

## Elena Letňanová – For COMPOSER USA

XXII. FESTIVAL FORFEST CZECH REPUBLIC 2011

/ June 12 - September 12 /

Olomouc - Kroměříž - Bratislava

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Forfest - the international festival of contemporary music with the spiritual intentions and with the contemporary painting exhibitions and performance, presented the newest compositions of world and home composers with the time extent of the last twenty years. Exceptionally there were performed the older compositions from before 30 to 60 years (this year the works of Luigi Dallapiccola, Tristan Murail, Cornelius Cardew, Bernd Zimmermann, Zdenek Lukas, and Rudolf Ružička-„Concertino“).

Festival runs every year in the last week of June in the Czech Republic, in the inspiring “Moravian Athens” – in a picturesque city of Kromeríž, in the majestic Assembly Hall of Archbishop's Castle, also in the Gothic Cathedral of St. Maurice and in the hall of Moravian Museum, where the this -year International Conference on the topic “Spiritual Streams in the music and contemporary fine arts” took place . For the first time we could perceive a profil of the contemporary Irish music which remained still unknown to us. Forfest was extended also in the last years in the cities of Olomouc from the June 12. and to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia in the September 12.

Kroměříž has been famed by early Baroque Gardens of Italian architect Tencalli with the Rotund and its spectacular cupola and narthex entrance and mainly the famous Foucault's pendulum (one copy is also in Prague). The European known significant gallery in the Archbishop's Castle invites all tourists and connoisseurs to see a such artists as Tizian ( The Victory of Apollon Over Marsyas), Veronese, van Dyck (portrait of the King Charles the First with his wife), P. Breughel the older with the genre pictures and others. Tizian's picture refers to music, the struggle between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles (the terms of F. Nietzsche, in which Apollon is a victor over wild Marsyas and lets to take the skin from the body of Marsyas who is hanging down his head from the tree. It is more about the transformation of Dionysian unleashed type of music into spiritual and clair, into a music non-dramatic, full of the order and austerity.

The directors of the festival, **Zdenka** and **Václav Vaculovič**, received the recognition for this year high level Festival from the artists and composers. It really touches deeper into a problem of spiritual music. The Z. and V. Vaculovic programmed 20 concerts, mainly Moravian and Czech music along with many pieces of Slovak, Italian, American, Japanese, German, Austrian, Canadian, French, Polish music and two composers from South America. Primate of the festival held premieres of Czech, Moravian, and international composers including four authors.

The author's concert in Assembly Hall of the Castle was a tribute to the greatest living Czech woman-composer **Ivana Loudova** (Prague) Already her youth compositions “Sonata for violin and piano” with Anna Veverkova and Jan Dušek, showed the 19<sup>th</sup>-year author's ripe emotional and technical abilities - lyricism, motivic work and pregnant rhythm. The most complex was her String quartet nr. 2, in an excellent performance of Prague FAMU Quartet. It was a genuine healthy, narrative music full of motovic invention, color and various moods. Preludias For Piano (1961) and Prague Imaginations (1995) as programmatic works (Plaza of Loreto, Hundred Spires And Bells), were characteristic pieces, conceived as the postcards for friends abroad. The composition under titled “The Planet of Birds ” for violin and electronics did not hide the study and inspiration with Olivier Messiaen in calls and “singing” of birds, which gave the impression of recordings from paradise serving as the base for the solo instrument.

The second author's concert was dedicated to Professor **František Emmert** (Brno the capital of Moravia) which remained for us as a real special event, bringing his newest chamber works which I would characterize as music of “god's love”, music as a prayer at the same time full of severe contrasts (simple lyrical with dramatic and passionate music with

unawaited caesuras. It was mainly the work with the poetics of psalms Nr. 118/ the Voice of Jubilation/ from 2011 which took my perception. Professor Emmert used a specific, plain dialog between soprano and violin, with two instrumental intermezzi, a subtle meditative and warm music, indescribable by poor words. It was the music of hope and belief. In Four Motets music simply brings us up. In the case of Emmert's chamber and solo pieces we are not at all interested in any sociologic or national determination. Unforgettable interpret, as before at the festivals was passionate Milan Pala (violin , Slovakia) in „Robe of Veronika“- an intima drama.

