

Among Slovenian modernist composers, Darijan Božič dedicated the largest part of his work to musical theatre. The genre classifications of his works show that the composer constantly searched for a new form of musical theatre. It would appear that he finally settled on a medium that could almost be designated as a "radio play", with an emphasis usually on the spoken word, accompanied by occasional interventions of instrumental music. Over time, these interventions appeared to lose their modernist edge (harmonic clusters) and approach postmodernism by juxtaposing diverse elements. Thus, a characteristic of Božič's works is their double imbalance: the language strongly dominates the music, while at the same time, the composer's desire to implement avant-garde theatrical procedures in an institutional opera house seems unusual.

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Gregor Pompe studied comparative literature, German language and musicology at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. He is currently a professor at the Department of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, where he also defended his doctoral thesis. He has also lectured at the Faculty of Education, University of Maribor and the Department of Musicology, Karl Franz University in Graz, Austria. The principal areas of his interest include contemporary music and musical theatre. He has published several articles and books. He also works as a music critic and composer.

gregor.pompe@ff.uni-lj.si

Darijan Božič's Musical Theatre Opus in the Context of the Slovenian Musical Theatre Scene: An Escape into the Literary-Dramatic in Opposition to the Desire for the Institutional

Gregor Pompe
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

Opera and Modernism

Despite numerous upheavals and great discussions about the first and also the second death of opera (cf. Žižek and Dolar) in the first quarter of the 21st century, opera is alive and well, as evidenced by the many new stagings of operas, audio and video recordings, and the endless possibilities for online streaming. Opera is not dead. It is, however, facing a serious problem: as an institution, “with each passing year, the opera theatre of everyday practice is becoming more like a museum”, as noted by the musicologist Heinrich Strobel (1898–1970), who also adds, “perhaps opera really is dead” (130).

There are several reasons why there is no real need for the opera to update its repertoire: (1) Opera intendants take care of the need for “innovation” by reviving older, forgotten works from the 18th and 19th centuries. (2) Historical staging practice often casts a completely new light on baroque opera. (3) The so-called director’s theatre, *Regietheater*, which “recasts” old content into a contemporary performance, provides a contemporary feeling in terms of both content and dramaturgy. Equally diverse reasons can answer why contemporary opera as an institution broke its connection to contemporary operatic creativity. The iron repertoire emerged in the first half of the 19th century, mainly through the reprisals of Rossini’s incredibly successful operas. In contrast, the end of repertory opera could be linked to (1) Puccini’s last, even unfinished opera *Turandot* in 1924 and (2) Arnold Schönberg’s (1874–1951) and his pupils’ definitive transition to modernism. Additionally, potential turning points might also be found in (3) the “zero hour” (cf. Brockmann) after World War

II and (4) the economic demands for a sustainable flow of profits, which appears to be more readily achievable by relying on old “hits” rather than taking up “risky” first-time stagings, which most certainly influenced such repertory decisions.

Among the abovementioned possibilities, the most relevant one seems to be the one related to the “zero hour”: the new post-war generation wanted nothing to do with the foundations from which the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships grew. At this very time, opera as an art form and an institution reached its peak by supporting the ruling ideology. It is precisely in the context of moving away from pre-war models that one of the leading post-war musical modernists, Pierre Boulez (1925–2016), famously noted:

Germany’s new opera houses certainly appear very modern – from the outside. On the inside, however, they remain extremely old-fashioned. It is almost impossible to create a modern opera in a theatre where mainly repertoire works are performed. It is quite unfathomable. Blowing up the opera houses would appear to be the most expensive solution. But do you not think that that would also be the most elegant solution? (Schmidt and Hohmeyer 170)

Boulez’s radical opinions became an emblem for a young generation that subscribed to the fetishism of the new and believed in the purifying power of the “zero hour”, while the remaining conservative composers, still looking to the past, automatically became marginalised loners. The only door open to them was the opera house, where they paved their softer “renovation” with operas dealing with plots from antiquity, with a form of literary opera that was able to disguise its conservative composition with strong literary value, and finally with the comic opera, which was given very little space in the 19th century of repertory opera. This changed to a point in the 1960s, when some modernists realised that the older forms could be renewed by appealing to a strong social engagement, as we can see in the operas of Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012), who even moved to Cuba for a couple of years due to his left-wing enthusiasm, and in the works of Luigi Nono (1924–1990), an active member of the Italian Communist Party, who also happened to be Schönberg’s son-in-law.

