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THE NON-EXISTENT PAST OF THE DISTANT FUTURE

About the Composition *Post-Excavation Activities* by Svetlana Maraš

Abstract: The text interprets Svetlana Maraš's electroacoustic radiophonic composition *Post-Excavation Activities* (2020). The compositional principle, which the author calls *the inversion of concrete music*, and which includes work with sounds of digital origin whose purpose is *to resemble* found sound artifacts, has been compared with the imaginary archives. Following the intention of Svetlana Maraš to present the medium as a sounding compositional layer, an analysis was made of which sound objects in this work can be representationally determined and how they participate in the communicativeness of the work of music. The importance of radio as a medium was emphasized, but also the context of the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade in which the materials for the composition were created.

Keywords: Svetlana Maraš, *Post-Excavation Activities*, experimental radiophonics, electroacoustic music, radio, sound objects, imaginary archive

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Radiophonic work by Svetlana Maraš,¹ *Post-Excavation Activities*, was first broadcast on 30th May 2020 on the Third Program of Radio Belgrade. The composition, as the author writes in the program note, “is based on a fictional scenario of restoring the ancient, lost and found, musical recordings.” The title refers to analytical methods and techniques that take place after the archaeological fieldwork. The lengthy and complex sequence of procedures (from careful cleaning and conservation of more fragile artifacts, sorting and classifying samples, and complex methods of dating... to numerous other specialized techniques) brings a more complete and deeper understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the found artifacts.²

The process of the collection and editing of sound materials was also lengthy. The composition was written from June 2019 to April 2020, and some materials used in it were gathered even earlier, from February 2019.³ When describing her compositional process, Svetlana Maraš mentions a personal informal and somewhat disorganized base of sound materials that is being refreshed during work on each new project.⁴ The author transfers mate-

¹ Svetlana Maraš (1985), composer and sound artist, has long been active on both the local and international scenes of experimental music. She studied composition in Belgrade in the class of Professor Zoran Erić, won her master’s degree at the Department of Media of the School of Arts, Design, and Architecture at Aalto University in Finland, and specialized in several courses and workshops in Austria, Germany, and the USA. Svetlana Maraš’s work covers the field of new music and sound art and ranges from performances through interactive installations to electroacoustic compositions and other sound art forms. Maraš presented her works at the Gantner Multimedia Center (Bourgnone), the Onassis Cultural Center (Athens), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Belgrade), the Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music, the Contemporary Sound Showcase in Zagreb, the CTM Festival in Berlin ... Among important compositions by Svetlana Maraš are her electroacoustic and radio works *Poetica Micro Mix* (2011), *Canzone Distorte* (2013), *Language* (2016), *Radio Concert No. 1* and *Radio Concert No. 2*, *Post-Excavation Activities*, then *It’s About Spy Stations* (2009) for voice, guitar, computer keyboard, bass clarinet, objects and live electronics, *Dirty Thoughts* (2015) for ensemble and live electronics, *Chamber Music* for accordion with electronics and cello (2020) (biographical data downloaded from <http://www.serbiancomposers.org/kompozitori/svetlanamaras/>) accessed on 27 April 2022).

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-excavation_analysis (accessed on 14 April 2022).

³ From the author’s Program Note on the composition, available on the author’s profile on the online music platform Bandcamp, where the composition in its integral version can be found: <https://svetlanamaras.bandcamp.com/album/post-excavation-activities> (accessed on 14 April 2022).

⁴ According to *An online conversation* between A. Gnjatović and S. Maraš on Zoom platform (25 March 2022).

rials, usually *small sounds*, the clearly defined short sound objects⁵ from one composition to another, and recontextualizes them. In the case of Post-excavation activities, the author insists that the majority of the sounds used in the piece “have a purely digital origin although their purpose is to resemble the quality and the characteristics of field recordings, amplified objects, or other concrete sounds. In this instance, the compositional method becomes an inversion of the concrete music in an attempt to re-create the world of real, organic sounds by using the artificial, digital ones.”⁶ If the comparison of Svetlana Maraš’s work with archeological work were to be continued at this point, the procedures would suit those dealing with pseudo-archeology, negatively connoted, a discipline that interprets the past by rejecting scientific methods and distorting findings under the desired narrative. The procedures of fabrication and tendentious contextualization of artifacts, however, point to specific artistic concepts and structures – the imaginary archives.⁷

