin and Piano from 1926 by early 20th century Ukrainian composer Boris Lyatoshynsky and the Second Sonata for Violin and Piano by contemporary Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk, written in 1990. All

three sonatas, being tonal in harmony and mostly romantic in their styles, presented varieties of lyrical, epic and at times melodramatic musical moods. This featured a more "accessible" program, in stark contrast to the more complex music to come during the two nights of the festival, in the way of a musical "hors d'oeuvre."

After the concert American composer and bassoonist from New York, Johnny Reinhard, known for being a specialist in microtonal music and the artistic director of the American Festival of Microtonal Music in New York, presented a master-class at the Small Hall of the Odessa Music Academy, which was well-attended by many people, including the visitors and participants of the festival, as well as the faculty members and students of the Music Academy - most notably, bassoonists. Reinhard demonstrated to the audience an assortment of new extended techniques for the bassoon, including microtones, circular breathing, multiphonics and, most notably, taking the bassoon apart and producing unusual yet very musical sound effects on separate parts of the instrument. In addition to that, he gave some very comprehensive explanations and demonstrations of various new microtonal tunings, most notably, his recently invented tuning of 128 tones per octave, all based on extensions of the overtone series to the ninth octave, and performed parts of his compositions for bassoon "Dune" and "Zanzibar", which involved many of these techniques. Finally, he presented a demonstration of improvisation on the bassoon, asking a few of the bassoon students to accompany him, which resulted in a brilliant improvisatory performance on the stage of the Small Hall. He encouraged the performers and composers present at the festival not to be afraid to experiment and search for new musical solutions while playing their instruments or while composing their music.

The festival proper started the following day, on April 21. The Percussion Ensemble of Freiburg Music University represented by Mathias Droll from Germany and Arrigo Aixa from Italy together with the Percussion Ensemble of the Lübeck Music University, represented by Vera Seedorf, Florian Stapelfeldt and Seorim Lee, all directed by Bernhardt Wulff, gave a brilliant performance of "Clash Music" by famous German composer Nicklaus Huber, involving regularly pulsed harsh percussive sounds played both on the standard percussion instruments, the piano, and extraneous non-musical objects. Notwithstanding its rough

textures and sonorities, the composition possessed brilliant theatrical qualities and was appreciated by the audience. Concerto for Marimba with **Percussion Instruments and Chorus** by American Composer Gene Koshinski, performed by the aforementioned percussionists along with the Student Chorus of the Odessa National Music Academy, conducted by Grigoriy Liosnov and Galina Shpak contrasted the lengthy drawn out sounds of the chorus with the lively motor sounds of the percussion instruments, to which the chorus tuned in at times. Possessing tonal harmonies and features of a neo-classical style, combined with an innovative percussive textural world, the composition stood out with its dramatic and theatrical qualities and its ambivalence in regards to the alternating leadership between the chorus, marimba and other percussion instruments.

Johnny Reinhard gave a virtuosic performance of four bassoon pieces, starting with his already famous work "Dune," inspired by the science fiction novel by Frank Herbert, which alternated lengthy alternately tuned melodic lines with virtuosic trilllike and quasi-tremolo effects and special techniques of taking the bassoon apart and playing into its separate constituent parts – the latter presenting both satisfying acoustic and theatrical effects. "Ballad" by the writer of these lines was a slow and lyrical composition combining plaintive melodic writing with usage of intervals from the 128-note scale. A more intellectually complex piece, extended in its duration and extensive in its gradual development was the piece "For Johnny Reinhard" by Austrian composer living in New York, Georg Friedrich Haas, where the audience had ample opportunities to delve into the intricate sounds of the tiny intervals comprising the 128-note scale, played at close proximity with each other. "Hard Rain, Johnny" by Bosnian born and New York-based composer Svjetlana Bukvich for bassoon and electronics was a lively composition making full use of nonstandard textural noises in the electronics and colorful melodic writing inspired by Bosnian folk music, which greatly impressed the audience.

