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# FROM POSTDRAMATIC HETEROGENEITY TO NEW REFLECTIONS ON NOISE

The House of Extreme Music Theater and  
the *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*

## ABSTRACT

Performative methodology of the House of Extreme Music Theater led by Croatian, Zagreb-based performing artists Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo is largely based on the creation, recycling and abundant use of sound objects, deconstruction of voice and text, and collaborations with alternative rock and noise musicians and multimedia artists. But precisely because of its apparently chaotic, noisy manifestation, it is easy to miss the structure and concept that is undoubtedly in the background of every performance. If we take into account the predominance of music and noise in such an open model in terms of genre, it would be appropriate to try to define theoretical and methodological guidelines for its description, which this article will try to do. Observing the work of House of Extreme Music Theater, the following questions arise: How does its “noisy” poetics affect the definition of genre and analytical approaches to it, and,

conversely, how does the chosen genre framework affect the status of noise that is produced in the performances of this “theater”? In this sense, the article will refer to the previous theoretical reflections on the House of Extreme Music Theater genre coordinates while trying to expand them with the concepts of independent auditory semiotics and musicalization, closely related to the notion of postdramatic theater as proposed by Hans-Thies Lehmann. Finally, the analysis of the music theater performance *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov* will try to show how the broad and permeable postdramatic determinant shapes the interpretation of noise in theater or noise as theater.

**KEY WORDS:** House of Extreme Music Theater, music theater, aurality, bruitism, independent auditory semiotics, schachtophone

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## INTRODUCTION

Performative methodology of the House of Extreme Music Theater led by Croatian, Zagreb-based performing artists Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo is largely based on the creation, recycling and abundant use of sound objects, deconstruction of voice and text, and collaborations with alternative rock and noise musicians and multimedia artists. But precisely because of its apparently chaotic, noisy manifestation, it is easy to miss the structure and concept that is undoubtedly in the background of every performance. If we take into account the predominance of music and noise in such an open model in terms of genre, it would be appropriate to try to define theoretical and methodological guidelines for its description, which this article will attempt to do.

Observing the work of House of Extreme Music Theater, the following questions arise: How does its “noisy” poetics affect the definition of genre and analytical approaches to it, and, conversely, how does the chosen genre framework affect the status of noise that is produced in the performances of this “theater”? In order to demonstrate specific performance qualities that open the door to reaffirming the importance of noise in art (especially theater) and society, the performance of the music theater piece *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov* will be analyzed at the end of this article. *Schachtophonia* was performed as part of the opening ceremony of the European Capital of Culture entitled *Opera Industriale* in the large Croatian port city of Rijeka on February 1, 2020. This performance was chosen for the analysis precisely because it reached the widest, international audience in presenting the House’s long-term poetics of noise, moving its work from the margins to the institutional scene in the most powerful way to date.

Although there are several interpretations of its genre framework, this article will prefer and expand those that most strongly open the door for new methodological approaches, primarily for semiotic analysis enriched with insights about the structure of House’s musical interventions and compositions. The article postulates that the postdramatic concept of independent auditory semiotics and musicalization best suits the analysis of House’s fluid performances. That is, they do not negate the drama theater or the textual template; moreover, they are mostly based on it, to then break it down, expand and enrich it with different auditory procedures—in the end, to turn it into a complete musical performance. The article mostly draws on Hans-Thies Lehmann’s reflections on the status of sound and music in postdramatic theater as the most comprehensive scholarly theatrical overview of the above issue, especially since later considerations about postdramatic theater mainly deal with determining the status of the dramatic in relation to the postdramatic and critical interpretations of Lehmann’s attitude towards the aforementioned dichotomy,<sup>2</sup> while the

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Jürs Munby, “The Vexed Question of the Text in Postdramatic Theatre in a Cross-Cultural Perspective,” *Dramatic and Postdramatic Theater: Ten Years After. Conference Proceedings*, ed. Ivan Medenica (Belgrade: Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Institute of Theatre, Film, Radio and Television, 2011), 88.

interpretations of sound and music in postdramatic theater are tailored according to examples of individual performances.

This article is further guided by the assertion of theorist Ivan Medenica—with which he begins a kind of apology for Lehmann and a view of postdramatic theater more than ten years after the publication of his book—that the postdramatic is “the first significant theoretical platform for understanding of theatre and the performing practices *beyond* every paradigm, and thus, most adequate to its subject, which is so heterogeneous to the point of being shapeless.”<sup>3</sup> Medenica's claim at the same time perfectly describes the eclectic, out of the ordinary, but over many decades conceptually consistent creations of the House of Extreme Music Theater. Furthermore, if Lehmann's postdramatic theater is not understood as a sharp Hegelian farewell to the dramatic, but his prefix “post” is understood as an extension of the dramatic with heterogeneous, plural techniques,<sup>4</sup> then the starting point for the analysis of House's work is even more strongly confirmed. The validity of Lehmann's independent auditory semiotics is best demonstrated and its flexibility is justified precisely when looking at eclectic and widely understood postdramatic examples of music in theater, as shown for example by theater scholar and social media theorist Catherine Bouko.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the example of the House of Extreme Music Theater will attempt to show that flexible postdramatic, “extended” approaches, such as abandoning the narrative sequence and manipulation of sound objects, improvisation and interdisciplinarity, which at the same time touch upon the textual template and graphic scores, represent a good platform for questioning the prevailing concept of noise and, eventually, encouraging its reaffirmation.

### “NOISY” POETICS OF THE HOUSE OF EXTREME MUSIC THEATER

Damir Bartol Indoš built his poetics over the last 40 years based on repetitive performance gestures, symbols or so-called “hieroglyphs,” which indicated his multi-layered aesthetic and equally ethical preoccupation. This is essentially preoccupation with socio-political actions, i.e., radical left-oriented activism (along with a fascination with the Baader-Meinhof Group), and, in his mature work, ethics of care, mental illness, ecology, but also spiritual ecology and Ronald D. Laing's concept of anti-psychiatry. Within his House of Extreme Music Theater, which has been active since the beginning of the 2000s and continues on his “hard” Group Kugla from the 1990s, he has chosen and used the above-mentioned gestures surrounded by a live

<sup>3</sup> Ivan Medenica, “Introduction. Postdramatic Theatre—Global Dilemmas and Local Reception,” *Dramatic and Postdramatic Theater: Ten Years After. Conference Proceedings*, ed. Ivan Medenica (Belgrade: Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Institute of Theatre, Film, Radio and Television, 2011), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Bouko, “The Musicality of Postdramatic Theater: Hans-Thies Lehmann's Theory of Independent Auditory Semiotics,” *Gamma: Journal of Theory and Criticism*, 17 (2009): 26.