In his essay *An archival impulse*,⁸ Hal Foster defines the art of archives as a genre that seeks “to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present”, which corresponds to the original description of Post-excavation activities. Whether the relationship towards the artefacts as material happens in projects that use actual archival material or the archive serves the artist only as a conceptual tool, the idea of archiving remains attractive in contemporary art. The attitude toward the construction of an archive as a performative practice, of tensions of the ephemeral and permanent, emerging and preserved, gradually transforms the archive from a repository of art documents to an artistic medium. The imaginary archive artists create *from zero* by creating not only the construction, function, and narrative of the archive but every single document that should take place inside it. The constructed documents/art objects are not a goal in themselves and do not necessarily bear the contextual marking but are fabricated as raw material that

⁵ The composition *Post-Eexcavation Activities* was awarded the “Stevan Mokranjac” Award for 2020, about which more will be said later in the text. As stated in the Explanation of the Jury Award Decision, Svetlana Maraš’s compositional procedure “has so far always been based on the use of sounds of short and definite duration, which are clearly defined, with great gestural potential and strong physical presence.” The text of the Explanation is available from: https://composers.rs/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Mokranjceva-nagrada-obrazlozenje-S.Maras_.pdf (accessed on 23 April 2022).

⁶ Svetlana Maraš, *Program note*

⁷ The terms *fictional archive* and *experimental archive* are less frequently used.

⁸ Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse”, *October*, Vol. 110, 2004, 3–22.

obtains its identity in the language and structure of the archive that produces them.

What the archive of the imaginary provides versus the archive of the real, historical, is the possibility of imagining (lying, creation), which is contained in its very essence. The fact that artistic expression is not predicated upon factuality allows it to be physically realized through any means and ways/acts that seem appropriate to the artist. Through the narrative frame of the archive, the artist speaks the meaning of the archival material and interprets it as if it had been uncovered, while that same material actually emerges as an artistic interpretation of the narrative that the artist communicates. “The composition was created by a very tranquil fitting of the material, over a year or more, and I mean the fitting of larger sections that gave the composition a narrative character. The fictional script of the work arose to some extent from the sound characteristics of the original material (...).”⁹ In the last third of the research process,¹⁰ a reciprocal cyclical game of materials that feeds the concept that gives birth to materials has emerged.

Svetlana Maraš builds a narrative of her work as “a personal contemplation of what this imaginary sound reproduction technology might be, and moreover, what are the musical specificities of a medium that we consider to be old (and maybe even long forgotten) in general. These imaginary (musical) findings are the central idea around which the compositions have been made. The sound vocabulary of the work has been built elaborating on this and on the idea that the medium, as a physical fact, can be represented in music as one of many existing compositional layers, with a possibility to be depicted by using conventional musical tools.”¹¹

The author connects her work with the legacy of early concrete music, the historical practice of compositional work “with sounds that specifically exist and can be considered complete and defined sound objects.”¹² The re-

⁹ The excerpt was taken from an interview with Svetlana Maraš conducted by musicologist Milan Milojković, Ph.D. *Razgovor s povodom*, web page of Composers' Association of Serbia: <https://composers.rs/?p=7583> (accessed on 27 April 2022).

¹⁰ *An online conversation* (25 March 2022)

¹¹ Svetlana Maraš, *Program note*

¹² The very term *sound objects* (les objets sonores) was first used by Pierre Schaeffer, the founder of the genre of musique concrète, when describing sound materials, i.e., specific and unique sound segments that are isolated from the original context by a compositional-technological process (recording) and treated as found objects, “fragments of sound that specifically exist. Then, through further manipulation, transformation, and musical

search on the manifestation and characteristics of sound objects is present and significant in the compositional as well as the theoretical practice of Svetlana Maraš. In her master thesis *Embodied Composition. Treatment and meaning of physical object in experimental music and sound art*,¹³ she examines the relation of Western European and North American art music to non-musical objects, the embodiment of music, and the problems of autonomy of non-musical objects in a musical work. Until she reaches her method of *inversion of concrete music* in *Post-Excavation Activities*, she crosses the circular path from the sound relation and musical relation to the physical object to the gradual release of sound from its material source. Objects continue to survive only through their auditory dimension, artificially generated, inorganic, but musically shaped and contextually positioned so as to carry within them a representation, a shadow of some material body occupying some physical space.

