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Essays in Honor of Prof. Dr. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

IZAZOVI SAVREMENE MUZIKOLOGIJE

Eseji u čast prof. dr Mirjane Veselinović-Hofman

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ALFRED SCHNITTKE'S OPERAS FROM THE 1990s IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAUMA STUDIES*

ABSTRACT: In this study I discuss Alfred Schnittke's operatic 'trilogy' from the 1990s in the context of trauma studies, a relatively recent research area in contemporary musicology. Schnittke's operas *Life with an Idiot*, *Gesualdo* and *The Tale of Dr. Johann Faust*, written towards the end of the composer's life, demonstrated his reaction to collective and personal traumas – be it the brutality of the communist rule, the loss of historical continuum in a society that had violently destroyed its own past in the name of the projected ideal future, the suppression of God and of Christian moral values, or the loss of Schnittke's family members and his own near-death experiences and physical suffering.

KEY WORDS: Alfred Schnittke; operas; the 1990s; trauma studies

Introduction

The area of trauma studies is a relatively new and potentially very interesting field of research in musicology and other humanistic disciplines. As such, it promises to increase the visibility of traumatic experiences as related to music on many different levels, to foster discussion about this often-suppressed area of human experience and enable new interpretations of both canonic and obscure musical works and their creators' personal and professional biographies. A recent interdisciplinary conference *Trauma Studies in the Medical Humanities: New Directions for Research*, organized by the Durham University Music Department and Centre for Medical Humanities (12–14 April 2018) for the first time featured special sessions on the study of trauma within musicology, in addition to the already established areas of study. The papers

* This article was written for the project *Identities of Serbian Music Within Local and Global Contexts: Traditions, Changes, Challenges* (No. 177004) financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

presented at this conference covered a variety of topics, from individual narratives of trauma and artistic representations of the traumatized state and post-traumatic subjectivity to the general observations of trauma in contemporary culture, thus confirming that this nascent research area has already attracted significant attention from scholars worldwide and could offer many interesting research outputs in the future.

The word *trauma* that has been accepted into many languages comes from the Greek *τραύμα*, meaning “wound.” This term mostly refers either to physical injury caused by an external force, or to a type of psychological damage that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. Reactions to and symptoms of trauma can be wide and varied. Although not all people who experience a traumatic event that threatens one’s survival and sense of security will become psychologically traumatized, some individuals can develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In short, trauma is the sum of three E-s: “the event, the experience, and the effect.”¹ Aside from individual trauma, contemporary medical and physiological practice also recognizes collective traumas, whereas the entire societies can remain “frozen” in the state of trauma, unable to face their past experiences.

In this article I wish to discuss Alfred Schnittke’s operas from the 1990s as responses to traumatic events, both individual and collective. Although predominantly hailed as a composer of instrumental (symphonic, concertant and chamber) music, Alfred Schnittke (1934–98) wrote no fewer than three operas in quick succession in the final decade of his life: *Жизнь с идиотом* (Life with an Idiot, 1991), *Gesualdo* (1994) and *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (The Tale of Dr Johann Faust, 1994).² Schnittke’s intensive work on these operas, which are still quite obscure and have been left in different stages of completedness, coincided with several traumatic events in his life. While

¹ Sam Wright and Mark Liddle, “Young Offenders and Trauma: Experience and Impact – A Practitioner’s Guide” (Salford/Berfordshire: Beyond Youth Custody partnership, 2014), <http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/wp-content/uploads/BYC-Trauma-experience-and-impact-practitioners-guide.pdf>, 2.