<sup>5</sup> Bouko, “The Musicality of Postdramatic Theater,” 26.

performance of underground and noise music. The performers are his Kugla band or guests, local or international musicians. In the aforementioned genres and the concept of noise, Indoš was attracted, as he claims, by the “countercultural nerve” that resists the popular notion of a healthy society.<sup>6</sup> For Indoš, such music, sound and noise are always related to social (re)action and the position of an “outsider,” i.e., noise has the ability to describe or even impact social interactions and the worldly processes. During his artistic development, Indoš shied away from working with academically educated actors and musicians, expressing a general mistrust of institutionalized education, i.e., believing that it suppresses the creative predispositions of the individual and imposes dominant structures of expression, such as a preference for harmony and the major-minor organization of scales and chords in music in opposition to the abstract nature of noise.

Indoš’s inspirations include experimental, electroacoustic, noise and rock musicians, as well as visual and theater artists of historical (especially Croatian) avant-garde: Russolo with his *intonarumori*; Artaud, his destructive humor<sup>7</sup> and the theater of cruelty; Jarry; Cage and the illusion of absolute silence, etc.; and in the context of ECoC (and some earlier performances),<sup>8</sup> the Croatian “pre-futurist” Janko Polić Kamov. Wanting to oppose the consumerist and capitalist world that rejects the spirit as much as objects, he began to make sound objects from discarded items and materials—mostly scrap metal; shafts, springs, etc.<sup>9</sup> By drawing them into the context of “extreme music” performances, he brings forth their inherent acoustic qualities. For example, together with Vrvilo and guest musicians or those from the Kugla band, he pulls, folds, stretches and shakes large metal springs, assuming that the noise they produce is, on the one hand, a manifestation of the objects’ spiritualization or the embodiment of the life energy that hums in the background of all events and, on the other hand, active expression of rebellion against the musical, but also the authoritative social structures that prefer signal, harmony and teleology over the comprehensiveness and atemporality of “disorganized” noise. In this sense, he also constructed a sound object, i.e., the instrument *schachtophone*, also called *orgone schachtophone*, following psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich’s concept of orgone energy or orgone accumulator, which accumulates positive and negative energy for the purpose

<sup>6</sup> Marin Blažević, *Razgovori o novom kazalištu 1 / Conversations About New Theater 1* (Zagreb: Centar za dramsku umjetnost, 2007), 275.

<sup>7</sup> Blažević, *Razgovori*, 281.

<sup>8</sup> See: Suzana Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!: Polemike oko programa otvorenja Europske prijestolnice kulture” [“Forca Fiume!: Controversy Over the Opening Program of the European Capital of Culture”], *Dani Hvarskoga kazališta: Sučeljavanja u hrvatskoj književnosti i kazalištu / Hvar Theater Days: Encounters in Croatian Literature and Theater*, ed. Boris Senker, Lucija Ljubić and Vinka Glunčić-Bužančić (Split: Književni krug; Zagreb: HAZU, 2021), 284–302.

<sup>9</sup> See more in: Agata Juniku, *Indoš i Živadinov, teatro-bio-grafije: sveto i ludičko kao modusi političkog u teatru / Indoš and Živadinov, Theater-Bio-Graphies: The Sacred and the Ludic as Modes of the Political in the Theater* (Zagreb: Akademija dramske umjetnosti, 2019).



of healing the human body.<sup>10</sup> Schachtophones are close to the poetics of bruitism and “made under the challenge of futurist intonarumori” as a “new system for the art of visual-performative noises, that consists of nets of iron springs in the acoustic metal boxes and surveillance cameras within, closed with schachts (manhole covers). Both Schachtophones and Intonarumori, as protoanalog synthesizers, were conceived as counter-instrumental, but in a symbiosis with different instrumental-vocal performances.”<sup>11</sup> Indoš and Vrvilo regularly incorporate schachtophone(s), “musical machine” or “collective assemblage,”<sup>12</sup> in the performances of the House of Extreme Music Theater, including the performance at the ECoC 2020. But the question arises as to how the noise produced by the schachtophones and other sound objects is treated in terms of the genre of the House of Extreme Music Theater's performances. Although this article leans towards the fluidity and permeability of the postdramatic use of sound and music, different interpretations of the genre should also be considered as they certainly affect the apparatus for analyzing the House's “noisy” poetics.



The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*. D. B. Indoš and T. Vrvilo performing with sound objects. Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.

<sup>10</sup> Suzana Marjanić, “Performativna glazba—od bruitizma do lesionizma: kolažno o žanru glazbenoga performansa na domaćim primjerima” [“Performative Music: From Bruitism to Lesionism: A Pastiche on the Genre of Musical Performance Using Local Examples”], *Život umjetnosti [Life of Art]* 91 (2012): 22.

<sup>11</sup> A draft version of the text for the album *The Rumorists' Schachtophonia 2017–2022. DB INDOŠ—The House of Extreme Music Theater & Rumorists*. Courtesy of Tanja Vrvilo and Damir Bartol Indoš.

<sup>12</sup> Marjanić, “Performative Music,” 22.