Most impressive was the performance of young 24-year-old Ukrainian pianist Vitaliy Kyianytsia, who gave brilliant performances of Tristan Murail's texturally elaborate and emotionally expressive piano piece piano piece "La Mondragore" (written by the composer in 1993), Brian Ferneyhough's brilliantly virtuosic and ultra-complex composition "Lemma-Icon-Epigram" (composed in 1981),

his own dynamic and innovative composition "Euphoria" (written in 2016) and very cerebrally sounding piece with harsh textures "West Pole II" (2009) by Greek composer Panayiotis Kokoras. The enthusiasm, agility of technique and the daring of Kyianitsya's musical endeavors both as a composer and performer arouses presented a great impression and demonstrated the presence of young talents in Ukraine who are ready to uphold the traditions of European avant-garde music.

The chamber music Senza Sforzando, devoted to performing contemporary music, founded and directed by Oleksandr Perepelitsya Jr., gave a performance devoted to the memory of singer Vasil' Slipak, one of the enthusiasts of contemporary music and performers of many new works by Ukrainian composers. The first seven songs from Arnold Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire were performed, with Andriy Malinich as the singer, dressed in the fashion of a Pierrot, with his face painted in a theatrically colorful manner. The performance produced a most unusual yet gratifying effect of having the vocal part sung by a tenor, instead of a soprano. Andriy Malinich's own composition, his mini mono-opera "Pierrot et la beauté" for two voices and chamber ensemble, set to poems by Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine, although lasting only ten minutes, was an emotionally saturating work, which achieved a harmonious blend of lyrical expressivity with harmonic and textural innovation of sound. A video film presenting Vasil Slipak singing Oleksandr Kozarenko's composition was next shown, featuring episodes from rehearsals and performances of Kozarenko's music, as well as the composer and the singer talking about their work. This served as a prelude to a live performance of Oleksander Kozarenko's work "Pierrot's Deadly Loop" for chamber cantata for counter-tenor and chamber ensemble, set to poems by Mykhaylo Semenko, one of Ukraine's most modernist poets from the early 20th century. The latter was the same musical composition heard in recording on the video. It was impressive by its emotionally intense, expressionistic qualities, both lyrical and harshly grotesque ones, enhanced by an imaginative elaboration of diverse textural effects produced by the instruments and the singer, which altogether created a most powerful and striking composition.

A most extravagant multi-media project followed, titled "By the way, how the hell(o) do people learn to speak," featuring a video with fragments of music lessons made by Leo Collin from France, against

the background of which the creator of the project produced sounds on small non-musical objects, **Kaiju Zhang** from Australia played the saxophone, occasionally accompanying herself with percussion instruments, while **Nuriya Khasenova** from Moscow, Russia played the flute, occasionally switching to percussion. The result was the achievement of the effect of diluting the "concrete" images of the music lessons in the video with the abstract musical sounds played by the musicians.

Swiss soprano **Karolina Eurich** produced a fantastically morbid theatrical performance by singing **Morton Feldman's** "Three Voices for Joan la Barbara" for voice and electronics, its three movements titled: "Whisper," "Unaccented Legato" and "Snowfall." Against the background of a darkened stage illuminated with fantastic colors, she was dressed in an extravagant suit with fluorescent colors, her face painted in a bizarre way. Eurich's performance aroused sensations of a grotesque, eerie nocturnal atmosphere, which was enhanced by her walking on stage in a theatrically dramatic manner.

Most impressive was the performance on the solo violin by Ukrainian violinist Anna Savitska living in Switzerland, who performed a number of works, including Karmella Tsepkolenko's "Solosolisimo", a dramatic, colorful piece, written by the composer in 1999, involving lyrical, expressive solo lines, alternating with non-traditional textures for the instrument and occasional vocal exclamations by the performer. All of these effects produced a saturating dramaturgy for the composition. Swiss composer Fabian Miller's four-minute-long composition "Munchs Traum(a)" was remarkable for its gradual musical development, emotional expressivity and textural contrast. Boris Alvarado's lengthy work "Sava," written especially for Savitska, was more intensively dramatic and theatrically artistic and combined in a natural way traditional virtuosic effects, typical for the violin since the times of Paganini, with modern harmonies and contemporary technical effects for the instrument.