² I have written about different aspects of these operas in the following articles: Ivana Medić, “Idioti, đavoli i grešnici: opere Alfreda Šnitkea” [Idiots, Devils and Sinners: Alfred Schnittke’s Operas], *Muzički talas*, 42 (2013), 10–22; Ivana Medić, “Opera i kraj komunizma: Život s idiotom Alfreda Šnitkea” [Opera and the End of Communism: Alfred Schnittke’s *Life with an Idiot*], *Zbornik Instituta za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju*, 28 (2015), 59–74; Ivana Medić, “Irony, Satire, Parody and Grotesque in Alfred Schnittke’s Opera *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*”, in: *Emigration, Integration und künstlerische Produktivität – Alfred Schnittke in Hamburg, 1990–1998* ed. by Amrei Flechsig and Christian Storch (Hamburg: Alfred Schnittke Akademie, 2018) (forthcoming).

these operas are, on the surface, quite diverse, in all of them Schnittke deals (either directly or metaphorically) with the traumas of the decades of the communist rule, the downfall of the Soviet empire and his subsequent emigration to Germany, but also with his own battle with a progressively debilitating terminal illness. Namely, he suffered a series of five strokes between 1985 and 1998, experiencing clinical death three times. Each stroke left him more and more incapacitated and impaired his ability to work. The traumatic political circumstances of Schnittke's life intertwined with his medical history, thus affecting his operatic output on several levels. I aim to show how in these operas, which are quite brutal and deal with the topics of murder, torture, dehumanization and repentance (or the lack of it), Schnittke performed something akin to musical exorcism and confronted his demons.

Musicology, Eastern Europe and Trauma

My first encounter with the trauma studies in the realm of musicology happened five years ago, when I was commissioned to review Maria Cizmic's book *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe*³ for the journal *Music and Letters*.⁴ In this book, Cizmic deals with the 1970s and 1980s – the decades of 'stagnation' and 'glasnost' respectively. The book unfolds as a series of hermeneutic essays, and Cizmic readily acknowledges that she was influenced by the scholars such as Lawrence Kramer, Susan McClary and Boris Groys, among others. The works by three Soviets and one Pole – Alfred Schnittke, Galina Ustvolskaya (1919–2006), Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) and Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (1933–2010) – inspired Cizmic to explore "how music participates in discourse regarding the meaning of trauma and loss."⁵ The selection of works is interesting, because (with the exception of Górecki's symphony) these works have not been "intentionally composed as responses to trauma."⁶

My review was mostly positive and I praised Cizmic's contribution to exploring "how music can and does help people deal with traumatic events; how music makes it possible for them to make sense of their memories and share their experiences with fellow sufferers and sympathetic listeners,"⁷ and asserted that "Cizmic makes the reader keenly aware of the fact that music cannot exist outside of its cultural, social and political fields, while she does

³ Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴ Ivana Medić, "Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe by Maria Cizmic (review)", *Music and Letters*, 94/1 (2013), 193–6.

⁵ Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain...*, op. cit., 167.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷ Ivana Medić, "Performing Pain... (review)", op. cit., 193.

not lose sight of the highly idiomatic and idiosyncratic ways in which music can create something akin to meaning.”⁸ However, I also observed several problems with Cizmic’s approach, and the main one was the fact that two of her case studies explicitly dealt with works that have been utilized (thus acquiring new meanings) as film music. For example, Cizmic only analyses Arvo Pärt’s seminal 1977 *Tabula Rasa* for two solo violins, prepared piano and chamber orchestra in the light of its use within the 1984 Georgian film *Repentance* (Georgian: მონანიება, *Monanieba*; Russian: Покаяние; directed by Tengiz Abuladze). By doing so, Cizmic completely disregards the actual ‘meaning’ of Pärt’s work; namely, as one of Pärt’s first *tintinnabuli* pieces, *Tabula Rasa* was an ‘empty canvas’ and signaled a new beginning for the composer.⁹ Furthermore, in the chapter on Gorecki’s *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, the focus is again on the film: the eponymous 1993 BBC production directed by Tony Palmer, which mixes the footage of the symphony’s live performance featuring the soprano Dawn Upshaw and the London Sinfonietta conducted by David Zinman with disturbing images of the twentieth-century atrocities, including the composer Gorecki’s visit to Auschwitz. The problem that I observed here (one that was more-or-less admitted by Cizmic herself) was that “the pairing of music with the images that explicitly illustrate traumatic events does not necessarily enrich the music’s meaning, for it can actually trivialize or even ‘corrupt’ the music.”¹⁰