## BETWEEN POSTDRAMATIC THEATER AND PERFORMANCE ART

It is true that a musical-sound-noise microuniverse of the House's performances is being built instantly in a given context and that, considering the elusive and ateleological nature of the noise, as in the case of Indoš's sound objects, the performance reveals itself as unique and unrepeatable (although, on the surface, it always sounds almost the same). However, the question arises whether such a concept is closer to postdramatic, "liberated" theater or performance art, especially with reference to the notion of unrepeatability. Theater and performing arts theorist Suzana Marjanić, who has long been studying Indoš's work, classifies the works of D. B. Indoš with respect to six approaches to performative manipulation (marking) within the musical performance genre as performative manipulation of sound objects.<sup>13</sup> The same author is more inclined to bring Indoš's performances closer to performance art, while choosing terminological determinants such as "theoretical performance"<sup>14</sup> and, as mentioned, "musical performance"—still as a kind of reconciliation between music theater and performance art. This conciliatory position—although Marjanić sometimes prefers the performance art side—is not unusual, considering that Indoš himself systematically refused to answer the question about the genre, giving only a hint that he is working to bring performance art and theater closer together.<sup>15</sup> Other theoreticians, such as Agata Junika and Goran Sergej Pristaš, will adhere to Marjanić's position.<sup>16</sup>

However, if we were to try to approach this question from the position of (perhaps involuntary) self-determination, then it would be necessary to observe the genre determinant of this phenomenon according to its very name: extreme music theater. This definition is at the same time close enough and far enough from the notion of music theater which, despite the historical expansion of the term as a guideline for this analogy, considerably relies on its beginnings in the experimental, avant-garde use of music in theater—especially during the 1960s when it was forged and retrogradely from the 1920s onwards—and which dialogued a lot with the tradition of classical and neoclassical music, opera and musical theater. As already hinted, it should be kept in mind that the framework of music theater today can include various unconventional and experimental uses of music. Indoš and Vrvilo's concept of music theater, along with the extreme preference for noise and the sounds of various discarded objects, alludes more to a specific approach to the topics performed and to the ambivalence between the aesthetic and ethical functions of their performances than to the historical scrutinization of music theater or to a pure

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<sup>13</sup> Marjanić, "Performative Music," 20.

<sup>14</sup> Marjanić, "Forca Fiume!," 288-89.

<sup>15</sup> Suzana Marjanić, "Gluma transformacije, održavanje prirodnosti i politika metafizike," ["The Acting of Transformations, the Maintenance of Naturalness and the Politics of Metaphysics"], interview with Damir Bartol Indoš, Vili Matula, Irma Omerzo, *Frakcija* 6, no. 20-21 (2001): 21.

<sup>16</sup> Juniku, *Indoš and Živadinov*, 56.

experiment. It is exactly this “extremity” of their concept that serves as a point of difference in relation to the general notion of music theater.

A lot has been written about the unique features of performance art that separate it from postdramatic theater, which is also at the intersection of different arts, and a much clearer (although not yet completely firm) boundary has been set. Performance art is characterized, among other aspects, by notions of self-transformation and effective communication with the audience; the emphasis is on the process and not on the finished work itself,<sup>17</sup> while postdramatic theater still favors the aesthetic over the ethical function, although in the aesthetic sense it may set a kind of distance. The transformation of the artist in the context of postdramatic theater is still the result of the interplay with other, although liberated, means of expression, that is, the transformation of the entire act from reality to fiction, as it happens in the case of the House of Extreme Music Theater. If the difference between performance art and postdramatic theater forms can be defined as the dichotomy between presence and representation (but not mimesis), in Lehmann’s case it will mark a schism, and in the case of Indoš and Vrvilo as artists—even though they are close to the notion of performers in Pavis’s terms<sup>18</sup>—it will be precisely this tension between the two opposites. That is, although favoring ethics over aesthetics in the desire for permanent transformation of the performer and the society, the preconceived dramaturgy, approaches to scenography, costumes, etc. are still closer to theater.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the implicit dramaturgy and distorted, “noisy” aesthetics that indefinitely opens the field of reception, the vacillation between mental dullness and enlightenment, as well as the hint of radical avant-garde worldviews and the propensity for activism create an illusion of Austin’s performativity in Indoš and Vrvilo’s performance gestures and concepts. Regardless of how much they give the impression of ritual transformativeness<sup>20</sup> or radicality—in other words, no matter how much it seems that sound, noise and words really change or do something—these performing gestures, and even the performance as a whole, still remain at the level of feigned performative, the so-called affirmativity in theater.<sup>21</sup> Preconceived dramaturgy that simultaneously allows for experimental physical and sound-noise-music play also assumes a kind of fictionalization of selected historical figures or ordinary people in the context of their peculiarity, i.e., socially unacceptable behavior (autistic individuals, schizophrenics, etc.). This hyperbolized semi-mimetic process at first resembles the original ritual state from which the artist will emerge transformed, while in fact it is an elusive, but nevertheless theatrical representation. In this respect,

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište [Postdramatic Theater]* (Zagreb: CDU—Centar za dramsku umjetnost; Belgrade: TkH—Centar za teoriju i praksu izvođačkih umetnosti, 2004), 180–81.

<sup>18</sup> Patrice Pavis, *Suvremena režija [Contemporary Mise en Scène]* (Zagreb: Hrvatski centar ITI, 2022), 498.

<sup>19</sup> Goran Sergej Pristaš according to Juniku, *Indoš and Živadinov*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> The impression of rituality is given by the dramaturgy of each performance, which resembles a protocol characterized by a series of different abnormal body jerks or “hieroglyphs.” See more in: Juniku, *Indoš and Živadinov*.

<sup>21</sup> Lehmann, “Afformance Art” in *Postdramatic Theater*, 336–37.

it is more similar to Lehmann's concept of mediality of the body through unusual pronunciation and noise production, which will be discussed more below. In the case of the performance at the ECoC opening, when the protofuturist notes of author Janko Polić Kamov, whom, along with writer Vladimir Čerina, Indoš and Vrvilo perceive as "a clinician of civilization,"<sup>22</sup> are taken as a template, it is rather a matter of statement (constative); a diagnosis of the entire society.