The inauguration author's concert of the Forfest on June 19, 2011 pertained to Moravian philharmonic with the exquisite director Petr Vronsky and **Jonathan Griffith** „Meditations Over the Poem by Suzann Renaud“ and „The Old Singing“ –variations on the song of St. Thomas Aquinas by Moravian composer **Petr Blatny** in the St. Maurice church.

The fourth late evening author's concert was dedicated to two portraits of jubilee composers – Slovak composer **Miro Bázlik**, who is also a mathematician, and Czech professor **Rudolf Ružička**, the both with international prizes. It was a long awaited concert of electro acoustic music. The most attractive and well built, on the harmonic base, excelled the multifaceted „Spectra I“ by Miro Bázlik and brought the absolute primate of Slovak music. The work was a genuine aesthetic experience to the last measure of one hour lasting production with sound structures transforming Bach's fundament. Harmony, and homeostasis kept our attention in beautiful „Aria“, the music of Dante's purgatory. Prof. Ruzička excelled in the first composition titled „Tibia“, as well as the others with the soloist Jirí Hlaváč-clarinet.

Into a certain extent we can count to author's concerts also the life electronic and sound interventions on glass objects-sculptures the Prague composer **Michal Rataj**, who performed himself on glass objects of Marek Trizuliak/Slovakia/Prague and created well felt and built composition with sense of area contrasts.

This year FORFEST lasted 11 days. Every day we might listen to two or three concerts of chamber, ensemble or soloist type. Except for this rich program two exhibitions of paintings were opened by Czech Associate Professor **Dana Puchnarova and Italiani Tomassina Squadrito**. The so called Garden's Atelier with the paintings by **Václav Vaculovič** represented rectangular big formats - oil paintings- the most of abstract expression, actually, the states of soul“, brought an artistic culmination to the Festival. We should include also the three-day international colloquium with the presentations of musicologists, philosophers, theoreticians, composers, critics from abroad and home, which tried to capture the problem of spirituality from various angles and tried to state criteria of spirituality of the work of art, such as the truthfulness (in the great work the artist cannot lie).

We have heard excellent instrumental performances let me name just few of them **Nicola Baroni** {cello, Italia), **Daniel Kessner and Dolly Kessner** (flute-piano, USA), **Anna Zielinska** (violin, Poland), **Friedrich Gauwerky** (Germany). I was impressed by excellent character pieces „Zadig 21 capriccios“ by Italian composer **Massimiliano Messieri**, from which the part „Jealousy“ developed in a breathtaking way, and took my heart. Mr. Messieri has been invited repeatedly to Forfest, along with music by **Giacinto Scelsi** this time we heard significant older work „Trilogia I tre stadi dell'uomo“ from the year 1965, and **Carlo Benzi, Jonathan Harvey, and Cornelius Cardew**.

The pianist and Californian professor Dolly Kessner earned her high performance credit already on the previous Forfest festivals. This year she performed with utmost sense for mystery the enigmatic and mysterious piece in deep registers with the element of deliberate „uncertainty“ of the piece under the title „Terra oscura“, one of the most interesting and best compositions of Forfest by **Nikolas Zourabishvili de Pelken**, the French composer with dedication to musical spiritual space. In this concert there was performed an ensemble highly expressive piece, moving and taking our breath already at the beginning of the composition, it was a new premiered piece by American soloist-flautist and composer **Daniel Kessner**, titled „In the Centre“, his best piece so far. The soloist of the piece was dedicated woman **Kristina Valouskova**-soprano, who contributed to the work with her deep experience in the contemporary music. Other Kessner's composition „Epigraph Sonata For Flute and Piano“ from 2010, attracted with the authentic dynamic, and very active style, by the

composer itself along with **Dolly Kessner**/piano. This piece is an example of positive music built on vigorous flute process and noble subtle motives.