Cellist **Zoltan Almaschi** from Ukraine performed a number of solo compositions by three different composers. "**Tonyukuk**" by **Firuz Allahverdi** from Azerbaijan was a work distinct for its accessible musical language and references to traditional Azeri music, intermingled with a moderately innovative European musical idiom.

The first night of the festival rounded off with three works for solo percussion. German

percussionist Vera Seedorf performed a most extravagant piece by American composer Stuart Saunders-Smith called "Songs I-IX," written in 1981 for percussion instruments and various household items. The musician walked on stage, spoke and sang various words and syllables in a theatrical way, presenting the effect of a delirious person, and made noises on the percussion instruments, as well as on knives, plates, pots and pans. Her declamation essentially demonstrated the more conspicuous part of the work, with all the percussive effects forming an accompaniment to the former, all of which in conjunction produced a lively effect, filled with a vivid humor.

Loops II for solo vibraphone by French composer Philippe Hurel, performed by Florian Stapelfeldt, was a colorful work, combining regular motor-like rhythms and repeated harmonies with irregular, free and quasi-improvisatory rhythms and developing harmonies, added to which was a vigorous mood and varied textures of the instruments. David Lang's "Unchained Melody," performed by Seorim Lee, was an ongoing chain of percussive effects in almost regular motor-like rhythms, performed on jingling bell-like objects.

The second day, April 22 opened up with the Children's Chorus from the School of **Pedagogical Practice**, affiliated with the Odessa National Music Academy, conducted by Yevheniya Bondar, singing works by contemporary composers. Young Odessa-based composer Kira Maidenberg-Todorova's "Au" for children's chorus and piano, set to the text of Moscow-based late 20th century poet Genrikh Sapgir, combined tonal harmonies and accessible melodic lines with an imaginative and innovative theatricality, enhanced by quasijazz glissando effects and non-pitched declamations by the chorus and the chromatic harmonies and virtuosic bell-like textures in the piano. "Aglepta" by Swedish composer Arne Mellnaes, written in 1969, set to the text of Bengt Klintberg, was a short and striking piece with a mysterious, nocturnal mood, bordering at times on declamatory style in its combination of tonal harmonies with outlandish sound effects, including drawn-out sonoristic chords, mingled by glissandos and non-pitched shouts, all brilliantly performed by the children's chorus. The famous "Geographical Fugue" by Austrian-American composer Ernst Toch, consisting of nonpitched, rhythmic incantations of names of different countries and geographical locations, received a superb, highly energetic performance by the chorus.

Percussionists Vera Seeforf, Florian Stapelfeldt and Seorim Lee from the Percussion Ensemble of the Lübeck Music University gave an accomplished performance of a number of works, among which most impressive was Echoes for three percussionists by Ukrainian composer Mikhaylo Shved. Its meditative, romantic mood was enhanced by repetitive figures on the marimba and vibraphone, joined with soft, delicate sound effects on other percussion instruments, such as triangle and gong.

Next there was a selection of compositions by Julia Gomelskaya, one of the leading figures among the group of Odessa-based composers, who was killed in a car accident in December 2016. The works were written in the most diverse styles, some of them adhering to a traditional, folk-music oriented style, while others following an advanced avant-garde idiom. The choral cantata "Spring, Fun and Jokes" for children's chorus, violin, percussion and piano was performed by Solo Musica, the Children's Chorus of the School of Pedagogical **Practice**, affiliated with the Odessa National Music Academy, directed by Yevhenia Bondar. This was a work incorporating Ukrainian folk music into the composer's personal style in a most colorful, artistic manner. The composer's string quartet "From the Bottom of the Soul," a highly emotionally tense, expressionistic work written in advanced musical idiom, incorporating a moderate share of novel instrumental techniques for enhancement of expressive means, was performed by the "Harmonies of the World" String Quartet (Nataliia Lytvynova, violin, Leonid Piskun, violin, Iya Komarova, viola, Serhii Scholz, cello). The duo "DiaDem Julia" for two violins, played by Anna Savitska and Yakub Dzialak, was an emotionally saturating, elegiac work with lengthy contrapuntal elaborations of the two violin lines, extended tonal harmonies and an overall gradual musical development. "Hutsulka -Dance for piano and percussion player," heard in the performance of Ukrainian pianist Vira Kuusiku and Italian percussionist Arrigo Aixa, was an agile work with regular motor rhythms, dynamic contrasting textures of the piano and the percussion instruments, chiefly the xylophone, and a dynamic, boisterous mood. The "Diptych" ("Liuli for Yuli, a Lyllabye" and "Curly Catherine") for female chorus and percussion, performed by the Oriana Female Chorus (directed by Halyna Shpak) with Daniel Fednando and Castro Semenova on percussion instruments, contained elements of Ukrainian folk music, modified in an organic way by the composer