## THEATER AND/AS MUSIC—THEATER AND/AS NOISE

In the postdramatic sense, towards which this article gravitates, the union of theater and music or the notion of theater as music is manifested in the emphasized sensibility of theater creators for (independent) auditory semiotics, as well as in various techniques that open up space for moving away from the linear and teleological setting of the musical (and sound) thread within the communication framework of a performance. In this context, the most relevant among Lehmann's examples of musicalization are certainly the manipulation of electronic music techniques—especially in the play of noises and tones—in order to open up a new dimension of sound in the theater, the multiplicity of variants that allow combining text material with voice and music (as in the conceptual composing of Heiner Goebbels) and the simultaneous superimposition of sound worlds (mentioned in the context of the joint work of John Cage and Merce Cunningham).<sup>23</sup>

The artists within the House of Extreme Music Theater achieve musicalization using the prepared instruments and extended techniques of singing, playing and even speech, but, as presented in the quote about the concept of the schachtophone, they also contemplate sound and their instruments spatially, calling them "sound-scenographic boxes" or announcing their dual ontology as "performing apparatus and stage props." On the other hand, the graphic scores are also "graphic," visual and spatial and participate in the transformation of reality. The theater music is freed from its emotional and secondary function and acts as an independent tool in the interplay with other visual, tangible modes of expression, which are considerably present in the House of Extreme Music Theater performances, as is voice, word and language in form of an exposed object. Here, in the act of musicalization, the audience is still at a clearly visible spatial and spiritual distance, participating only through cooperation in *a posteriori* dramaturgy—which exists even before the piece is "written," but is not clearly discernible as a structure and at first viewing and listening—or through the construction of extrinsic dramaturgy in a delusion that it is a work without order or solid conceptual background.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Marjanić, citing Indoš and Vrvilo in "Forca Fiume!," 289.

<sup>23</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theater*, 119.

<sup>24</sup> Professor of composition, composer and performer Javier Alejandro Garavaglia distinguishes intrinsic (or inherent) dramaturgy, which is further divided into *a priori* and



Lehmann will point out that the works of postdramatic theater are mostly tailored according to a certain (often textual) template, although the value of such theater pieces is not equated with it.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the House of Extreme Music Theatre, as can be seen from the aforementioned Garavaglia's dramaturgical division, there is a very clear template; a kind of semantic structure that permeates the entire performance and conditions its reception. During the performance, it can be experienced audio-visually. Most of the listening behavior is focused on the empathetic and immersed type, although figurativization and search for a law of organization are imposed as necessary, almost subconscious processes that accompany immersion.<sup>26</sup> Just before each performance, the listeners have at their disposal an excerpt or a complete graphic score, a program booklet or an essay, which, disconnected from the context of the performance, continues to serve as a push towards a make-believe state. Likewise, during the performance, all these, apparently paratextual, materials become an extension of the performative state, enabling the audience to simultaneously participate in the deciphering of preconceived dramaturgy and the creation of a new one that arises through contemplation, despite the physical and somewhat spiritual distance from the performers. In the end, although these "paratextual" materials have a kind of pedagogical function on the audience, as Marjanić will emphasize,<sup>27</sup> their ambivalent nature is evidently imbued

*a posteriori* type, and extrinsic (or emergent) dramaturgy. It can be argued that his typology, although on the surface more inclined to the dramaturgy of music, falls into both areas (musicology and semiotics). *A posteriori* subtype "is the type of dramaturgy that does not have a predetermined dramatic plan evident to the listener." Such dramaturgy can be based on the principles of absolute music or some other that are necessarily invisible and elusive to the recipient in their original form. Additional explanations, i.e., paratextual material such as a program booklet can provide assistance, but even without it, the recipient has enough material to establish a plausible interpretation, although it will not necessarily coincide with the author's conception. Extrinsic dramaturgy, "arises solely in the listener's mind by means of the act of listening and therefore, it is of entirely subjective nature." It takes place during and after the performance as an act of contemplation, and in some instances of musical performance it becomes the only possibility of reception: "The emergent dramaturgy is ultimately and absolutely a subjective act, happening in the mind of the recipient, but having, however, its source outside the subject itself, and so it might not be independent of the ideas intended by the creator of that music, as the recipient's cultural, cognitive background, capacity to understand, expectations, etc. must be taken into consideration." Javier Alejandro Garavaglia, "Music and Technology: What Impact Does Technology Have on the Dramaturgy of Music?," *JMM: The Journal of Music and Meaning* 7 (Winter 2008), <http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=7.2>, sec.2.3.

<sup>25</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theater*, 179.

<sup>26</sup> Garavaglia exhaustively enumerates the types of listening behaviours as conceived by François Delalande, theorist of electroacoustic music and musical analysis, in the context of the genre of *musique concrète*, which in terms of performance techniques and principles of acousmatic sound occasionally coincides with the concepts of Indoš and Vrvilo. The listening behaviours he enumerates are: "taxonomic: distinguishing the morphology of structures heard; empathetic: focus on immediate reactions to what is heard; figurativization: search for a narrative discourse within the work; search for a law of organization: search for (given?) structures and models; immersed listening: feeling part of the context while listening; non-listening: losing concentration or interest in listening." Garavaglia, "Music and Technology," sec. 2.4.

<sup>27</sup> Marjanić, "Forca Fiume!," 295.

with aesthetic significance. In addition, these essays are stylistically dense and difficult to navigate and, just as the graphic scores, do not reveal much more than themselves as artistic objects and the extension of this auditory microuniverse, thus greatly limiting the proposed pedagogical function.

Noise, alone or complemented by music, can also be seen as an independent figure in the performances of House of Extreme Music Theater. But aligned with the poetics, especially the ethical preoccupations of the artists themselves, it could also be understood as theater itself. If noise is understood as an abstract presence in all aspects of the world and society, the principle of their organization or as a means of opposition to the existing order of things, then it corresponds to what this kind of theater is in its entirety. How the potential definitions of noise are manifested within the flexible postdramatic perspective of the House of Extreme Music Theater's work will be shown on the example of the performance *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*.



The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov: Horses*, the graphic score.

Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.