Anna Zielinska is known also from the previous Forfests. She brought an interesting concert dramaturgy with unknown authors from Byelorussia, Macedonia and Sweden. Passionate performance surprised in the first Swedish piece by **Jesper Nordin** „Calm Like a Bomb“ for violin and electronics. We heard Polish very interesting piece by **Tadeusz Wielecki**, for the first time performed in Czechia „Thread Is Spinning II for violin solo“, having clear compositional programmatic intention very well realized. The author is disposed with internal meditative talent and witty invention of „variations of the same“. **Wielecki** ended the piece with departure into a high „thin“ register of the instrument creating tapering angelic sounding. **Pawel Lukowiec** Enigma For Violin And Electronics pertained to the most melodic, „sad“ piece, with the accompanied „background“ of forward registered music in the performance of young sympathetic violinist **Anna Zielinska**, who is able to expose the feministic and masculine temperaments if the music needs this trait. **Lidia Zielinska**, the mother of the soloist this time presented her music as a sort of mosaic of motives, intermingled with the stereoscopic pictures of various aesthetic value, landscape, nature, and everyday objects by which she extends the limits of music toward visual impulses a sort of intimae experimental „Gesamtkunstwerk“. Swedish author **Jesper Nordin** in „Calm like a bomb“ for violin and reproduced electronics, instead of an ensemble, showed the way of group in dialogue, the violin keeps the position of string and plucking instrument - „homophonic voice“. **Alexander Litvinowski** from Byelorussia in Jazz Graffini gave the impression of improvising violinist again in passionate play of Anna Zielinska. **Soni Petrowski** from Macedonia in „Bric-a-brac“ brought the shimmering Balkan rhythm and old historical „bourdon“, eternally sounding supporting the tension, the piece that was made for effect.

String quartets and chamber ensembles were this year successful and well programmed. Acclaimed piece by **Daniel Kessner** „In the Center“, was one of the most successful. Then we should mention two string quartets performed at the end of the Forfest with a „high resolution“ structure by English composer **David Matthews**, developed in ramifying and „fractal“ processes, interesting in every movement. He knows how and when to develop new themes, the surprising mature and sovereign composition. I liked also originally written String Quartet by Moravian **Petr Zemek** a pure and deep music of Moravian warmth and musicality, constructed in three movements performed as though in one sweep on pleasant accorded pizzicato articulation in the first movement, the other movement was conceived by string bow as a fine contrast toward pizzicato of other instruments. Zemek is the connoisseur of melos not once he created in this quartet a heavenly beautiful horizontals and made so in the coda of the last movement by getting off the ground gradually to the highest spheres and left us amazed. Just to remind here his beautiful one-voice symphony performed by all instruments explicitly unison in the former Forfest was an audacious project. It was not re-creation of Middle age horizontality but searching of new musical space, what is not easy to compose. The quartets of Czech composers **František Fiala** (Epigrams from 1997 and Sonata da chiesa for violin and piano) and **Zdenek Lukáš** (The Second Quartet, measurely traditional), kept the public's attention along with premiere of subtle ensemble work „Madrigals of Summer“ by Prague recently deceased **Petr Pokorny**, with well-known dedicated soloist **Markéta Dvoráková**. Quintet by **Petr Eben** with tempi allegro risoluto, allegretto, moderato andante, Allegro-finale, was a dignified end of concert of Czech music.

The concert of two Czech soloists **Jan Řezníček**, viola, and **Eduard Spáčil**, was dedicated to Austrian composers **Maximian Kreuz**, with traditional „Adagio spirituososo“, full of lyricism and passion, **Wolfram Wagner's** Sonata (2009) in premiere, with pulsating dynamism and modulations, with striking first and last movements, effectively built long areas into maximum, even on the whole-tone scale. **Horst Ebenhoh** in dramatic 3rd Sonata with stinking rhythm and melody in both well-balanced instruments, led quasi dialogue, and German **Gisbert Näther** in „Moment musical“ gave us a very move mental and dynamically developed work in quick tempo. The Czech **Pavel Slezák** wrote „Wagnerlandia“ in a great style, epic and passionate form, inspired motivically by Wagner( Walkyra- „Tages Anbruch am Rhein“). Two Canadian composers **Philip McConnell**, **Alexander Rapoport**, were performed

with fire, Rapport with Russian soul and touch reminded us on serious works of **Alfred Schnittke**.