It was probably Nono, Henze and Luciano Berio (1925–2003) who started exploring new approaches to using the voice as a potential way of renovation, rather than drama and staging possibilities, and thus showed other modernists that it was possible to create opera also in contemporary language, material and forms. There was, however, no longer any talk about opera at all. Nevertheless, just like several other times in its history, the denial of opera paradoxically brought forth several new forms – modernists started composing new musical theatre works that were no longer called operas. Instead, they used many new genre names. Musicology has not yet found a single umbrella term for all such endeavours. However, the name that appears to be most appropriate is the distinctly general term *musical theatre*. The latter goes back

to the tradition of the works by the tandem Weill/Brecht (Salzmann and Desi 13), in which individual theatrical elements did not merge but were deliberately kept apart. The term musical theatre, however, can be used broadly or narrowly – in the broadest sense, it can encompass all musical theatre works from all periods and styles. In a more exclusive sense, it designates quite specific contemporary endeavours. It is precisely due to this confusing duality of the broader and narrower meanings that Hermann Danuser's suggestion of the term *stage compositions* (350) seems interesting in relation to the musical theatre work of the great modernist Mauricio Kagel (1931–2008), who bestowed this genre label onto his greatest work, *Staatstheater* (*State Theatre*, 1970). It was later renamed as anti-opera. In his work, Kagel deconstructed all institutional opera conventions and opera as a musical theatre form, thus reaching the peak of the negative modernist attitude towards opera. At the same time, his approach also marks a clear turn towards searching for new forms and genres that would use the musical theatre medium more appropriately for the modern age.

New Forms and Genres of Musical Theatre

The earliest attempts at new forms of musical theatre can be discerned in the musical works in which scenic elements suddenly became extremely interesting. This approach is particularly characteristic of several works composed by John Cage (1912–1992). In his *Living Room Music* (1940), percussionists use objects that could be found in a typical living room to produce music. Stagings of this work usually include scenographic elements that represent a living room environment (sofa, chest of drawers, club table, etc.). In Cage's *Water Walk* (1959) composition, the performer sets off a variety of sound sources that either contain water or are placed in it so that rather mundane, non-musical elements (e.g., a tea kettle, bathtub, blender, flowerpot, steaming pot, various other vessels) find their way onto the stage thus drawing the spectator's attention not only to more familiar sounds but also, at times, to the rather absurd movements of the performer among various objects and everyday actions. Particularly significant in this respect is the piece *4'33"* (1952), in which, through apparent silence, the composer liberates the most neglected sounds, usually completely ignored in a concert situation. Michael Nyman, however, reminds us that in this piece, the listeners' attention perhaps "shifted from listening to something that wasn't really there, to watching something that was" (72). Cage believes that music is not only what we hear but also all that we can see (Cage et al. 50) – it is a holistic experience of action, and thus for him, any "relevant action is theatrical" (Cage 14). Cage's initial idea was later further radicalised by Dieter Schnebel (1930–2018) with his concept of *visible music*, a typical example of which is the composition *Nostalgia* (1962), written exclusively for a solo conductor who expressively waves their hands through the air, while there are no musicians on stage so that we are bereft of any aural stimuli.

Cage also fulfilled his idea of a theatre that is everywhere around us in a *happening* that he staged at Black Mountain College in 1960. There he randomly linked different activities into a unified artistic action, which can be interpreted today as a precursor to both *performance art* (the performers lent their real bodies to the performance) and *multimedia art* (besides Cage and pianist David Tudor, other performers included dancer Merce Cunningham, painter Robert Rauschenberg and others).

A similar step towards merging the arts, albeit less open, is also characteristic of *instrumental theatre*, of which the most renowned representative is Mauricio Kagel. His works include instrumental pieces in which, besides playing their instruments, musicians perform additional tasks of a more theatrical nature. This is how the gradual appropriation of the characteristics of individual arts began, as noted in Marianne Kesting's famous article, with the telling title "Musicalisation of Theatre. Theatricalisation of Music". Cage's happening can already be understood as the musicalisation of theatre since a composer arranged non-musical actions according to the logic of a precise temporal sequence, which is typically a musical operation. However, the term *composed theatre* (Rebstock and Roesner) is even more articulated. It deals with the treatment of voice, gesture, stage movement, light, sound, visual imagery, stage design and other elements of theatre production through composition techniques, i.e., musical thinking.