#### “NOISY” POETICS AT WORK: *SCHACHTOPHONIA ACCENNI FOR KAMOV*

The opening ceremony of Rijeka as the European Capital of Culture took place over the course of one day throughout the city as a series of various simultaneous performances, with *Opera Industriale* as the most ambitious among them. Behind this concept was the electroacoustic composer duo from Croatia JMZM (Janko Maršić and Zoran Medved) along with the main conductor and arrangement lead Frano Đurović,

a wide team of conductors and performers of classical and alternative rock music, as well as actors, dancers and multimedia artists. As Đurović stated in an interview on the occasion of the performance, the “comprehensive program” of the *Opera Industriale* consisted of an electronic music apparatus, a chamber orchestra, a narrator, two choirs, a tool, lathe and grinder orchestra, the House of Extreme Music Theater, the drummers on the building roof, thousands of people in the audience who produced “noise” in specific places, zvončari<sup>28</sup> and 25 rock guitarists from Rijeka.<sup>29</sup> The JMZM duo, in the spirit of noise aesthetics and *musique concrète*, prepared samples of the industrial and various other city sounds and fused them into a drone ambient background, co-creating together with unpredictable atmospheric phenomena (as was the rain during the performance) a soundscape of the entire city. The minimalist electronics was persistently maintained at a low level of audibility during the performances of the chamber orchestra, Indoš and Vrvilo and others. Simultaneously, the performance coincided with the Rijeka Carnival, being one of the reasons why the carnival procession of bellmen took place at the end of the *Opera*, in which the members of the audience participated by ringing the bells handed out by the organizing team. The liminal period of the year marked by the carnival as a ritual of nature’s but also social transformation—a time of dissolution, criticism and unwinding until returning to reality—determined the genre structure of the entire event as marginal, allowing some participants of the alternative scene, such as Vrvilo and Indoš, who calls himself an outsider,<sup>30</sup> as well as the topics of the working class, anti-fascist heritage and the like to be a part of it.

Different authors describe the event, on whose genre outline there is no academic agreement, in different ways, such as the team opera,<sup>31</sup> multimedia concert,<sup>32</sup> musical performance,<sup>33</sup> collective work,<sup>34</sup> a neo-avant-garde Meyerhold opera, anti-opera, a cacophonous polystructural composition,<sup>35</sup> or a spectacle.<sup>36</sup> The dramaturgy of the *Opera* unfolds as a successive series of distinct performances (choir, drum, theater), connected mainly by JMZM’s sound foundation and the noisy

<sup>28</sup> Zvončari (bellmen) is a folk custom cherished in the region around the city of Rijeka. It refers to men dressed in costumes with a large bell and sheepskin throws, whose noise and jingle drive away the evil spirits of winter, thus summoning a new season cycle.

<sup>29</sup> “Jedna riječ dirigenta i aranžera timske Opere industriale.” [“A Word from the Conductor and Arrangement Lead of the Team Opera Industriale.”], interviewed by Jana Haluza, *Cantus* 220 (2020): 31, <https://issuu.com/hds.hr/docs/cantus-220-web>.

<sup>30</sup> Blažević, *Conversations*, 249.

<sup>31</sup> “A Word from the Conductor,” 30.

<sup>32</sup> “Šahtofonija Natuknice za Kamova” [Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov] (programmatic text), [http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice\\_za\\_Kamova.htm](http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice_za_Kamova.htm).

<sup>33</sup> More about the *Schachtophonia* and its genre determinants in: Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!,” 284.

<sup>34</sup> Marjanić “Forca Fiume!,” 288.

<sup>35</sup> Leo Rafolt, “Teška industrija smisla: zabilježbe o otvaranju EPK 2020.” [“The Heavy Industry of Meaning: EPK 2020 Opening Notes”], *Književna republika [Literary Republic]* XVII, 1-6 (2020): 195.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example: Rafolt, “Teška industrija smisla,” 194; Saša Drach, “Opera Industriale kao metafora moderne Rijeke 20. stoljeća” [“Opera Industriale as a Metaphor for Modern Rijeka of the 20th Century”], *Cantus* 220 (2020): 22-26, <https://issuu.com/hds.hr/docs/cantus-220-web>.

improvisations of the House of Extreme Music Theater, with a narrator as the master of the ceremony.

The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*, also known as *Schachtophonia Notes for Kamov*, finds its postdramatic template in the protofuturistic notes called *Accenni*<sup>37</sup> of the well-known Rijeka writer Janko Polić Kamov, which the authors chose in the context of the rebellious and historically socio-politically left-wing Rijeka, and their own ethical preoccupations. By choosing Kamov as a socially maladjusted and rebellious individual, they created a bridge from their own aesthetic and ethical goals to music, voice, sound and noise as their embodiment: “Anormality creates the harmony of disharmony in harmony.”<sup>38</sup> The musicians who matured in more alternative Croatian new wave ensembles and today perform in genres such as noise, free jazz, avant and post rock, as well as eight schachtophonists of the Ivan Matetić Ronjgov Music school from Rijeka participated in the performance of *Schachtophonia*. Together, Indoš and Vrvilo call these performers rumorists—they intone social and natural phenomena, just as Russolo’s intonarumori are designed to intone noise, and not to merely onomatopoeically imitate it.<sup>39</sup> The mise-en-scène was designed in detail in such a way that the instruments and sound objects filled the entire stage space, concentrically spreading the sound towards the city and the audience that was scattered around the place of performance—the De Franceschi pier. This contributed to a largely suppressed awareness of the soundscape as envisioned by the composer Raymond Murray Schafer, abolishing, to cite theorist Douglas Kahn, frontal perception as the contemporary concept of noise itself implies in relation to traditionally conceived sound and music.<sup>40</sup>

