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Little Concert Anthology

by Zorica Premate

The project *Breathing In / Breathing out* is a discographic release of three CDs based on a series of three concert nights "My Little Concert Anthology of Music for Piano", played by Nada Kolundžija at the Artget Gallery of the Belgrade Cultural Center on May 27th, July 7th and August 7th, 2014. This thematically originally designed and excellently executed concert series was also the highlight of Belgrade's musical life that season. Nada Kolundžija marked it with a unique and sophisticated poetics, which has for decades nurtured, developed and spread the love of contemporary music among the younger generations. Her pianism is an example and a model of how music of the 20th and 21st centuries does not have to be uncomfortable and difficult to follow and understand; how the listener can be naturally and unpretentiously drawn into its world and how they can be offered a variety of current directions and styles to be enjoyed. When musicologist Ivana Miladinović Prica joined this project during the development of the accompanying program booklet, another valuable precedent occurred in our publishing practice, and this accompanying material became a real book (in English and Serbian), not only with all composers' biographies and their explanations and unknown information related to recorded works, but also with a survey in which each composer (in person or with appropriate quotes) briefly answered three questions about composing for piano, his/her own creative process and contemporary music in general. Thus, the artistic and analytical part of this edition, entirely complementing and agreeing with each other, achieved another goal — to turn the listener into a true lover, offering him/her a profound reason for this: the ability to fully understand recorded music through the author's statements about it and its creation.

The concept of Nada Kolundžija and Ivana Miladinović Prica as the editor of this edition was fully supported by Belgrade-based publisher Vertical Jazz, which produced a technically flawless and visually modern and functional design and packaging. The three compact discs are presented and connected in a small joint cardboard cover by designer Dušica Knežević, observing the rules of transparency, accessibility and unpretentiousness, while sound designer Zoran Marinković, our doyenne of the art of recording and producing sound, performed his task in an elegant and highly professional way.

The project has now returned to its concert origin: Nada Kolundžija is touring in late March with a program composed of compositions recorded on this release in the United States (Washington, New York and Boston), Canada (Toronto, Coburg) and (probably) the United Kingdom; her UK-based publisher took over the placement of her compact discs, and is currently organizing several suitable concerts, to be played in April.

After decades of continuous work and development, pedagogical and concert activity, the unique poetics of Nada Kolundžija could be defined as exploring the relationship between simplicity and complexity, concept and context, the immediacy of musical expression and its strict control. As “breathing in / breathing out” the living tissue of sounds. All the extremes of contemporary piano music (or music for the piano) present this artist with a challenge and a chance to explore, through playing with traditional and non-traditional aspects of pianism, with canons and freedoms, with stereotypes and surprising discoveries; an opportunity to creatively develop such an approach to the score that would cling to its secret being and transport it into the world of sound in a natural, unpretentious and humorous way.

Nada Kolundžija is exclusively devoted to contemporary music, which (even in difficult conditions for the existence of art in our milieu) she constantly plays and promotes, which is a rarity in Serbia. Her enthusiasm is so sincere, motivated and professionally powerful that she succeeds in achieving the impossible: to bring together, spread and educate both the younger generations of pianists and audiences who thus acquire an affinity for the most up-to-date works of global and local music, and who enjoy together with her the compositions that she puts on the repertoire.

The concert project *My Little Concert Anthology of Piano Music*, followed by the *Breathing In / Breathing Out* CD series is just that: a collection of contemporary piano music loved by Nada Kolundžija, selected with special refinement and poetic inspiration. With her subtle, unmistakable taste, Nada Kolundžija has compiled works by local and foreign authors of different generations and styles, from Satie, Cage, Cardew, Noncarrow, Perth and Glass, to M. Savić, M. Lazarov Pashu, M. Raičković, D. Bogdanović and Katarina Miljković. On this occasion, as many as 17 works by Serbian and foreign composer were performed in Serbia, with three world premieres (compositions by M. Raičković, G. H. Brown and M. Savić). In addition to piano solo, Nada Kolundžija also played works in the combination of piano and toy piano, piano and tape, piano and computer. The three CDs *Breathing In / Breathing Out* that serve as the imprint and upgrade of this concert series have extended the selection of compositions to the works of Lola Perrin, Ivana Stefanović, David Lang, Vuk Kulenović and Yannis Kyriakides. Thus, the "little anthology" was expanded according to Nada Kolundžija's

principle that "the entire concert is one whole" and can be refined and directed to various stylistic and interpretative essences, just like any work of art that exists in the status of permanent creation. It is that "breathing in / breathing out" of her creative being, where playing is just one of the activities that creates the art of sound, which, as it is well known, is not as strict as language.