In the chapter dedicated to Alfred Schnittke, Cizmic focuses on his role as the musical spokesperson of his generation. Schnittke’s oeuvre is distinguished by fragmentation, disruption, brokenness, irreparability – the features that she associates with the representation of trauma, because it can cause a breakdown of linear narrative and lead to fragmentation, intrusive repetitions, gaps of silence, and a collapse of the past and present. Cizmic argues that Schnittke’s trademark *polystylism* is “a compositional strategy that foregrounds disjunction, contrast, fragmentation, and a collapse of linearity by juxtaposing disparate musical styles.”¹¹ She chooses Schnittke’s Concerto for Piano and Strings to represent one of his typical procedures: in essence, he seemingly attempts to create a large classical form, but deliberately ‘fails’ to do so, and thus the entire musical edifice ‘crumbles’ before the listener; thus she argues that the “Concerto for Piano and Strings performs trauma by invoking and breaking down teleology – a musical parallel to the ways in which traumatic memory disrupts normative, linear memory.”¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹⁰ Ibid., 195.

¹¹ Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain...*, op. cit., 30.

¹² Ibid., 54.

Now, whether this is actually Schnittke's way of depicting trauma and finding a way to deal with it is entirely open to interpretation. As a member of the so-called 'generation of the sixties', Schnittke crossed a creative path from the initial Shostakovichian idiom, through a short-lived fascination with European avant-garde, to a specific synthesis of all these influences into stylistically heterogeneous and extraordinarily expressive works. Even in his youthful 'avant-garde' phase (roughly encompassing the 1960s) Schnittke was never interested in stylistic and technical purity, but in the expressive potential of various avant-garde procedures, which he 'road-tested' by working extensively as a composer of music for film and theatre.¹³ Hence, all 'evidence' that Cizmic provides to support the depiction of trauma in the works by Schnittke and his contemporaries is rather provisional, conditional, speculative, and everything could be read completely differently. So, I will now try to avoid this sort of too "close reading" and simply evoke certain moments from Alfred Schnittke's biography and his medical history, and attempt to relate them to his operas, which are quite brutal, violent, disturbing and grotesque.

Alfred Schnittke's Operas

In 1990, just before the dissolution of the USSR, Schnittke became one of the numerous intellectuals who left the country never to return. As a son of a German-speaking Lithuanian Jewish father and a Volga German Catholic mother, and an artist who felt a lifelong attraction to German culture and art, Schnittke settled in Hamburg. Although his health rapidly deteriorated just a few months after arriving to Germany, Schnittke continued to compose prolifically and his late output contains three operas: *Life with an Idiot*, *The History of Dr Johann Faust* and *Gesualdo*. Although *Life with an Idiot* is the only opera that explicitly deals with life under a dictatorship and what Soviet citizens had been subjected to, all three operas, each in its own way, tackle the issue of political and cultural oppression, the result of which is the loss of personal identity.

Although Schnittke is one of the most frequently performed composers of the second half of the twentieth century, his operas have remained somewhat obscure, due to a rather unfortunate set of circumstances. Namely, when Mikhail Gorbachev came into power in 1985 and Schnittke was finally able to travel to attend performances of his works outside the Soviet Union, he began to be plagued by serious health problems, beginning with an almost

¹³ Cf. Ivana Medić, *From Polystylism to Meta-Pluralism. Essays on Late Soviet Symphonic Music* (Belgrade: Institute of Musicology SASA, 2017), 25–34.