The composition consists of ten short movements (the shortest of them lasts only 61 seconds, and the longest is 6 minutes and 29 seconds). The total duration is 29 minutes and 25 seconds. "Some titles of the individual pieces point to concrete references, providing the listener with the material for a storytelling experience that permeates the whole work."¹⁴ Movements in the composition can, to some extent, be classified based on the *main, most evocative* sound objects they contain and according to the principles of the organization of the course of music. There is, however, no movement in the piece in which only one sound source is present, nor in which one sole constructive procedure is in force. Thus, the tape does not sound only through the movements whose names directly refer to it (*Tape 1, Tape 2*) but is present throughout the composition, as a sound artefact or as a reference to a characteristic of the medium, for example, through the increased compression of the sound spectrum.

recontextualization, sound objects become musical objects." According to: Biljana Srečković, *Modernistički projekat Pjera Šefera: Od ispitivanja radiofonije do muzičkih istraživanja*, Beograd, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2011, 45–50.

¹³ The theoretical study *Embodied Composition. Treatment and meaning of physical object in experimental music and sound art*, is part of the master's thesis defended in 2008 at the Media Department of the School of Art and Design, Aalto University, Espoo, Finland.

¹⁴ Svetlana Maraš, *Program note*

Movement	Length	Predominant sound object	Organization of the form
1 – Opening	03:44	EMS Synthi 100	music ¹ (tonal, with repetitions)
2 – Voice recording (re-construction)	01:14	voice	music (tonal, with repetitions)
3 – Tape fragment 1	01:15	magnetic tape	sound (concrete sound)
4 – Episode 1	03:02	EMS Synthi 100	music
5 – Main	06:29	voice	music + sound
6 – Episode 2	01:01	EMS Synthi 100	music (tonal, with repetitions)
7 – Incomplete	06:01	voice	concrete
8 – Noise	01:58	EMS Synthi 100	music + sound
9 – Tape fragment 2	02:56	magnetic tape	sound (concrete sounds)
10 – Episode 3 (Ending)	01:45	EMS Synthi 100	music (tonal, with repetitions)

Even without delving into the complexity and discordance of theoretical views of different authors on the representational capacity and character of music as art, it is clear that in the case of *Post-Excavation Activities*, working with sound objects and artefacts is more a game of invocation than of representation. What are the parts of the material world of sound that the author evokes? How many artefacts are, in fact, recognizable in the sound and cause in the listener at least partially distinct associations with the source of the sound, its origin, and physical manifestation? In the multitude of small sounds that build the eco-system of the work, there are three types of sounds whose aspects (to an unequal extent and often in odd relationships) can be representationally determined:

- 1) sounds EMS Synthi 100
- 2) the sounds of a magnetic tape
- 3) human voices

¹⁵ Biljana Leković, in her *Ontological 'Key' for problematizing sound art*, separates performative sound art – the practice of performing sound as a temporal art without communication with material space (which would correspond to the musical organization of the form from the table above) and presentational sound art – the practice of treating the sound as art in time and in communication with the physical space of the sound setting (to which the sound organization of the form would correspond). Along with these two categories, their amalgam, performative-presentational art, is also present. According to: Biljana Leković, *Sound Art/Zvukovna umetnost: Muzikološka perspektiva – teorije*, Beograd, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Katedra za muzikologiju, 2019, 105–106.

1) “The signature sound by EMS Synthi 100 has been used cohesively throughout the different sections of the composition to set an emotional backdrop of the work...”¹⁶ During the engagement of Svetlana Maraš in the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade, the analog/digital hybrid synthesizer EMS Synthi 100 was restored and put into active use,¹⁷ originally assembled and adapted for the needs of Belgrade Radio in 1971.¹⁸ This rare and complex device with a specific sound has become a hub in the work of the renovated studio, which became a “place of active research and production of electronic music”¹⁹ through workshops, composers’ residences, guest appearances, and concerts by foreign and domestic artists. The composer’s continuous work with the electronic instrument, next to serving as a source of sound materials, resulted, among other things, in her pieces *Radio Concert No. 1* and *Radio Concert No. 2*, in which “the use of EMS Synthi 100 (*Synthi*) in combination with computer setup and magnetic tape loops”²⁰ depicts a sonic landscape akin to the world of *Post-Excavation Activities*.