to adjust to her original compositional style. The composition featured sonoristic effects on extended diatonic harmonies in the chorus with only occasional slight, sparse effects in the percussion instruments.

A most unusual and extravagant instrumental trio, namely, the Kontra-Trio, featuring Madeleine Bischof on the contrabass-querflute, Thomas Mejer on the contrabass saxophone, and Leo Bachman on the tuba, performed a selection of works for this most unusual ensemble of instruments. The most interesting pieces of their selection were "Aquarium 17" by Madeleine Bischof and "...und auch der Wind wohnt..." by Karmella Tsepkolenko. In Bischoff's composition the sonorities of these three instruments spelled out the basic tones of the overtone series and created quiet percussive slap sounds on all three of the instruments, at times resembling sounds of such aquatic animals as whales, seals and dolphins, albeit never departing from the diatonic harmonies centering around the overtone series. Tsepkolenko's piece contained an array of sonoristic effects, involving juxtapositions of arrays of fast notes played very softly in the low register with lines with slightly slower durations in the same low register, with gradual incursions into higher registers with occasional whispering harmonic sounds (in very high registers), albeit continuously in very soft registers. This set of effects created a mysterious, eerie and fantastic poetic atmosphere, fitting the title of the piece. "Tartarelischer Tanz V" by Thomas Mejer was a slow, static piece with sonoristic effects around diatonic harmonies mostly in soft dynamics with only a few occasional sforzando accented notes. In this piece the sounds of the three instruments emphasized tonic minor sonorities in the extreme low registers with very slow melodic swaying around the basic notes. In Rafal Zapala's "Trialog" short detached notes played by the three instruments in their low registers alternated with soft declamations of words and syllables, creating a surrealistic effect. "Downstairs" by Julia Ruffert featured slow, static long notes in the instruments' lower registers, intermixed with non-pitch breathing on the instruments. "Tinguely Machine 2.0" by Katharina Rosenberger presented static polyphonic elaborations of the three instruments' lines in the extreme low register with occasional slap and breathing effects.

Another performance by the **Senza Sforzando** ensemble, directed by **Oleksandr Perepelitsya Jr.**, featured a set of chamber works by a few contemporary composers. "**A priori**" for flute, violin and piano by

Ukrainian composer Liubava Sidorenko was a most accomplished piece, which combined organically modernist harmonies and instrumental textures with an exuberant, highly expressive emotional mood, presenting itself diversely in the work's contrasting sections emphasizing various emotional moods by means of diverse harmonies and textural combinations, ending in a very subdued manner. "On the Coast" for piano by Anna Tikhoplav from Odessa was an extensive, moderately lyrical yet agile piece with rather diatonic harmonies and textures which combined lyrically subdued with dynamic and quasi repetitive motions. Polish composer Alicja Gronau's "Agnezioni II" for solo flute was a lyrical, texturally refined and rhythmically elaborate piece with tonal melodicism and elements of Impressionist stylistic features. "Szena' for violin and piano by Kiev-based composer Andriy Merkhel was a very impressive piece with a wealth of subtle novel effects for the combination of instruments and a very intricate kind of emotional expressivity. "Tomorrow", a chamber cantata by Odessa-based composer Kira-Maidenberg-Todorova for soprano, clarinet, cello, marimba, toy piano and piano on a poem by Tatiana Polozhy was the longest and most elaborate work in this block. It was a highly dramatic work written with new harmonies and instrumental textures, involving stark contrasts of instrumental textures, ranging from slow and refined to loud and motor-like, dominated by an epically intensive vocal line, which expressed in a very heartfelt way the emotional content of the poem which formed the semantic basis for the music. Kira Maidenberg-Todorova appears to be a very promising young representative of the new musical scene in Odessa, and she should definitely be heard from more often.