Contemporary musical theatre, which merges stage compositions, instrumental theatre, happenings, performance, multimedia projects, composed, total and experimental theatre, draws on theatrical innovations that Gordon Craig, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Antonin Artaud, László Moholy-Nagy and absurdist theatre introduced into performances/projects in the 20th century. It differs from its predecessor opera not only in the sheer breadth of its genre range and the associated terminological ambiguity but, above all, in a series of dramaturgical shifts. Thus, contemporary musical theatre can no longer be understood as a representation of literature: we are often left without a clear plot; linear discursivity is disrupted in favour of fragmentation; language rarely performs its discursive function; and the theatre action itself is not necessarily narrative. Further, the stage action appears to be a metaphor rather than a simulation of reality, and the voice, which has represented the focal point of opera for over three centuries, is no longer a necessary prerequisite. The central focus becomes the physical presence of the performer/actor, who no longer functions as a real theatrical subject. Musical elements are no longer in the foreground, but instead, they are on par with theatrical elements. While this often leads to the merging of different kinds of arts, it is no longer according to Richard Wagner's logic of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, where all the arts are combined into a single amalgamation.

Darijan Božič in the Context of Modernism in Music in Slovenia

Despite major shifts in the global production of musical theatre that were happening in the second half of the 20th century, the musical theatre oeuvre of Darijan Božič (1933–2018), which is the focus of our discussion, must first be observed within the context of Slovenian musical culture. Here, the end of World War II also represents a significant turning point. It could again be understood as a kind of “zero point”, but not so much in the sense of opposing the regime that triggered the cataclysm of the war. Instead, the “zero point” signifies the establishment of a new political system and a new ideology, which, following the Soviet example, initially attempted to control all social subsystems, including the arts. In this respect, however, the new politics were not very consistent, at least as far as music was concerned, which is a characteristically abstract type of art and thus ideologically rather ambivalent – on the one hand, it is hard to make it discursive, while on the other hand, for that very same reason, it is easy to stamp it with virtually any label (cf. Pompe, “Slovenian”). Thus, immediately after 1945, Lucijan Marija Škerjanc (1900–1973) became a leading figure in Slovenian music, despite dedicating his *Symphony No. 3* (1941) to the Fascist Italian authorities in Ljubljana only a short time before that and basing his musical style deep in the emotional colouring of the 19th-century Salon style, making him the epitome of bourgeois sensibilities. A similar situation occurred in opera immediately after the war, as it appears that the first post-war season, in particular, was ostensibly monitored in terms of the repertoire, which meant that the opera gears continued to grind the same as before the war or in Western Europe. The only difference here was that the socialist politics apparently had no idea what to make of opera ideologically and gradually deprived it of financing, which led to the undermining of its social status (Pompe, “Na obrobju” 75), the consequences of which can still be felt to this day.

Darijan Božič’s generation was lucky to escape the times of the most rigid agitprop. At the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, he found friends in a group of composers who strived first to carve out a space for their own pieces and then to go beyond the aesthetic horizons of their professors at the academy, who, following Škerjanc’s logic (which apparently did not clash with the doctrine of socialist realism) were still deeply rooted in the 19th century. Similar aspirations brought together young composers, who as early as 1961 had begun to associate privately, to form the group *Pro musica viva*, in which Darijan Božič worked alongside Ivo Petrić, Alojz Srebotnjak, Jakob Jež, Kruno Cipci, Igor Štuhec, Milan Stibilj and Lojze Lebič (cf. Barbo, *Pro musica*). In his early work in the late 1950s, Božič’s critical attitude towards prevailing institutional models is apparent from the inspiration he took from jazz music, which was initially not very popular with the authorities. But then, at the very beginning of the 1960s, he moved towards the objectivity of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) movement, which was soon followed by the decisive impulses that Slovenian composers got from their

visit to the Warsaw Autumn Festival of Contemporary Music. There, they got wind of the second wave of post-war modernism, which had already surpassed the radicality of the first serial phase by incorporating controlled aleatorics. Božič's compositions soon start to reflect this, and he characteristically draws on three seemingly different sources of inspiration. He is still strongly attracted by (1) the language of jazz, which he supplements with (2) his own harmonic theory, the so-called vertical structures (Božič, "Vertikalne"), for which he is indebted to the New Objectivity of Paul Hindemith and his textbook *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* (1937), adding to these also (3) the logic of collaged juxtaposition. Matjaž Barbo mentions these three elements as "a multilayered sonic collage of layered heterogeneous elements. His compositional language could thus perhaps best be characterised by the term *collage sonore*, which he often uses in the titles of his compositions" (Barbo, "Božič").