lethal stroke in June that year. Schnittke literally died – he was declared clinically dead and brought back to life three times.¹⁴ High blood pressure and coronary disease was hereditary in his family. His mother Maria suddenly died from a stroke in 1972, and his older brother Viktor would succumb to the same illness in 1994.¹⁵ The untimely death of Schnittke's mother affected the composer profoundly and triggered a decade-long personal, psychological, spiritual and creative crisis, which he resolved in 1982 when he decided to receive baptism and became a practicing Catholic.¹⁶ Schnittke suffered his second stroke in June 1991, just a few months after he had moved to Hamburg to replace Ligeti as a composition teacher at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater.¹⁷ Although he again managed to pull through somehow, from that point onwards Schnittke's music became more austere and more obviously concerned with mortality. He suffered another stroke in 1994, which paralyzed the right side of his body and left him wheelchair bound. However, he did not cease to compose; he dictated his scores to his son and other assistants, and even learned to write with his left hand. After suffering further two strokes, he died in 1998 in Hamburg.

Schnittke wrote all of his three operas during the remarkably productive four-year period between 1990 and 1994, which ended with the third stroke. As a composer of incredibly dramatic and effective music loaded with symbolism, Schnittke was ideally equipped to write an opera; however, the lack of commissions prevented him from fulfilling his dream sooner. Since for the most part of his life in the Soviet Union Schnittke was considered an 'avant-gardist,' a 'disobedient' and 'risky' composer, it was impossible for him to obtain such a major state-funded commission to write an opera; and when the political circumstances finally changed, Russia could no longer afford to acknowledge Schnittke. Hence, all three operas were premiered abroad. It is really unfortunate that Schnittke's operatic legacy was badly affected by his

¹⁴ Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), 190.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130–1.

¹⁶ This decade of spiritual struggle resulted in a series of Schnittke's 'hidden' requiems and masses, e.g. Piano Quintet, Requiem from the stage music for Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Symphony No. 2 *St. Florian* etc. Cf. Ivana Medić, "Skriveni rekvijemi i mise Alfreda Šnitkea: Klavirski kvintet, Rekvijem iz muzike za Šilerovog *Don Karlosa* i Druga simfonija *Sveti Florijan*" [Alfred Schnittke's Hidden Requiems and Masses: Piano Quintet, Requiem from the Stage Music for Schiller's *Don Carlos*, and Symphony No. 2 *St Florian*], in: *Jezik muzike – Muzika i religija* [The Language of Music – Music and Religion], (Kragujevac: Faculty of Philology and Art, 2012), 25–39.

¹⁷ Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, op. cit., 200–1.

declining health. Feeling that his time was running out, the composer plunged into work, but left his operas without a sleek finish.

Life with an Idiot is a dark comedy which, while being superficially concerned with the collapse of communism, in fact deals with the human condition on a broader scale, something Schnittke underlines by resorting to direct quotation from a great deal of music. On the other hand, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* may be seen as an operatic passion (a 'negative passion' or 'anti-passion', in Schnittke's own words), dealing with the fundamental dichotomy of good and evil. *Gesualdo* (1994) continues these preoccupations; it is specifically concerned with the divide between artistic genius and the ability of its possessor to perpetrate the sin of murder.

The first opera to be started was the last one to be completed and premiered. The opera *Doctor Faust* was in the making for almost 15 years; the librettist was Jürgen Köchel (under the pseudonym of Jörg Morgener). In 1980, Christoph von Dohnanyi commissioned a Faust opera from Schnittke, but after his departure from Hamburg the project was jettisoned.¹⁸ In 1983, Schnittke wrote a cantata *Seid nüchtern und wachet* (Be Sober-Minded and Wakeful) for the Vienna Festival. By 1988 Schnittke had in mind a three-act structure, with an interval midway through the second act;¹⁹ but when Mstislav Rostropovich secured a commission for *Life with an Idiot* to be staged in Amsterdam, Schnittke abandoned *Doctor Faust* indefinitely. The librettist Viktor Erofeev's short story *Life with an Idiot* became a basis for the eponymous libretto.²⁰ The work on this opera was interrupted when Schnittke suffered his second stroke in 1991. After months of intensive therapy, he managed to recover sufficiently to complete the opera, although the second act does suffer from being written in a hurry. While only a few sketches for the opera survive within the Juilliard Manuscript Collection,²¹ they still show the composer's deteriorating handwriting and a very sparse orchestration, left to be filled out later by one of Schnittke's collaborators.