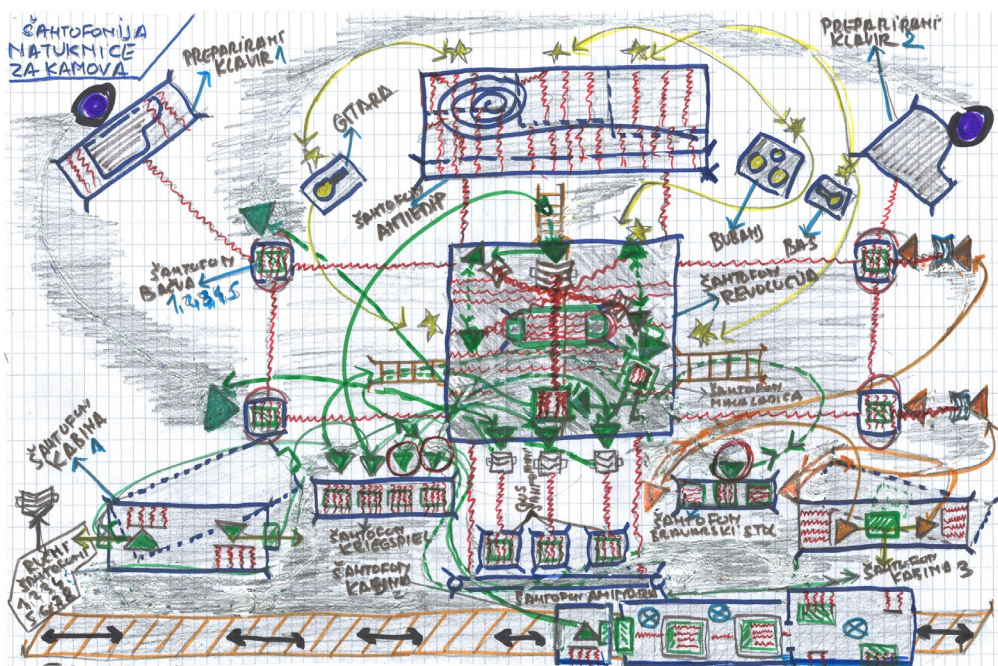
<sup>37</sup> *Accenni* is a series of maxims and aphorisms published in the Italian magazine *Lacerba* in 1913, three years after Kamov’s death. The magazine was close to futuristic tendencies, and was edited by writer Giovanni Papini. More about the context of their publication in: Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!”

<sup>38</sup> Indoš and Vrvilo according to Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!,” 290.

<sup>39</sup> Russolo’s intonarumori “simulated worldliness only through an expansion of timbre.” Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*, 27.





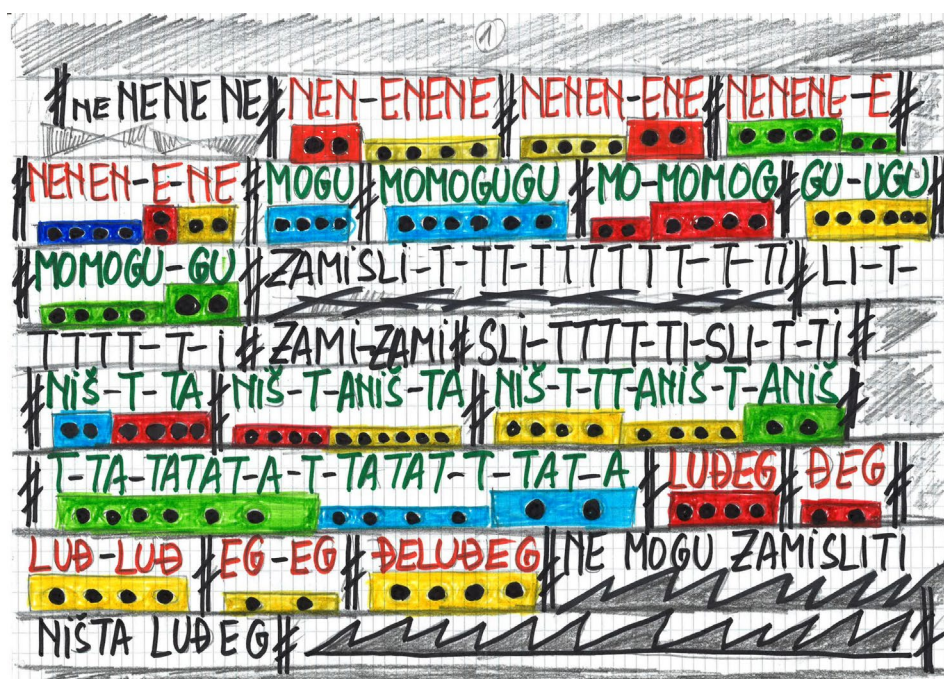
The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*, a scenographic design drawing.  
Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.



The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*, children-schachtophonists of the Ivan Matetić Ronjgov Music school from Rijeka.  
Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.



The vocal-instrumental parts alternated with purely instrumental parts according to the three-part graphic alpha-numeric and colored score, the segments of which were called: 1. *Exaltation*, 2. *Horses*, 3. *Insanity*. While *Exaltation* and *Insanity* further observed a state of anormality in the “normal” world (which the artists actually considered anormal) as a position of sanctified, enlightened madness, *Horses* directly relied on Kamov’s notes and the heritage of Futurism. However, they revealed that this attachment to noise was not necessarily indebted to the later socio-political, particularly war context of Futurism. That is, the subject in Kamov’s note becomes furious because he believes that it was people who woke him up, but calms down when he realizes that it was the horses. The noise of people, which was at first positively experienced as the noise of progress, transformed over time into the noise of violence, and the original context of Russolo’s optimism can now only be linked to the uncorrupted context of animals and nature. Invoking environmental topics, ecology and Greta Thunberg’s protests through the performance of the children-schachtophonists in yellow raincoats confirms the aforementioned ethical tendencies of the artistic duo.



The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov: Insanity*, an excerpt from the graphic score.<sup>41</sup> Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.

The “noise” produced during the performance as a synthesis of experimental instrumental music and stimulation of the sound objects, specific vocal techniques and a kind of “soul spelling” is certainly, as critic Saša Drach will state, somewhat

<sup>41</sup> The text of the score without interventions reads: “I can’t imagine anything more insane than our life, our country, us people and our understanding of this insanity.”