New Forms and Genres of Musical Theatre in Božič's Work

The collage technique seems to have been the starting point for the musical theatre work that appealed to him even before he committed himself to modernism. In 1958 and 1960, he thus created two classical operas, which still have not yet been staged. First, he wrote *La Bohème 57* (originally entitled *Ljubezna na Montmartru* [Love in Montmartre]), based on the novella *Quand on aime* by Roland Dorgèles (1885–1973). This opera was still conceived tonally, comprising clearly discernible musical motifs, repeated several times; some segments of the musical flow even develop into clear "numbers". The composer's motivation for choosing the plot is also quite evident, as it deals with a slightly modernised version of amorous intrigues in an artistic environment similar to the one that characterised Puccini's famous opera *La Bohème*. Božič's second work, the one-act opera *Spoštovanja vredna vlačuga* (*The Respectable Prostitute*), was also inspired by French literature, specifically Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905–1980) play of the same name. Here we can see a shift in the theme from melancholic amorous intrigues towards explicit social criticism, as the play raises issues of racism, the relationship between men and women, and the relevance of honesty, as the prostitute turns out to be much more worthy than the presumably respectable townspeople. Although still formally an opera, there is a clear shift in the musical phrasing – here, as a kind of prelude to the later *collage sonore*, Božič juxtaposes cool jazz with the serial technique. The main characters (Lizzie, Fred and The Black Man) are identified by their respective leitmotif, with The Black Man's motif including characteristic jazzy traits, Fred's motif is structured as a twelve-tone series, and the composer also uses a duration series, indicating a desire to move away from dodecaphony towards serialism. However, the latter is not fully realised by completely relying on the structural automatism characteristic of leading European serialists

in the 1950s. It appears as if Božič, in the time of New Objectivity, was writing his *Zeitoper* modelled on works from the 1920s and 1930s – in his opera, he tries to deal with the present, and that is why he also includes the sound of the present, which is represented by jazz forms as well as by the dance music broadcasted from a radio.

It was already in these early operas that Božič's interest in juxtaposing, mixing and collaging became obvious, so it is not surprising that he later developed this line further. Two genre-defying works of his could be seen as an exercise for larger musical theatre works. In the chamber piece *Collage sonore* (1966), we encounter a combination of the auditory and the theatrical. The latter part was performed by two reciters reading from Svetlana Makarovič's book of poems *Somrak (Twilight)*. In musical terms, Božič is split between jazz impulses, the twelve-tone method and a few minor aleatoric evasions. The composer introduces an additional element in the piece *Trije dnevi Ane Frank (Three Days in the Life of Ana Frank, 1963)*, which, in addition to a reciter and a chamber ensemble, also includes a tape recorder and two electronic sound generators. The central focus of the composer's attention appears to be the text, which he tries to soundtrack, which means that we are almost dealing with a kind of musical accompaniment for a radio show.

These examples show that Božič was searching and digging for inspiration primarily at the intersection of the literary, theatrical and musical, most notably in the theatre, as seen by his frequent collaborations with theatre directors for whom he composed stage music. A significant turning point in this respect was Božič's collaboration with the director Mile Korun on the famous performance of *Oresteja (Oresteia)* at the Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana in 1968, which fortunately is sufficiently documented along with a preserved notation of the musical score (cf. *Oresteia*). Božič's score for this stage work includes vocal parts and several parts for a few easy-to-handle instruments (the continuous rhythmic pulsation of sounds made by stones must have been particularly impressive). As a whole, however, the score often resorts to characteristically simple aleatoric formulas, the repetition of tiny material fragments, arranged here in an archaic modal way to suggest some historically distant, i.e., ancient, space, and to simulations of "real" music (whining, whimpering, grating sand in the cemetery). It was probably his collaboration with Korun that made Božič realise that in the standard operatic repertoire, "the director must yield to the score and adapt to the conductor as the foremost interpreter of the score. [...] While in contemporary theatre [...] the primacy of rehearsal management alternates between the conductor and the director" (Ažman 3). In his own words, he became an adherent of

Korun's non-literary theatre, which is no longer particularly special, neither in the visual arts nor in contemporary music. [...] I didn't want to create an opera score that would be sufficiently sonorous in itself but rather a script (just like in a film) from which the performance creators would create the final image of the work. The music must

not dictate or limit the stage action. Instead, it must offer the widest possibilities to the creators. To me, opera is not about music but about theatre in the proper meaning of the word. (Niko Goršič: "Zdaj in nikoli več?"; qtd. in Strgar 35)

Even before he started collaborating with Korun, Božič had created the musical theatre work *Polineikes* (*Polyneices*, 1966), to which he attached the genre label *collage drama*. As musicologist Andrej Rijavec points out, this work was based on Dominik Smole's play *Antigona* (*Antigone*, 1960) and "could be situated between a radio drama and a concert melodrama" (120). The music mainly supports the text, and one could hardly speak of its autonomy, even though the composer uses a unified logic of twelve-tone series divided into smaller units that function like submotifs and have no structural role. The music functions as a kind of backdrop to the recited text, which comes to the fore and is the vehicle of the dramatic and the thematic, while the music is relegated to the ambient background.