In all three operas Schnittke employs narrative strategies that can be regarded as a response to trauma. Namely, traumatized individuals have fairly limited access to reliable conscious memories (and therefore the truth) of an event. As a result, they see the symptoms of trauma – flashbacks, nightmares, and unconscious behaviors – as literal re-experiences of trauma and

¹⁸ Ronald Weitzman, "Schnittke's 'Faust' in Hamburg", *Tempo – New Series*, 194 (1995), 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Viktor Erofeev, *Life with and Idiot*, foreword by Andrew Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

²¹ Cf. Ivana Medić, "Revised Catalogue of Alfred Schnittke's Sketches in the Juilliard Manuscript Collection", in: *Schnittke Studies* ed. by Gavin Dixon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 209–57.

history as unassimilable into a linear narrative. In his operas Schnittke employs flashbacks, broken narration, surreal episodes, keeping the viewer constantly in doubt as to whether what we are seeing on the stage is “real” or not.

Premiered on 13 April 1992, *Life with an Idiot* became the only opera that the composer attended the premiere of. The recording of this production on CD was released by Sony Classical in 1992.²² Since then, the opera was produced in opera houses in Russia, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and Austria. The titular ‘idiot’ is a parody of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The year 1990 when Schnittke began to work on this opera was marked by his refusal to accept the Lenin Prize, one of the highest state honors; Schnittke explained that the introduction of the multi-party system led to the reevaluation of the role of historical figures, who became real and flawed people rather than symbols of an epoch.²³ Furthermore, at that moment Schnittke was writing this opera about the idiotic Vova (a nickname for Vladimir), who seduces an entire family and leads it into madness and death. Erofeev’s short story which attracted Schnittke’s attention employs “complex cross-cutting techniques, narrative intrusions, filmic approach to its subject and sudden shifts of perspective.”²⁴ Schnittke successfully translated this structure into an almost schizophrenic and extremely violent score, told from a viewpoint of a person driven to insanity. The narrative jumps from present to past seemingly without any logical order, thus evoking the Soviet people’s historical disorientation and the lack of a coherent and tangible diachronic narrative. The nameless protagonist (“I”) and his also nameless “Wife”, are punished for their “indifference” and have to accept a madman Vova into their home. Both “I” and his “Wife” fall in love with Vova and ignore his autistic and psychopathological behavior, his violent and destructive urges, and continue to seek in him the “wisdom” that he does not actually possess. Eventually Vova destroys the family, kills the “Wife” and disappears, leaving the now insane “I” to reflect on what has happened.

The work includes numerous references to other Russian works of high and low art. Schnittke references the nineteenth-century Russian operatic tra-

²² Alfred Schnittke, *Life with an Idiot*. Live recording of the World Premiere at De Nederlandse Opera. Dale Duesing, Tereza Ringholz, Howard Haskin, Vocal Ensemble & Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich (Cellist, Pianist, Conductor). CD Sony Classical S2K 52 495, 2-box set, 1992.

²³ Valentina Kholopova, *Kompozitor Al'fred Shnitke* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2008), 197.

²⁴ Jürgen Köchel, Liner notes to: *Alfred Schnittke, Life with an Idiot. Live recording of the World Premiere at De Nederlandse Opera*. Dale Duesing, Tereza Ringholz, Howard Haskin, Vocal Ensemble & Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich (CD Sony Classical S2K 52 495, 2-box set, 1992), 11.

dition of basing entire scenes of the opera around the quotations of vernacular music, predominantly folk songs, but also popular and revolutionary songs. A quotation always has a symbolic purpose, serves as a basis for a genre-scene, or helps create a distinction between the “national” and “foreign” elements and forces in the opera. For example, the quotation from the popular Russian song about Siberian convicts *Glorious Sea, The Sacred Baikal* appears in one of the only two ensembles in the work where “Vova” and “I” appear as happy lovers, after they have battered the “Wife.” This scene confirms I’s complete degeneration, influenced by his infatuation with Vova. The popular Russian song *A Birch was Standing in a Field* is used as the leitmotif for the opera’s finale; the idea of using this song in the closing episode came from Erofeev’s literary source, however Schnittke’s employment of this typically Russian song for the finale, in a heavily distorted version, offers a harsh critique of the insanity of the nation that had allowed itself to be seduced by the madmen.