“controlled.”<sup>42</sup> What further attracts Indoš and Vrvilo to noise could be described, in Kahn’s words, as the ability to promise something out of the ordinary; mutability and a world of possibilities. As Kahn would eventually conclude: “Noise is the forest of everything.”<sup>43</sup> In their performance, Indoš and Vrvilo consider noise through the dichotomy of concrete versus abstract (harmony).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, they observe it in relation to Artaud’s reading of nature in noise and the concept of pre-existing noise<sup>45</sup> or Cage’s absence of absolute silence, that is, the constant noise of the body, which in the context of this artistic duo can be expanded with philosopher Michel Serres’ noise of illness and atrophy.<sup>46</sup> The approach to noise in the work of these artists can also be put in relation to the types of noise that theater scholar Lynne Kendrick discusses according to Serres: as the noise that comes from the body, the type that assumes a continuous “background” noise of the world, and as noise produced by human processes: “sonic cacophony of the developed world.”<sup>47</sup> Despite the illness or the atrophy of the body and mind, which they study to some extent during this and other performances, Vrvilo and Indoš will emphasize that their *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov* comes from the excess energy for the noise of voices,<sup>48</sup> schachtophones and music—precisely that orgone energy that is life-giving and healing and thus related more to the body. However, the other two concepts of noise will as well be very prominent in the ECoC performance, as is evident in choosing the futuristic, avant-garde matrix (in both of its conceptual phases), as well as the topics like the processes of the city life itself, ecology and nature in general.

The dialectic of the state before language and entry into language has already been emphasized in the previous performance concepts of the House of Extreme Music Theater, such as in the play *Rocking 2* (2001), when the rocker (a character who performs repetitive, “autistic” rocking movements throughout the performance) reveals acting by “coming into the language.”<sup>49</sup> Indoš will continue that by coming into the language the rocker necessarily develops Artaud’s destructive humor, which, after all, manifests itself through giving contradictory information in communication with others. In the case of ECoC, Indoš and Vrvilo will emphasize in their essay: “And there came laughter, artistic and dilettante chardash, irony, caricature and satire of life, intellectual acrobatics, carnival of soul and brain.”<sup>50</sup> Distorted laughter, a symbol of awareness of social processes, is also similar to Artaud’s laughter in this schachtophonia, reinforced by the context of the Rijeka Carnival, where the Saturnalian critical edge of language is sharpened in particular. Leo Rafolt, on the

<sup>42</sup> Drach, “Opera Industriale,” 23.

<sup>43</sup> Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!,” 293.

<sup>45</sup> See more in Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Lynne Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 107.

<sup>47</sup> Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality*, 107-8.

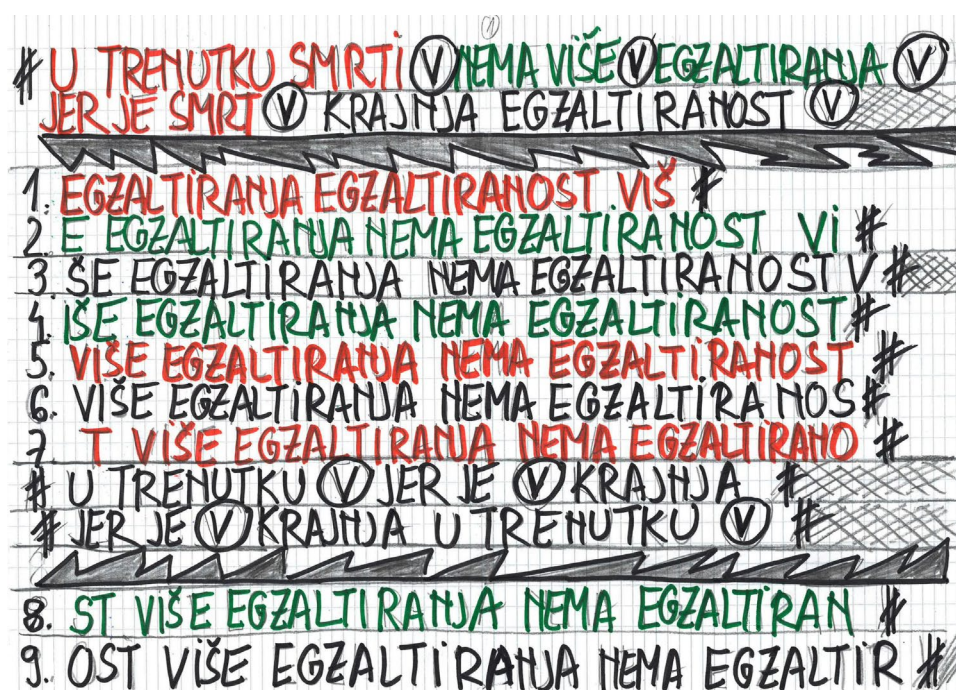
<sup>48</sup> “Šahtofonija Natuknice za Kamova” [Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov] (programmatic text), [http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice\\_za\\_Kamova.htm](http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice_za_Kamova.htm).

<sup>49</sup> Blažević, *Conversations*, 281.

<sup>50</sup> “Šahtofonija Natuknice za Kamova” [Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov] (programmatic text), [http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice\\_za\\_Kamova.htm](http://indos.mi2.hr/Natuknice_za_Kamova.htm).

contrary, will completely equate the performance with a pre-linguistic and pre-expressive context, i.e. with a protostate of pure noise and sound.<sup>51</sup> However, language and text are precisely the integral and integrative elements of this and every other performance of the House of Extreme Music Theater: the collage of artistic and scientific texts, as well as archival research precedes every conception of Indoš and Vrvilo, reminding us of the introductory note on postdramatic as an expansion or deconstruction, but not the exclusion of drama. The research materials are assembled into essays and manifestos of a dual (paratextual and performative) nature and are cut and ground into syllables using the “cut up” technique, as stated by Marjanić.<sup>52</sup> These syllables are later performed in repetitive patterns characterized by stuttering and affective amplitudes.

One example of the cut up technique can be found in the Exaltation [Egzaltiranost] score.<sup>53</sup> The text is divided into 34 lines and is repeated cyclically so that in each new line, when breaking up the last word, which is always “egzaltiranost,” one new letter is added (egzaltiranos / t; egzaltirano / st; egzaltiran / ost, etc.).



The *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov: Exaltation*, an excerpt from the graphic score. Courtesy of Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo.

Such an intervention allows words to be displaced from their everyday context, supporting Derridian deferment and difference in a kind of process of cleansing from the established meanings that caused habituation to the word or its unconscious

<sup>51</sup> Rafolt, “Teška industrija značenja,” 198.

<sup>52</sup> Marjanić, “Forca Fiume!,” 295.