His next work, *Iago* (1968), for eight performers and magnetic tape, based on Shakespeare's play *Othello* and the novel *Gottes zweite Garnitur* by Willi Heinrich (1920–2005), was labelled as a *happening*. In the score, the composer himself outlined what he was aiming for this genre label:

The happening should be performed as a ritual or as a children's play, i.e., a performance in which the sequence of words, movements and motions is predetermined and known in advance, allowing only a few variations on the prescribed scheme. However, the intensity of the play should be maximised just like in the case of a ritual or in the case of children's play, in which the actors (be it priests or children) and the spectators (the faithful or children) participate with full commitment. (Božič, *Iago*)

In this piece which revisits the issue of racism, Božič deals with three levels of action: (1) the thoughts, wishes and desires of the main characters that are expressed through the spoken word (Desdemona and Othello, Iago as the title character does not appear at all, a clear influence of Smole's *Antigone*); (2) sound, be it performed live or recorded on tape; while (3) three actors and actresses each create a scenic backdrop by moving around chairs, thus complementing the action. The label *happening* as applying to *Iago* ought to be understood as the composer's desire for multimedia, as he scores both the text and the live sound, recorded sound, soundscape and light-gesture-movement combinations, which of course, does not exactly resonate with the genre notion of happening as envisaged by Cage, for whom the central focal point was the undefined, spatial-situational, real "live" action, rather than the mere juxtaposition of different levels of action and art. Singing is no longer in the forefront, as the main characters instead choose to speak. The musical material is similarly sparse, repetitive and rather heterogeneous (diatonic and blues scales, harmonic clusters, chords built following the logic of vertical structures, recorded, concrete sounds). The composer even mentions "organised improvisation" (Šlamberger 6).

Two years later, the composer produced his most ambitious project till then, entitled *Ares-Eros oz. Lizistrata praznih rok* (*Ares-Eros or Lysistrata of the Empty Hands*, 1970), a musical-scenic play based on ancient Greek motifs, for which he wrote the text himself in the form of a montage of Aristophanes' comedies *Lysistrata* and *Peace*. This work premièred at the Music Biennale Zagreb in 1971 (the composer conducted the orchestra of the Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana, while Mile Korun was the director) but did not receive favourable reviews. Here, the composer apparently combined all of the ideas he had developed as a composer of stage music, marginal examples of instrumental music connected to spoken parts, and new musical theatre experiments. The score is based on the idea of controlled chance operations, with individual simple melodic formulas in-between chromatic dodecaphony and the modality of antiquity, while the harmony relies on vertical structures. The mostly very diluted orchestral textures are interrupted by spoken parts so that the music again serves more to suggest the atmospheres rather than weave its own logic. This quality is not surprising, as the action is quite complex due to its density and is driven forward mainly by the recitatives. In contrast, the rest of the action seems rather ritual, particularly in the last act, conceived as a kind of Dionysia.

His subsequent work, the opera-farce *Lizistrata 75* (*Lysistrata 75*), again draws on the same comedy by Aristophanes. However, this time it was adapted by Smiljan Samec into an updated libretto in which the war between the Athenians and the Spartans is replaced by the football passion of the citizens of the two cities. Despite the new genre label, Božič conceived it according to the same dramaturgical strokes as his previous musical theatre works. In this regard, he found it important to emphasise in an interview that "this is neither an opera nor a drama, but a theatre performance somewhere halfway between these two genres. It is deliberately done this way, since in contemporary theatre, these two genres are increasingly converging" (Božič qtd. in Mracsek 4). The director of both productions of the opera (it was first staged at the Maribor Opera House in 1980 and later in 1997 at the Ljubljana Opera House), Jurij Souček, also felt that genre considerations were of central importance and even went so far as to describe the work as an anti-opera. He wondered whether "I should think of Darijan Božič's *Lysistrata 75* as an opera-farce or as an anti-opera, or even a comedy with musical accompaniment, which is neither of the two" (Souček 8) and then went on to write that he was preparing a premièred of a "farcical non-opera" (9). Despite this genre positioning, an apparent attempt to catch up with modernist conceptions elsewhere in Europe, which, however, appeared rather stale in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the logic of Božič's piece is again similar to that of his earlier works. A diluted – critics even noted that the composer used music primarily as punctuation (Učakar, "Umetniški") – modernist sound prevails, stemming from long restrained chords, often shaped in the form of sound clusters or "vertical structures", aleatoric sequences and a renewed desire for collaged juxtaposition, most

clearly manifested in the singing of football club anthems, backed by a brass band playing live on stage, and children's songs performed by a children's choir. Due to such a collision of the distinctly modernist (clusters) and the tonal and even pop culture (club anthem), this work appears to signal the first traces of postmodernism rather than being an anti-opera.