After the second (Hamburg) stroke Schnittke’s music changed. According to his biographer Alexander Ivashkin,

The profile of his ‘new’ music appears to be more expressionistic, without any lyrical rests at all. He uses more and more dissonances, apparently feeling quite comfortable in this disturbing, nervous and restless world of ‘disharmony’.²⁵

Schnittke is implementing his feeling of an ‘expanded’ time, a feeling which revealed itself to him after his almost fatal illness. Familiar musical themes, the symbols of the past, now overlap. One melody is still being heard while a second begins. There is no border between them – everything can coexist in this ‘expanded’, irrational time.²⁶

This ‘irrational’ style is prevalent in the opera *Gesualdo*. It was commissioned by the Vienna State Opera and premiered on 26 May 1994, also by Rostropovich. It was a very prestigious commission because, prior to that, the last time Vienna Opera commissioned a new opera was in 1934 – it was Ernst Krenek’s *Carlo The Fifth*. Having spent several childhood years in Vienna, Schnittke was personally attached to this city. However, just as he was supposed to be finishing this opera, Schnittke suffered his third stroke, after which he spent three months in a coma and became severely disabled; thus, Schnittke’s wife Irina hired Marc-Aurel Floros to complete the final four scenes.²⁷ Schnittke could not attend the Vienna premiere. *Gesualdo* did not receive great reviews and did not stay on the repertory for long. It was briefly renewed in 2004 on the tenth anniversary of the premiere, conducted by Jun Märkl – again to rather mixed reviews.

²⁵ Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke*, op. cit., 190–1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

²⁷ Ronald Weitzman, “Schnittke’s ‘Gesualdo’ in Vienna”, *Tempo – New Series*, 194 (1995), 30.

In this opera Schnittke deals with the same themes as in *Life with an Idiot*: the evil, violence, jealousy, unrequited love, loss of personal freedom, subordination of the individual to the collective, and the consequent loss of sanity. Schnittke freely interprets events from the biography of Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa (1566–1613) and his unhappy marriage to his young cousin Maria, who cheats on him. In order to preserve his family honor, Gesualdo orders a brutal murder of Maria and her lover. A servant manages to rescue Gesualdo's and Maria's baby, but Gesualdo slowly slips into insanity, becomes convinced that the child is not his own and murders it. The opera consists of seven scenes, with Prologue and Epilogue written in the style of sixteenth century madrigals. As a master of stylistic pastiches, Schnittke here alludes to the madrigal tradition and to Gesualdo's own expressive chromatic style, which was very much ahead of its time. In terms of the dramatization of bare and raging emotions, the opera relies upon the tradition of *verismo*; on the other hand, the tragic, expressionist style of this opera brings it closer to the genres of requiem or passion. The lean instrumentation results in transparency typical of Schnittke's works from his last years, when he was plagued by a physical disability. The fact that Schnittke cheated death several times explains his obsession with death, with the ephemerality of life, heaven and hell, sin and repentance.