<sup>53</sup> The text of the score without interventions reads: “At the moment of death there is no more exaltation because death is the ultimate exaltation.”



ignoring. With regard to the prolonged repetition, cutting and moving of syllables, it is certainly possible for one to interpret the performance as a pre-linguistic or non-linguistic state. This illusion is supported by the fact that, for example, the empathetic listening behavior can easily pass into a non-listening state due to the overload of the perceptual apparatus. However, in the above context, as well as with the awareness of the necessary dialectic with bruitism and intonations of worldly processes, it cannot be a question of non-existence or complete separation from language. Moreover, the artists themselves call some of their performances, inseparable from the dramaturgy of their music, a delirium of language,<sup>54</sup> a condition that can evidently be defined only in relation to language as an already existing, established system of signs.

The aforementioned opposition of system and chaos together with its sounding manifestation in this sense irresistibly resembles the opposition between signal and noise. If we recall Kahn and noise as a threat to the speech and language communication, this thought is further clarified, and the Indoš and Vrvilo's performance becomes precisely a provocation of this threat. The similarity with Lehmann's exposing of language, that is, the mediality of the body which emerges from the emphasized artificiality of language, also contributes to the above analogy. With this provocation, according to Lehmann, the representative function of language is encroached upon; instead of linguistic representation, the placement of voices, words, sounds, etc. becomes more important. Finally, they are controlled by the rule of stage composition, not by a presupposed "meaning."<sup>55</sup> "The cut between being and meaning is shocking: something is exposed with all the vehemence of suggested importance—but then does not allow recognition of the expected meaning."<sup>56</sup> Lehmann will continue with an example: Gertrude Stein, using the techniques of repeated variation, then separating plausible semantic compounds and privileging formal arrangements according to syntactic or musical principles (alliteration, etc.), annulled teleological meaningfulness and temporality, thus bringing the language closer to the state of the exposed object.<sup>57</sup>

Just as the exposed language made of "ground" words confronts teleology and the assumption of a linear flow of time, noise also brings about a kind of reorganization of the sensorium.<sup>58</sup> Sensations, according to Kendrick, come precisely in relation to interference, not in its negation, whereby noise can even be seen as an organizing principle.<sup>59</sup> From this perspective, noise also becomes a methodological principle that can be applied to different aspects of human life: in socio-political events, communication, philosophy of language, ontology of the world and life, and in art—as could be seen in this performance, but also in the decades of continuous work of the House of Extreme Music Theater.

<sup>54</sup> Indoš and Vrvilo according to Marjanić, "Forca Fiume!," 289.

<sup>55</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theater*, 198.

<sup>56</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theater*, 198. Translated from Croatian by the author of this text.

<sup>57</sup> Lehmann, 198.

<sup>58</sup> Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality*, 107.

<sup>59</sup> Kendrick, 107.

## CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that the noise in the performances of the House of Extreme Music Theater is precisely the result of the dialectic between the traditional conception of noise as deliberate, unwanted or unintended vibration, unpleasant sound devoid of tonal characteristics, structure and therefore harmony on the one hand, and the contemporary conception, which recognizes noise as an alternative, more inclusive form of perception on the other. When individual parts of that whole are distinguished, it is certainly possible to find “pure” noise, for example, the noise of a schachtophone, scraping, banging and tapping on metal sound objects; but the sensorial reorganization in the performances of Vrvilo and Indoš is manifested only in the postdramatic synthesis of all self-sustained, seemingly heterogeneous, elements. This unfoldable fold, although visually attractive, contributes to the fight against occularcentrism,<sup>60</sup> emancipating aurality as an equal, but long neglected, mode of perception. Kendrick will also emphasize that noise, even when it is dramaturgically controlled, as in Indoš and Vrvilo (author’s note), “exceeds our understanding” and brings the unexpected and unexplainable.<sup>61</sup> This is precisely the reason why noise seems to play the role of a messenger of change, and it is precisely because of the assumed transformative power of noise that the performances of the House of Extreme Music Theater at times seem to carry the power of performative utterances.

The fact is that there is no agreement among the theoreticians—and the performers themselves refuse to take a side—about what is the defining genre of the House of Extreme Music Theater’s performances. But the vacillation between the definition of (postdramatic) theater and performance art proved to be an excellent ground for different perspectives that, when united, provide the most complete picture of this phenomenon and its dense intertwining with music and noise. In the case of these artists, as shown in the analysis of the *Schachtophonia Accenni for Kamov*, the concept of noise is certainly related to society and can exert a direct influence on it—precisely as a principle for the reorganization of the sensorium. And although this concept is very close to the side of performance art in the aspiration for the irreversible, ritual transformation of the body and society, in order to see it in the fullness of all its manifestations—through different vocal and playing techniques, the creation and use of sound objects, etc.—a wider, more permeable context is needed, which is provided precisely by the postdramatic theater as a paradigm beyond any paradigm. Furthermore, for future scholarly work, the performance conceptions of the House of Extreme Music Theater should best be viewed within the framework of this independent auditory semiotics in direct connection with musicological apparatus.

Finally, unexpectedness, inexplicability and general novelty that is manifested in the performance conceptions of Indoš and Vrvilo is in a constant wavering between

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<sup>60</sup> Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality*, 104.

<sup>61</sup> Kendrick, 104.



ethical and aesthetic function, as already mentioned above. In the interview with Blažević, Indoš will somewhat reconcile this position, claiming that the challenge of novelty in the theater is more ethical than aesthetical in nature. However, he will conclude that it is precisely from ethical aims that the highest aesthetic values, as well as the ultimate metaphysical questions arise—that is why Indoš and Vrvilo denominate the topics they select through deep archival work as “deserved topics.”<sup>62</sup> The work of the House of Extreme Music Theater therefore shows itself as a constant dialectic between ethics and aesthetics, normality and extraordinariness, theater and performance art, system and “carnival”—which in mutual interaction produce that life-giving energy that is manifested in noise and open to everything that *could* be. And in that sense, it is truly music and noise as theater, and not only music and noise in theater. In the end, to paraphrase Kendrick, it is perhaps even more than an aural experience precisely the root metaphor of our world.<sup>63</sup> ▣

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<sup>62</sup> Blažević, *Conversations*, 246.

<sup>63</sup> Kendrick, *Theatre Aurality*, 107.

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