Božič did not stop searching for a "new" genre, as the ever-new genre labels of his newly produced musical theatre works suggest. Thus, in the same year as *Lysistrata 75*, he also conceived the concert drama *Slovenske pesmi* (*Slovenian Songs*), which is quite similar to Božič's other work for theatre in general features. The label "concert drama", in its duality, probably refers to the fact that these works are not primarily intended for a theatre stage but rather for a concert performance. On the other hand, in terms of dramaturgy, it is their dramatic or literary content that actually drives them forward. Thus, there are no dramatic characters in *Slovenian Songs*; the mezzo-soprano is not a role-bearer. The two announcers and reciters provide the narrative focus and develop typically Slovenian themes such as emigration, World War II and alienation, which also means that we are dealing with a critique of the world from a Slovenian point of view. The composer does not give up basic mise-en-scene elements – the score prescribes certain stage gestures for the performers (at the beginning of the "Peasant" movement, the composer adds the following instruction into the score: "the reciter sits, the singer stands – they are facing slightly away from each other"). In connection to the musical image, which is again quite sparse (the starting point is the material of the "Prelude", which reappears on several occasions, consisting of a harmonic cluster, semitone shifts and a short interval series) and similar to the earlier, "more" stage works, we can see that, despite the new label/form/genre, Božič's basic creative register has not really changed.

In the following decade, Božič created four other quite similar concert dramas. In *Bela krizantema* (*The White Chrysanthemum*, 1976), the composer assembles texts from Ivan Cankar's works *Martin Kačur*, *Hlapec Jernej* and *Bela krizantema* into a textual "script", as he calls it, in order to present to us the fateful figure of Cankar in relation to the Slovenian nation. A similar split between the public and the private also characterises his piece *Maximilien Robespierre* (1978), a concert drama based on the biographical novel *Robespierre* by Rudolf Harms (1901–1984), while at the centre of *Štirinajsta* (*The Fourteenth*, 1980) lies the story of the 14th Partisan Division. Here, the four reciters also become role-players (the first one represents the political commissar of the division, Matevž Hace, the second one is the commander, the third one first acts as one of the soldiers, but later a doctor, while the fourth one is the poet Karel Destovnik Kajuh). The work was written for the Revolution and Music Festival. Finally, in *Slovenski visoki pesmi* (*Slovenian Song of Songs*, 1983), the composer arranged the poems written by Matej Bor and Dragotin Kette into a

dialogue between two lovers, akin to the biblical *Song of Songs*, where the sparseness of the music makes the work appear like a kind of background to a poetry reading. This was probably due to the conservatism of domestic opera institutions, which, despite Božič's success with *Lysistrata 75* in Maribor, were reluctant to take risks with modernist experiments in form, material, content and dramaturgy. A glance at the repertoire of the Ljubljana Opera House shows that from the 1970s on, it virtually stopped staging operas written in the 20th century (Pompe, "Repertoarna").

This was, perhaps, also the reason why Božič used a new, quite telling genre label for his next contribution to opera. In 1985 he completed a "music-scene project", *King Lear*, which premièred the following year at the Opera and Ballet of Slovene National Theatre Maribor. But again, despite the new genre label, Božič stuck to his established practice, which he had roughly outlined as early as 1966 with his *Polyneices*. The text is once again a collage of excerpts from Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, his sonnets and old English poems. This time the musical image itself was likewise designed in the manner of a collage, using pre-existing material, for which the composer borrowed songs from John Gay's (1685–1732) famous work *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), while Božič derived the orchestral music in some cases from his previous works *Audiospectrum* (1972) and *Audiostrukturae* (1973). Thus the composer devoted most of his originality to the story, in which the titular character is obviously mentally disturbed from the very beginning, which leads him to commit several heinous and bloody deeds. The entire dramaturgy of the work is woven around a number of dualities: live music is "countered" by the sound of an orchestral recording, spoken text by singing, the world of modernist music by medieval songs, vertical structures by harmonic clusters, all of which probably represent the clash of the real and the imaginary world.