A block of compositions by Odessa-based composer Aliona Tomlionova, currently residing in Moscow, came next. "For Emily", performed by Oleksandr Murashko on the oboe and Olena Pavlova on the piano, was an extensive piece, written in a romantic idiom with tonal harmonies and traditional textures. "Two Bagatelles for chamber structures" for flute and piano, performed by Darva Chorba on the flute and Olena Pavlova on the piano were very short and concise with an extended diatonic harmonies and moderately traditional instrumental textures. "Two Poems by Vlada Ilyinskaya" were likewise short in duration, moderately tonal in harmony and lyrical romantic in their mood. They were performed by soprano Nina Kachur-Nevska and pianist Olena Pavlova.

Johnny Reinhard presented another selection of contemporary pieces for the bassoon in microtonal tunings and temperaments. "Tenkenas (for Johnny Reinhard)" by Monroe Golden from Birmingham, Alabama, USA, was an impressive enigmatic piece composed in the 128 note scale, which showed ample contrast of rhythm and texture to set up a lively yet quizzical mood during its moderate length. A very accomplished work was "Lento Pensieroso" by Alexander Shchetynsky, one of the leading composers in Kiev, which produced a great impression on the audience for its expressive and innovative use of the bassoon's new techniques and organic application of microtones, thereby creating an emotionally and texturally saturating composition. "Maknongan" by the famous Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi created its due emotional effect with its static melodic line and abundance of small microtonal intervals, all of which presented the composer's established pensive, meditative style in yet another manifestation. The hit of the program was "Dreams like little Movies" by Los Angelesbased composer Peter Thoegersen. An extensive, technically elaborate and virtuosic composition, it kept the attention of the audiences throughout the entire 17 minutes of its duration by its apt usage of the pitches of the 128 note scale, well thought out musical development, its contrasting textures and saturing musical dramaturgy. Johnny Reinhard greatly intrigued the audience with his original performance of John Cage's "0 minutes and **0 seconds**" by performing the theatrical gesture of coming up to the writer of these lines and pointing the bassoon at him. Johnny Reinhard's own piece "Zanzibar" presented a most sensational close to his performance, with the composer-performer declaiming the words "Zanzibar," "Tanzania" and "Africa," taking the bassoon apart and creating sound effects of bamboo canes and elephant calls by playing on the separate parts of the instruments, throwing a ping-pong ball down, playing the main theme on the bassoon, and then roaring it out with his voice in the manner of a lion, then performing more virtuosic passages on the bassoon, now assembled together.

The Innovation Duo from Switzerland with violinists Anna Savitska and Yakub Dzialak performed a set of works for two violins, the most memorable of which was "Ashes" by Ukrainian Mykola Khshanovsky, a piece, which included an assortment of extended techniques for the instruments, including scrapings on the wood, pizzicato effects, playing on the other side of the bridge and numerous other scratching and scraping effects. The other pieces performed by the duo were for the most part composed in a similar radical style.

A group of five young composers presented their new works for odd ensembles of instruments, among which "Song about Corasis" by young Odessabased composer Anton Koshelev for marimba and bass guitar produced the most impression, being diatonic in harmony, quasi-minimalist in its style and organically combining the classical idiom with elements of jazz style.

The festival came to a close with two dynamic percussion works, namely, "Kim" by American composer Askel Masson, a loud, energetic and rhythmically intense work for solo snare drum, played by Italian percussionist Arrigo Axia, and Bernhard Wulff's "Metalli 2" for full percussion ensemble, a loud, rhythmically dynamic piece, performed by the Percussion Ensemble of Freiburg Music University together with the Percussion Ensemble of the Lübeck Music University, conducted by Bernhard Wulff, with which the festival concluded on an exuberant note with a bang.

This year the festival "Two Days and Two Nights of New Music" in Odessa once again impressed and dazzled its audiences with its lively assortment of the most varied trends of new music and created a rare artistic environment, which was greatly appreciated by the composers and performers participating in it, as well as for the regular audiences of Odessa and among the guests from other cities and countries, who came to the city to savor the great celebration of new music.

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