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of redemption through pilgrimage. Tripitaka sings a beautiful aria whilst offering Monkey a golden headband. Unfortunately for Monkey this allows him to be controlled and tamed when the monk is at prayer. In the next three scenes, the motley crew endure trial and temptation from the flesh-eating White Skeleton Demons, the Spider Women (where Piggy declares himself seduced to the accompaniment of a beguiling Waltz), and must also pass through the fires of Volcano City. They achieve this with the aid of a giant fan that extinguishes the flames, to the accompaniment of some of the most epic music of the production. Having finally overcome their trials, the friends attain enlightenment in Paradise. Although this was a foregone conclusion, the work demanded it; not only that – this was just about the most uplifting ending one is likely to experience. The music of this scene was epic in scope, yet noble and devotional in aspiration.

Constant Lambert famously remarked that the most intelligent comment he received about his largest work, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, came from not from any professional or colleague but from his grocer, who said that the work struck just the right balance, without undue emphasis on any one element. The same could be said of *Monkey*, except that whilst each individual contribution was superb, the sum of those parts was superlative: a triumph in every respect that amply fulfilled the director's long-nurtured dream of a 'fantastical spectacle' that thoroughly deserved its standing ovation.

Tim Mottershead

Zagreb: 24th Music Biennale – International Festival of Contemporary Music

In 1961, the well known Croatian composer Milko Kelemen initiated the now renowned biennial Festival of Contemporary Music in Zagreb (MBZ). This year, he and the festival received the prestigious *Kultur Preis Europa 2007*. Not so innovative as it once was, the festival (held on 19–28 April) was more a survey of past and present achievements, at home and abroad, comprising five themes: 'Composer in focus' (Krzysztof Penderecki), 'Musical links' (with Sweden; in 2009 it will be Canada), 'Music scene', 'Women composers' (36 of them) and a review of diverse and interesting electronic music performances, even with dance.

In the presence of the Polish composer Penderecki we heard six of his compositions, but not even one from his avant-garde period!

He conducted two of them with the Zagreb Philharmonic (the Fourth Symphony and the *Concerto grosso* for three cellos); the others were various chamber works, among them his latest *Divertimento* for cello solo (played by the wonderful young Danjulo Ishizaka) which proved once more this composer's innovative and rich creative energy, this time in a miniature form. He had stated: 'the real Penderecki today can be found in his chamber works', and this proved to be true.

The Swedish link was very rich in events: with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, the Camerata Nordica, the Kroumata Percussion Ensemble and with some of the composers of the performed works present; the impressive Swedish Dance & Electronic Scene (EMS) and so on. Among all the music heard, Ingvar Lidholm (1921) as the senior composer, Karen Rehnquist, Anders Eliasson and Victoria Borisova-Ollas (born 1969) proved to be still the most consistently imaginative.

During the 10-day festival, with five daily concerts/happenings, we heard 34 world premières of varying quality, mostly in chamber genres, in which all the guests and domestic performers (22 countries, 31 ensembles and 148 total works) took part. Among the new works of the Croatian composers at this year's Zagreb Biennale, the 'newest' and most innovative was the piece *Dialogues of Birds Asleep* by the 'eternally young lad', the 70-year-old Dubravko Detoni,¹ for mixed choir and two pianos (performed by the wonderful Choir of the Croatian Radio with the composer and his son Daniel at the pianos). Three lady pianists played, one from Zagreb and two from Belgrade: Katarina Krpan gave the first performance of a longer initial piece *Mother's Kiss* (from a cycle *Kate's Kiss* dedicated to her) by the Croat Mladen Tarbuk (also known as a conductor); Sonja Radojković played the condensed and evocative *Preludij & Aria* by the young composer Draško Adžić (1979, a student of Isidora Žebeljan in Belgrade), which awoke our attention; while Nada Kolundžija presented her emblematic 'lady composers programme' (heard earlier in Belgrade) with pieces by Ada Gentile, Roberta Vacca, Jasna Veličković, Katarina Miljković, etc). Unlike the two other, energetic lady-pianists, Kolundžija, with her cultivated touch of the instrument, succeeded in creating an atmosphere of unimagined beauty and sensation, especially with *Good Bach* by Jasna Veličković.

¹ Author of 128 compositions, an excellent pianist, conductor and eloquent music-writer, who in 1970 founded his Acezantes Ensemble for contemporary music performances.