The same topics are explored in the opera *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, although that one is less depressing, because Schnittke infuses his interpretation of the centuries-old Faust tale with sardonic gallows humor. It is a reworking of the Faust legend with which Schnittke identified very personally throughout his life. The first result of his Faust fascination was a cantata *Seid nüchtern und wachet* completed in 1983, which depicts Faust's damnation and death. After accepting a commission to complete the opera, Schnittke incorporated this cantata as the third act of the opera, and then wrote the first and the second acts. Most of the vocal part for *Doctor Faust* was written before Schnittke's second stroke in 1991. Gary Bertini hoped that Frankfurt Opera would stage it, but his departure halted the project.²⁸ In 1992, when Hamburg again took the initiative, Schnittke orchestrated the first two acts. However, following his third stroke in June 1994 Schnittke could not supervise the preparations for the premiere, and thus it was the conductor Gerd Albrecht who 'trimmed' the opera for performance – by editing out almost one third of it! *Faust* was premiered only a month after *Gesualdo*, in Hamburg; again, Schnittke was unable to attend. A CD box was with the Hamburg performance was subsequently released – this is now known as Gerd Albrecht's "director's cut."²⁹

²⁸ Ronald Wetizman, "Schnittke's 'Faust' in Hamburg", op. cit., 27.

²⁹ Alfred Schnittke, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten. Live recording of the world premiere in Hamburg. Eberhard Lorenz, Jürgen Freier, Arno Raunig, Hanna Schwarz,*

There are some remarkable stylistic differences between the cantata and the two acts written in the 1990s, in terms of the vividness of orchestral writing, the variety of employed stylistic devices, and the type of musical humor. Again, it is visually striking in the manuscript score to observe how the composer's handwriting has changed and how many empty staves there are in the first two acts, which occasionally may seem as mere drafts that needed to be further developed. The sparse orchestration, dominated by harpsichord, immediately evokes baroque *continuo*, and with the Narrator and a moralizing Choir alternately telling and commenting on the story of Faust's life and death, we are strongly reminded of baroque oratorios or passions. The rudimentary character of orchestral accompaniment is, at least partially, a consequence of Schnittke's crippling illness and race against the time to finish the opera, but also a result of his intention to parody baroque models.

The protagonists of this opera are Faust and Mephistophiles (who also has a female counterpart, Mephistophila). Mephistophiles is a counter-tenor – an 'unnaturally' high male voice, used as a signifier of the grotesque and the demonic. This 'campy' devil is confronted by Faust, a baritone, who wrongly believes that he can control demonic forces. In Chapter 25 which opens the third act (i. e. the original Faust-cantata *Seid nüchtern und wachet*), the rhythm of the tango announces Faust's imminent doomsday; then in Chapter 28 "Faust's Dreadful Death and Burial", Mephistophila retells the events of the fateful night when Faust met his demise. While she describes how he was tortured, the ominously lush tango accompanies her powerful alto, becoming increasingly seductive. As the choir, accompanied by whistles and high woodwinds, describes how the students found Faust torn to pieces, the chanteuse experiences an almost orgasmic pleasure.

Although the first two acts of the opera are seemingly more austere, Schnittke does not abandon the polystylistic idiom that characterized the original cantata, as he freely parodies Bach, Verdi, Wagner, Weill et al. all the while turning musical norms upside down and demystifying the compositional process before our eyes. As observed by Egon Friedell, when the original Faust tale was conceived, "Man, the measure of all things, was taking the place of God, the Earth taking the place of Heaven... becoming the hub of the universe."³⁰ Thus I would argue that Schnittke's long-standing fascination

Der Hamburgische Staatsoper, Philharmonischer Staatsorchester Hamburg, Gerd Albrecht (BMG Classics – RCA Victor Red Seal 09026 68413 2, 2-box set, 1996).

³⁰ Cited in Annedore Cordes and Klaus Angermann, "Be Sober, Be Vigilant", liner notes to the double CD *Alfred Schnittke: Historia von D. Johann Fausten. Live recording of the world premiere in Hamburg. Eberhard Lorenz, Jürgen Freier, Arno Raunig, Hanna Schwarz, Der Hamburgische Staatsoper, Philharmonischer Staatsorchester Hamburg, Gerd Albrecht* (BMG Classics – RCA Victor Red Seal No. 09026 68413 2, 2-box set, 1996), 10–11.

with Faust was a product of his reaction to the suppression of religion in the Soviet Union and to atheism in general. Since the responses to trauma can include ritualization and retreat, it is no coincidence that Schnittke's Faust cantata was completed in 1983, less than a year after he was baptized. He used the old Faust tale to express his repulsion with atheism and the sinful state of the world, but also with the horrors of the twentieth century that were a result of the humankind's dismissal of God and consequent loss of moral compass.³¹ Unable to confront communist demiurges who had suppressed religion, Schnittke severely punishes his sinner Faust, makes him repent and accept his destruction, while at the same time mocking his stupidity and frivolity.