On Forfest 2011 we had occasion to hear the works of young and older generations in vocal and instrumental settings, many of them inspired by dramas, poems, biblical, philosophy and Buddhist texts, some of them by own composer's experience, some from diaries, paintings of friends and sculptures. Just to remind us: Franz Liszt was the first who composed a symphonic poem inspired by the great painting of his contemporary. One afternoon's concert was an experimental project „Palagrachio“ using the historical Foucault's pendulum as a part of its instrumental equipment and new environmental space of the memorial's cupola. The work of new sounds and the form, depending on environmental inspiration, made on various sound objects, amplified (for instance on a small air-turbine, strings of knitting machine, and so forth), was combined with the gentle mental improvisation played by the Moravian author **Petr Graham** ( an original composer from Brno) in high concentration on keyboard instrument in collaboration with **Ivan Palacký**, developing together the two different lines of sound three part form. The work has potation of further transformations in a new space and conditions. The work included a certain element of indeterminacy.

**Peter Graham's** „24 Aquarelles“ for piano solo (a selection from this cycle) was interpreted on the concert of Slovak music performed by Elena Letnanova (Slovakia)- (included is the review from Opus musicum, Brno, Czech Republic, August 2011, reviewer Jan Grossmann): „Letnanova always surprises with something unconventional. Her musical and technical education formed her into an unusual personality. It has been a pleasure to listen to her concert performances. From her programming I was moved by Six Epigrams by **Miro Bazlik** (Slovakia) slowly placed clusters with which the interpret literally played, a gentle figurative fine-drawing, cleverly used small aleatorics in the left hand or double lines on a common rhythmical model) and by selection of a six miniatures from „24 aquarelles“ by Peter Graham which were the touches of music and silence with the exception of two parts“. On the program we have heard in retrospective two Slovak composers **Roman Berger's** „Soft November Music I“ and „Semplice“, and Czech premiere by young composer **Tomáš Boroš** „Three Reflexions For Piano“.

The chamber ensemble „Konvergenecie“ interpreted some unknown foreign composers from Japan, South Korea, Czechia, Slovakia, and France, with well-known soprano **Kristýna Valoušková** and **Ondrej Štochl**-viola. The concert brought music inspired by spirit and aesthetics of Far East. Pure and „tamed“, over spirited music in majority shorter pieces in which we have forgotten the physical time (works by **Vladislav Matoušek** for soprano and haptically used bells (the simple work but magical), then **Marek Kopelent** „Shy Shades“, and **Martin Marek's** „Three Arrows of Ioram“. Konvergenecie prefer to present silenced musical space and sounding, departure from overfilled material pole of music. Further we heard the work of the founder of the spectral computer tone analysis - **Tristan Murail** in colored structure „C'est un jardin secret.....“ (It is a secret garden...), and two East works by us known Japanese **Toru Takemitsu** with rational three-minute long „Voice“with intermingled outcries of the soloist playing in the extrem registers and the author from South Korea **Toši Asikawa** „Vertical Soul“ on the traditional instrument of Japan and Korea- on flute, often used lovely overblown tones making illusion of harmony. An amazing work of the concert was vocal-instrumental „De profundis“- four chants played by the whole ensemble based on poems of Michelangelo Buonarrotti by **Iris Szeghy** (Slovak woman-composer living in Switzerland), the work of humbleness and gentleness. In the part titled „Al mondo“ the piece developed in barely hearable pianissimo dynamics, it was quasi-a „prayer“.

Violoncello recital of **Friedrich Gauwerky** pertains to the best performances of the festival. Soloist interpreted the works with a deep feeling/experience for himself. He disposes a perfect technique and personal expression, every detail was clear until the last momentum of the work (in **Luigi Dalapicolla's** Ciacona Intermezzo a Adagio, the oldest work of the festival (1945), **Bernd Alois Zimmermann's** Sonata from 1960, **Karlheinz Stockhausen** „In Friendship“ (1977-82). Stockhausen has been performed by us very rarely, at least the last 30 years, why?

The essential thought of the Forfest Festival 2011- the spiritual music is the firm part of serious music (the artificial music as to opposed to non-artificial music) and uncovers potentiation to be expressed in silent, meditative areas, which have tendency to extend our „lived“ time („real“ time, Kantian time) and is this year prevailingly programmatic and narrative next to the „absolute“ music, which delineates us from everyday contemporary society which tries to live very quick for no reason. Spiritual music is more and more substitute of this problematic common life of communicative-technically developed society. An interesting fact should be stated: this year - Forfest did not present any work of minimalist provenience or „style“ which served long as a sign of technical-communicative society which is almost in the state of hypertrophy, the state of live out, and overuse of this technique.

Doc. PhDr. Elena Letňanová, Bratislava August 23, 2011