¹⁶ Svetlana Maraš, *Program note*

¹⁷ Svetlana Maraš was the composer in residence and artistic director of the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade from 2016 to September 2021, when she took over the position of professor of creative music technologies and co-head of Electronic Studio of the Academy of Music of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts (FHNW) in Basel. The joint efforts of the editorial staff of the Third Program of Radio Belgrade in this period resulted in the revitalization and modernization of the studio through the reparation of the EMS Synthi 100 and Studer track recorder and the purchase of other specialized equipment. After more than a decade of inactivity, the official concert opening of the renovated Studio took place in March 2018. The concert, starring Synthi 100, featured live compositions by Svetlana Maraš and Paul Pignon, an improvisation by Nicola Ratti, and a screening of Slobodan Šijan’s experimental film *Yeah* (1972), for which the music was composed by Paul Pignon.

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EMS_Synthi_100 (accessed on 27 April 2022).

¹⁹ Milan Milojković, *Razgovor s povodom*

²⁰ “In *Radio Concert No. 2*, the expressiveness of complex micro-processes is applied, enabled by computer technology in the analog domain. Svetlana Maraš characterizes her approach to sound in the last few compositions as an inversion of concrete music. Namely, resemblance to the concrete sound is achieved through the application of processes inspired mainly by granular synthesis and micro-compositional techniques based on the sound source, whether analog or digital. Sonoristically and at the level of aesthetic direction, this work consciously and actively communicates with the sound of the past and early electronic music.” From the announcement of the show *Electronic Studio (RB3) dedicated to Svetlana Maraš’s Radio Concert No. 2*: <https://www.rts.rs/page/radio/ci/story/1464/radio-beograd-3/4422043/elektronski-studio--svetlana-maras-radijski-koncert-broj-2.html> (accessed on 27 April 2022).

The sound of Synthi, as connective and emotional tissue, symbolically positions the author's creative practice in relation to the heritage of the Belgrade Electronic Studio. It opens the *Post-Excavation Activities* and is present as the supporting sound layer in all *episodes*, as well as in the eighth movement (*Noise*). Thus, as many as five of the ten movements of the composition, including its *Opening* and *Ending*, speak in the language of Synthi. At the same time, these are the most melodic movements of the composition (although the melodic component traditionally understood as the activity of the relationships of tones of different pitches has no significant connotations in this piece).

All episodes are characterized by repetitiveness – slightly distorted or irregular looping. Synthi does not give much scope for the temporal organization of the course, so one of the ways to build a longer musical phrase from the configured fragment is to repeat it through the work of an envelope shaper.²¹ This dynamic processor (similar to a compressor but not affecting the original signal level) allows independent boosting or the attenuating of different sound envelope segments. The sonification of the technical characteristics and limitations of the medium itself, testifies that in the service of the representational aspect of sound in this case are not only Synthi's sounds, but also its devices and processes. Repetitiveness, from the very beginning, acts as a ritual. It contributes to the immersiveness of the work, drawing the listener into the rhythm and cycle of distant and deep layers of existence.

Opening draws a not-quite-periodic loop of the EMS Synthi 100 figure dominated by a long tone **g4**. This main layer is gradually joined by artefacts of unclear origin, which, with their considerably larger reverberation, progressively build the background layer, which is less informative. As the movement proceeds, the space gradually expands and deepens, the echo of small objects resonates deeper and deeper and gradually, symbolically *opens up the past*. In *Episode 1*, Synthi's sound is more distant than at the beginning. The hum of its highly stretched tones (somewhat ominous and somewhat nostalgic at the same time) repeats and reverberates on the same ground with other sound artefacts, building the sound space of the movement. Occasionally, certain artefacts come to the fore, closer to the listener. *Episode 2*, the cycle's most melodious and *tenderest* movement, is the only one in which there is no continuous activity of very short sounds. The sound of the slightly higher Synthi register is accompanied only by the deep sounds of digital waves (or

²¹ *An online conversation* (25 March 2022)

winds?) And very high, discreet glass slides. *Episode 3 (Ending)* appears as an inverted image of the first movement. One *d* reluctantly enters a space echoed by artefacts of an unknown past. As the artefacts thin out, the *d* gets its high distorted response, the entire sound landscape shifts to a higher register and Synthi remains the last sound heard in the composition.