Božič adopted a very similar strategy when conceiving his most comprehensive work *Telmah* (1989), for which he again invented a new genre label: *musical-theatre happening in the theatre – afternoon, evening and late-night*, in which we can find a synthesis of several models. "Happening in the theatre" clearly refers to Kagel's flagship project *State Theatre*, in which visitors witnessed all kinds of actions taking place throughout the theatre building. Likewise, Božič aspired to make the entire ritual of coming to the theatre part of the performance.¹ The division into three parts of the day suggests a

1 In this respect, it is interesting to read the composer's instructions for the interval: "The interval should not be an ordinary theatrical break between two acts, but a directed action. In a certain sense, it makes part of the performance. It should be combined with some typical Slovenian cultural event, such as a 'book fair', a major anniversary of some association (artistic photography, various musicians' associations), etc. A special event could also be organised for the occasion: e.g., an exhibition about the life and work of Mirko Polič, Hinko Leskovšek or Niko Štritof. It is also possible to include – as was the custom in Elizabethan times – performances by smaller theatre or musical groups (chamber ensembles, soloists). The audience's attitude to the theatrical happening of 'Telmah' should be like that of the courtiers to the 'Mousetrap' in the play. Everything that is going on serves to relax the audience and prepare them for the banquet. After this comes dinner as if the host were Claudius or Telmah – not literally, of course. Thus, the interval between the two acts can last for a longer time. It helps to transform a conventional two-hour performance into a theatrical happening that in the context of Shakespeare's stories brings together both the performers and the visitors for the better part of the day: from the afternoon through the evening and late into the night".

trilogy modelled on the example of Wagner's tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), which was conceived to take place over four consecutive days, or perhaps even Stockhausen's heptalogy *Licht* (*Light*), in which each unit is dedicated to one day of the week and accordingly bears its name. Božič again composed the text himself, using a montage of texts from various Shakespeare's plays (*Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Henry VIII*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*), his sonnets, and Robert Bolt's (1924–1995) play *A Man for All Seasons* while using very little original musical material, this time resorting to the orchestrations of the motets from Jacobus Gallus's (1550–1591) *Opus musicum* collection, which of course evokes the music from Shakespeare's times. The extensive score also includes video and audio recordings – suggesting a desire for a broader multimedia approach – and the eclectic juxtaposition and collage of Renaissance music with modernist harmonic clusters, the twelve-tone method, jazz interventions and vertical structures. Thus this piece is closely dependent on postmodernism in style. Besides *King Lear*, Božič here also travesties Hamlet, wondering what would happen if the titular character did become King of Denmark after all. His answer is linked to the introduction of other Shakespeare's plays, which shows that he assumes that Hamlet would take on the traits of Macbeth, Henry VIII and others if this were the case. Božič is confident that he is approaching the model of director's theatre (Menart 48). Just like in *King Lear*, the opposition of disparate elements served Božič as a basis for his dramaturgical approach:

The whole play is built on combining theatrical elements “by two”, first of all, drama and music. The dramatic elements consist of scenes and the musical ones of movements. Furthermore, the play is structured into two parts: the first one focuses on the text and its dramatic build, while the second one focuses on the music with an operatic conception of staging. [...] The language is likewise subjected to a double treatment: spoken lines vs singing. The duality of the image: live action on stage vs film and TV clips. There are two ways in which the music is performed: live singing vs playing (reproduction of recordings). Furthermore, combining scored music (tradition) vs improvisation (free-jazz).²

The work is thus conceived in the traditional form of a number opera (see Table 1), i.e., consisting of individual, completed units, often based on Renaissance dances (almain, corant, sarabande, jig). At the same time, the composer is convinced that he has established the form of these parts symphonically.³ Interestingly, the critics acknowledged the connection to postmodernism, with Tone Partljič noting that the play is a “postmodernist reproduction” (Hostnik Šetinc). However, the composer initially dismissed postmodernism as a label given to “many a thing that is trying

² The folder with the compositions of Darijan Božič entitled “Opera” is kept in the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

³ Božič writes that this is according to the logic “based on the construction of a symphony”. Cf. the score.

to establish itself: from ignorance of the techniques of strict phrasing to the lack of knowledge about the twelve-tone system, to ‘computer music’ and any systems whatsoever. It is becoming rather messy” (Sajovic 4). But later, during the creation of *Telmah*, he nevertheless accepted it as “a relief where you can use any musical technique”, which is, in fact, what we can notice in this “musical theatre development” (Hostnik Šetinc).

Table 1: The distribution of numbers in Božič's *Telmah* (taken from the composer's table of contents in the score).