As we have seen, Schnittke's three operas, written towards the end of the composer's life, demonstrated his reaction to collective and personal traumas – be it the brutality of the communist rule, the loss of historical continuum in a society that had violently destroyed its own past in the name of the projected ideal future, the suppression of God and of Christian moral values, or the loss of Schnittke's family members and his own near-death experiences and consequent physical suffering. In these operas Schnittke deals with the destiny of an individual in the oppressive world and the issues of personal and collective guilt, failed hopes and broken promises.

Sažetak

U ovom članku razmatram tri opere Alfreda Šnitke u kontekstu studija traume – relativno novog i potencijalno veoma zanimljivog područja istraživanja u muzikologiji, pa i humanistici uopšte. Sve tri opere nastale su tokom devedesetih godina XX veka, tj. u poslednjoj deceniji kompozitorovog života. Najpre opisujem svoj prvi susret sa primenom studija traume na području muzikologije, koji se odigrao pre pet godina, kada sam dobila zadatak da napišem prikaz knjige *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (Izvođenje bola: muzika i trauma u Istočnoj Evropi) američke autorke hrvatskog porekla Marije Čizmić (Maria Cizmic). Premda ističem značaj i doprinos ove knjige, osvrćem se i na dve glavne zamerke koje sam tada istakla, a koje i dan-danas stoje. Prva se odnosi na autorkino neprecizno ili nategnuto "čitanje" određenih muzičkih dela, a druga na generalnu proizvoljnost njenog interpretativnog postupka. Koristeći kao otisnu tačku njeno poglavlje posvećeno Šnitkeovom Koncertu za klavir i gudače, u ovom radu tumačim Šnitkeovu opersku "trilogiju" iz devedesetih: *Život s idiotom* (Жизнь с идиотом, 1991), *Đezualdo* (Gesualdo, 1994) i *Povest o doktoru Johanu Faustu* (Historia von D. Johann Fausten).

³¹ Ivana Medić, "Irony, Satire, Parody and Grotesque...", op. cit. (forthcoming)

Šnitkeove opere sagledavam kao umetničke odgovore na različite traume, bilo kolektivne, bilo lične – u rasponu od brutalnosti komunističkih vlasti, istorijske dezorijentisanosti društva koje se nasilnim putem odreklo sopstvene prošlosti u ime projektovane idealne budućnosti, potiskivanja religije i posebno hrišćanskih moralnih vrednosti, pa do iznenadnog gubitka bliskih članova porodice i Šnitkeove višegodišnje borbe sa teškom bolešću, koja ga je primorala da se u više navrata suoči sa sopstvenom smrtnošću. U svojim operama Šnitke razmatra sudbinu pojedinca u opresivnom svetu koji ga okružuje, kao i pitanja lične i kolektivne krivice, izneverenih nada i neodržanih obećanja. Dok se u prvoj dovršenoj operi *Život s idiotom* Šnitke bavi sagledavanjem posledicama života pod komunističkom vlašću u Sovjetskom Savezu (koji se upravo u to vreme raspadao) i kolektivnim traumama sovjetskih građana, druge dve opere su ličnije, iako nisu autobiografske. U njima Šnitkea okupiraju bolest i smrt, ali i posledice gubitka moralnog i duhovnog kompasa na psihu pojedinca. Šnitke posebno surovo kažnjava Fausta, grešnika koji je odbacio Boga, te ga primorava da se pokaje i prihvati sopstveno uništenje, sprovodeći time svojevrstan muzički egzorcizam.

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