2) Although the sound of Synthi is recognizable as *the sound of an old synthesizer*, the notion of its specificity to the sounds of other related instruments is accessible to a small number of listeners. On the other hand, the sound of the magnetic tape and artifacts of its use is part of the great auditory culture of the twentieth century. Thus, its representational power is greater, and the historical landmark is the only one that can be drawn with certainty when trying to contemplate the time that the composition reconstructs.

Movements *Tape fragment 1, and 2* are based on concrete sounds of tape winding and warping, clicking of the hub, characteristic rustling and crackling and other artefacts of this medium... In *Tape fragment 2* this is further combined with sound content recorded on tape and whose significant distortions occur as a result of (sounding) tape manipulations; this combination works like a camera zooming in and out,²² playing with the space in which the tape sounds and the space which sounds on the tape. This one example shows how imagined listening perspectives change through composition; in this case:

- the sound of the studio, i.e., the sound of physical manipulation of tapes and devices (sound of tape being placed on a tape recorder, hub clicking, other external sounds)
- *the surface* sound of the tape (sound of rustling or crackling and twisting of the tape itself, as opposed to the sound of its contents),
- the sound of synthesizers, the sound of old technology – the *inner sound of the tape* (the sound of what is on the tape), the sound artifacts of distant cultures, voices.

²² The term cinema for the ear (*cinéma pour l'oreille*), which the author uses, connects the techniques of creating an acoustic work with film techniques and addresses the interpretation of sound work in the language of film. This name, established by the French-Canadian composer Francis Dhomont, is used for “a genre of electroacoustic music that makes use of concrete (real-world) sounds that are suggestive of programmatic elements. The listener is taken on a journey through different soundscapes that conjure up aural images, creating a cinematic experience for the ear.” According to Rob Mackay: <https://nickcofilm.com/2013/10/04/cinema-for-the-ear/> (accessed on 23 April 2022).

In the montage of the composition, individual sounds/fragments are organically sewn together, and materials of analog and digital origin are bound into unique smooth surfaces. At other intersections, however, minor distortions and skips intentionally occur; their uneven binding seems like a result of the use of old technology (such as magnetic tape). During the composition movements (especially the longer, more developed ones, such as *Main* or *Unfinished*), changing the point from which the sound is *observed* produces the effect of disorientation of the listener (one sudden, *imperfect* cut takes place in the fifth movement, at 5:54, when exiting the soundscape and entering into the tape). This is another method the composer deals with, sonifying the medium.

The concretization of sound seems to contribute to the increased abstraction of the organization of the music time. In *Fragments*, rhythmic and rhythmic-formal means (the activity of meter, repetitions, reprises, contrasts, and variations of larger structures) and known ways of organizing a musical texture – do not affect the listener. (This is less striking in *Fragments 1*, in which the number and type of materials used are reduced, and the movement itself is very concise.) The pieces are listened to as works of sound art without the expectations that the passage of music evokes. Interestingly, the movement *Noise*, despite the first impression of the accumulated materials of various origins and contexts (processes and artefacts present in other movements here build the *noise* together), musically communicates somewhat differently. Communicativeness is provided by the emergence of harmonic tonal material (from Synthi) in the 30th second, its transformation/variation, and finally, disappearance.

3) The second movement of the cycle reconstructs the archaic singing of male voices in a complex rhythmic and spatial (panoramic) counterpoint with deep percussive sounds and high noises that occasionally come forward, step into the foreground. Fragmented excerpts of the song, with its phrase contours with rarely perceptible modal scale motion, and a constant rhythmical exchange with percussive sounds, point to an ancient ritual. The anonymity of the voices and singing is achieved by the abrupt cutting and editing of short fragments whose distortions are most significant on slow attacks and torn ends of phrases so that only the vocals are intelligible. At the end of the movement, male voices go into depth, below the range of the human voice, and only based on known phrase contours can the vocal origin of the source be assumed.

