

25th MUSIC BIENNALE ZAGREB

Musical works for the stage, *Transcending Time* and *The Plumber*

AN ABSTRACT OPERA AND A BLACK BALLET

The piece *Transcending Time* by the American composer Orlando Garcia is, in its form, a “true” Biennale production that tests its audience

ZAGREB – Two premières of musical works for the stage crowned this Wednesday on the 25th Music Biennale Zagreb, both showing top quality approaches to different expressive elements. At the Gavella Theater it was the first performance of a new piece by the American composer Orlando Jacinto Garcia, *Transcending Time*, in its form a “true” Biennale production. At the &TD Theater it was the first performance of a ballet by Gordan Tudor, the composer, and Natalija Manojlović, the dramaturgist, *the Plumber*, produced, luckily, by the &TD Theater (with the MBZ as co-producer).

Garcia and his collaborators have completely succeeded in „transcending time“, as the title suggested, creating an auditorily and visually ritualized unwinding of a temporal ball, which, in turn, never results in monotony, but rather absorbs the listener deeper and deeper into the circulation around a structure. Jacek Kolasinski is the author of the video that places a man in a protective suit and a mask in the center of attention.

This character passes through a lovely landscape and the old historical ruins of Poland, an important motif being water, water that should cleanse the world, and the green grass floating in the air, bringing hope for a new beginning. John Stuart enriched the video excerpts with a motif of verticality, often represented by huge telecommunication antennae, as a symbol of the disruption of the natural order.

Campbell McGrath has created a very ascetic, abstract, and yet, in its concise messages, expressive text, serving as a libretto of the opera, intertwining with the solo part of the mezzo soprano Martina Gojčeta Silić, but also with the roles of the four vocal soloists arranged and allocated as if there were instruments (Monika Cerovčec, Martina Matić Borse, Neven Mrzlečki and Goran Jurić), as well as with the members of the Cantus ensemble, who, led by Mladen Tarbuk, carried out the sound of a live ensemble.

To all this, the composer Garcia has added a key segment, the electronically manipulated motifs - distended through time - from his own pieces. Through a very careful, extremely slow unspooling, he focused on the sound colors that almost imperceptibly cross-fade all the time.

It's a complete, idiosyncratic concept in which, unlike some projects of the MBZ so far, the idea and the realization find a way to correspond mutually and to form a unified whole.

After this extreme testing of a listener's concentration and perception of reality, a wholly different experience awaited the audience at the première of *The Plumber*, a "black ballet", by Gordan Tudor and Natalija Manojlović, a chamber ballet based upon the motifs from the texts of the black-humorist French writer Boris Vian (...)

[Mirta Špoljarić]