The movement *Main* has the most developed dramatic curve and represents a *surrealist sound landscape*²³ in which sounds of obviously digital origin and sounds that act as if they are of biophonic and geophonic origin are found. From 2:12, voices that speak an unrecognizable and non-existent language, a language that, by dissecting morphemes and digital distortions of phonemes, the author alienates from the human, come to the fore. The image intensifies while *the speakers* take multiple positions in the sounding environment. The ominous soundscape moves toward them and grows around them as a threat. From 3:36, the human voice completely disappears, merging with other materials processed so that only distorted outlines of speech can be discerned, and during the next minute, the culminating part of the movement takes place, in which animal-like cries of unidentified origin replace speech. At the end of the piece, only the rustling of the tape remains.

The movement *Incomplete* begins with an inhumanly deep, distorted by stretching, and grainy sound of a choir whose color gradually morphs during extremely slow repetitions of individual tones and turns into a completely indistinct and sporadically interrupted drone.

In addition to the melodic (tonal) character of the episodes entrusted to *Synthi*, the use of voice contributes to the composition's communicativeness. The voice humanizes the deep layers of the past for which the listeners search. Although obvious, this procedure is not banal because, with emotional distancing and anonymization of the voice, the author avoids turning to pathos (*preventing a song, movement 2*) and documentary/didactic (*preventing a story, movement 4*). Another type of emotional distancing from the voice can be observed – whenever it occurs, even in moments when it is questionable whether the voice is human, it is indisputable that the voice is *male*. With the tendency to connect the idea of archaism with the idea of patriarchy, this is also a distancing (perhaps unconscious) from possible (very influential on

²³ English composer Trevor Wishart explains that three interdependent factors are essential for understanding the virtual acoustic space of an electroacoustic work – the sound landscape: the acoustic properties of the perceived sound environment, the disposition of sound objects in it, and the recognition of individual objects. He proposes a division into three types of sound landscapes – real, imaginary and surreal. The surreal sonic landscape is a logically unacceptable ecological whole that contains (recognizable) objects of various origins in impossible relationships. According to: Trevor Wishart, *On Sonic Art*, London, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998, 139–159.

the perception of auditory experience) analogies to the mother's voice, the primary connection with the vocal in the human mind.²⁴

Regardless of the imagined listening perspective, all sounds seem archaic in some way, but their archaeological age is impossible to determine with precision (or at all), so the sound experience is comprehended as *timeless*. In this work, Svetlana Maraš also explores the concept of historicity, which points to the variability of meanings of sound objects and processes in different epochs: "In conceptualizing the work, I turned to the field of archeology because of its broad, meaningful connections with the world of artifacts. In addition, digging deep beneath the surface layers of the earth in anticipation of the discovery of a (sound) object that is symbolically important for its historicity, not just its current functionality, was an interesting starting point."²⁵

The friction between the linear time of the context of sound objects and the cyclical time of the temporality of their musical existence is always present in *Post-Excavation Activities*. Linear time, which passes, one-dimensional and one-way, from the past to the future, is the time of the archeological/archival reference world of Svetlana Maraš. A cyclical time whose different points connect in an endless series of circles, repeating cycles (such as day and night, seasons, periodic heartbeats, breathing, sleep cycles...) is the time of musical processes, repetitions, movements, breathing phrases, cyclic forms of composition. Svetlana Maraš poetically describes her fictional scenario as a revival of the non-existent past from the perspective of a very distant, dystopian, post-apocalyptic future.²⁶ One can close a small circle here and draw a parallel with Schaeffer's concept of concrete musical experience, which is "based on working with sound objects that are not specified by numbers, seconds, but *parts of time torn out of space*."²⁷ By careful exploration and digging to the depths of the imagined prehistory of sound, Svetlana Maraš reaches the cosmos of small sounds, those created in detail, selected, and processed. Time

²⁴ "In the beginning, in the uterine darkness, was the voice, the Mother's voice. For the child once born, the mother is more an olfactory and vocal continuum than an image. Her voice originates in all points of space, while her form enters and leaves the visual field. We can imagine the voice of the Mother weaving around the child a network of connections it's tempting to call the *umbilical web*." Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, 61.

²⁵ Svetlana Maraš, *Program note*

²⁶ *An online conversation* (25 March 2022)

²⁷ Biljana Srečković, *Modernistički projekat Pjera Šefera: Od ispitivanja radiofonije do muzičkih istraživanja*, Beograd, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, 2011, 49.

sometimes leaves a patina on her objects, sometimes bypasses them, and sometimes turns them into vague memories. Some of the sounds remain evocative enough to draw the listener deep into the scenes of the cinema for the ear in which different times and perspectives of sound meet.

* * *

The composition *Post-Excavation Activities* by Svetlana Maraš won the Composers' Association of Serbia "Stevan Mokranjac" award for 2020. This prestigious recognition for the most successful work by a Serbian author that had its premiere in the previous year was awarded for the second time to a work belonging to the radiophonic genre.²⁸ "For me, the awarding of the prize to a radiophonic piece which rests on foundations of electroacoustic and (maybe even more) electronic music is, above all, a symbol of the presence of this kind of contemporary music not only in the concert setting, but in an everyday context, and that is the context that radio to a great extent enables (allows, provides)."²⁹

According to Marija Ćirić, a more precise genre determiner of composition would classify it in the domain of experimental radiophony in its "most abstract subtype," "the most subjective form of expression with sound/music." The connection between concrete/electronic/electroacoustic music and radiophonics is most apparent here (...).³⁰ Svetlana Maraš's compositional work is primarily realized in the domain of electroacoustic music, and since 2016 and the beginning of her engagement in the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade, her artistry has been deeply connected to radio as a place of creation and a specific medium.

The author herself describes radio as a place of *playfulness with sound*,³¹ *a space of freedom of creation, a laboratory of sound*.³² *Laboratory Post-Exca-*

²⁸ Since the establishment of the "Mokranjac" Award in 1994, the only radiophonic work that has been awarded is *A Large Stone*, a radiophonic poem by Ivana Stefanović, which premiered in 2017.

²⁹ Milan Milojković, *Razgovor s povodom*

³⁰ Марија Ћирић, "Игра и музикалност као претпоставке радиофоније", in: Ивана Медић (Ed.), *Радио и српска музика*, Београд, Музиколошки институт САНУ, 2015, 101–114.

³¹ "Understanding the theater of sound as the art of music, that is, resignifying/moving to the position of a related discipline, music, is *ludus per se*. This – again – points us to the experimental form as a game of expressing the author's micro or macrocosm." Marija Ćirić, *ibid.*

³² *An online conversation* (25 March 2022)

vation Activities remain in the archives of the Electronic Studio as one of the treasured compositions that continue the tradition of cultivating the experimental radiophonic form on Radio Belgrade.³³

“What makes the Belgrade Electronic Studio special is the fact that it is part of Radio Belgrade. This is already enough to characterize it as a unique specimen of its kind in the world, because the radio infrastructure not only provides immense possibilities for the content presentation, but also affects the production and what is being created in the studio. Precisely because it is the institutionalized place of research and production of electronic music, the Electronic Studio of Radio Belgrade also produces content that is professionally selected and which is in dialogue with the heritage of electro-acoustic music created in it. All this is reflected in the music that comes out of there...”³⁴

Translated by the author

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³³ Despite the ups and downs of the Electronic Studio of the Third Program of Radio Belgrade, founded in 1972, from its practice and tradition, over the years, many significant experimental authors' works (such as Vladan Radovanović, Ivana Stefanović, Arsenije Jovanović, and others) were produced. The series *Radionica zvuka* (started in 1985) of the Radio Belgrade Drama Program is especially deserving of the fostering and promotion of radio forms. As an incentive for the authors of the youngest generation to research radio art (drama and music), since 2006, the student award “Neda Depolo” has been established, a recognition for creative contribution to radio expression.

³⁴ Milan Milojković, *Razgovor s povodom*

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