Act	Title	Act	Title
1	INTRODUCTION	40	Agnus Dei / Coronation of Ophelia
2	Part One: INFANS – INTRADA	41	Sanctus / Coronation of Telmah
3	PICTURE 1	42	Gloria
4	SECOND IMAGE: almain	43	PICTURE XV: almain
5	DIALOG	44	Corant
6	CORANT	45	Dialogue
7	DRAMATIC SCENE	46	Sarabande
8	SARABANDE	47	Dialogue
9	DIALOGUE	48	Jig
10	JIG	49	PICTURE XVI: Telmah – third monologue
11	PICTURE III: dialogue	50	Love scene, Horatio is led to the execution – aria
12	FOURTH IMAGE: the Lords' tippie	51	INTERLUDE
13	Dramatic scene	52	PICTURE XVII: Camp, soldiers' choir
14	Telmah – first monologue	53	Telmah's phantoms
15	The scene before the performance	54	Battle
16	THE MOUSETRAP	55	Erinyes
17	Telmah – second monologue	56	PICTURE XVIII: party at Ophelia's
18	King Claudius: scene and aria	57	Fanfare
19	PICTURE V: recitative	58	Telmah – fourth monologue
20	INTERLUDE	59	Telmah and More
21	PICTURE VI: Polonius' funeral	60	Telmah with the Erinyes
22	Ophelia – monologue	61	PICTURE XIX: The Sea and the King's Dinner
23	PICTURE VII: scene on the tower	62	Scene and aria of the Bishop of York
24	PICTURE VIII: scene and aria of the Ghost	63	PICTURE XX: almain
25	The Werewolf	64	Corant
26	PICTURE IX: love scene	65	Sarabande
27	PICTURE X: duel	66	Jig

28	Dramatic scene and recitative		67	PICTURE XXI: Telmah kills Ophelia
29	FIRST FINALE		68	After the murder
30	INTERVAL		69	PICTURE XXII: scene and aria of the Queen
31	External introduction to Part II		70	PICTURE XXIII: a night on the tower
32	Internal introduction to Part II		71	TV clip: the Birnam Wood
33	Part Two: REX MORTIFER		72	Telmah with the dead mother
34	PICTURE XII		73	PICTURE XXIV: the dance of branches and knives
35	Fugatto		74	Telmah vs Malcolm
36	Performance by the actors		75	APOTHEOSIS
37	Hastings is being led		76	Conclusion – IN
38	Ophelia arranges to marry; Hastings is killed		77	Conclusion – OFF
39	PICTURE XIV: TE DEUM – Kyrie/ wedding			

There are two more “later” works worth mentioning, which apparently show that Božič did venture to do some additional theatrical experiments. He was, however, not overly satisfied, at least with the performance of *Provokativne variacije* (*Provocative Variations*, 1986), which is probably why he did not continue along this path. In fact, the work features the genre label “controlled improvisation of an artistic encounter”. The composer again edited various texts (poems by France Prešeren, Gregor Strniša, Ciril Zlobec, Ivan Minatti, aphorisms by Žarko Petan and an interview with the actor Radko Polič from *Start* magazine). The work unfolds as a conversation between the musician and the actor, who raise various topics and quote various writers. Later, the actor also involves the audience in the communication by provoking them with questions, such as what they think about having sex without love. Paradoxically, although the score allows both the actor and the musicians to act relatively freely, the composer was not satisfied with the performance, especially with Radko Polič’s acting,⁴ even though Polič had performed brilliantly in Božič’s previous musical theatre works. This shows that deep down in his essence, Božič, despite his commitment to all things contemporary, open and experimental, nevertheless remained conservative and dependent on pre-established forms and solutions.

Perhaps this is why in his last work, which could still be considered in the context of musical theatre, he moved towards another possibility for finding innovative solutions. Thus, he conceived *Samorog* (*The Unicorn*, 1992) as a “multimedia project”. He wrote it for the opening of an exhibition of animal sculptures by Janez Boljka (1931–2013) in the Arboretum Volčji Potok. It seems that, just like in *King Lear* and

⁴ The National and University Library Music Collection holds a letter from the author to the actor, in which he explicitly accuses the latter of “spitting” on his art.

Telmah, the composer is moving away from active composition and becoming more and more a kind of “director” of multimedia happening, i.e., he is transposing the idea of music collage to combining diverse kinds of arts. Thus he uses the text by playwright Gregor Strniša and once again also quotations from Gallus. However, what seems to be most important to him here is the spatial arrangement of the musical “happening” (the project took place outdoors), which attempts to take into account the characteristics of the location (see Figure 1), and the spectacular treatment of pyrotechnics. As Božič’s final contribution to musical theatre, *The Unicorn* can thus only be understood as further withdrawal from music and its complete assimilation to other arts, which is a process that was evident already in the composer’s earliest modernist encounters with the stage.

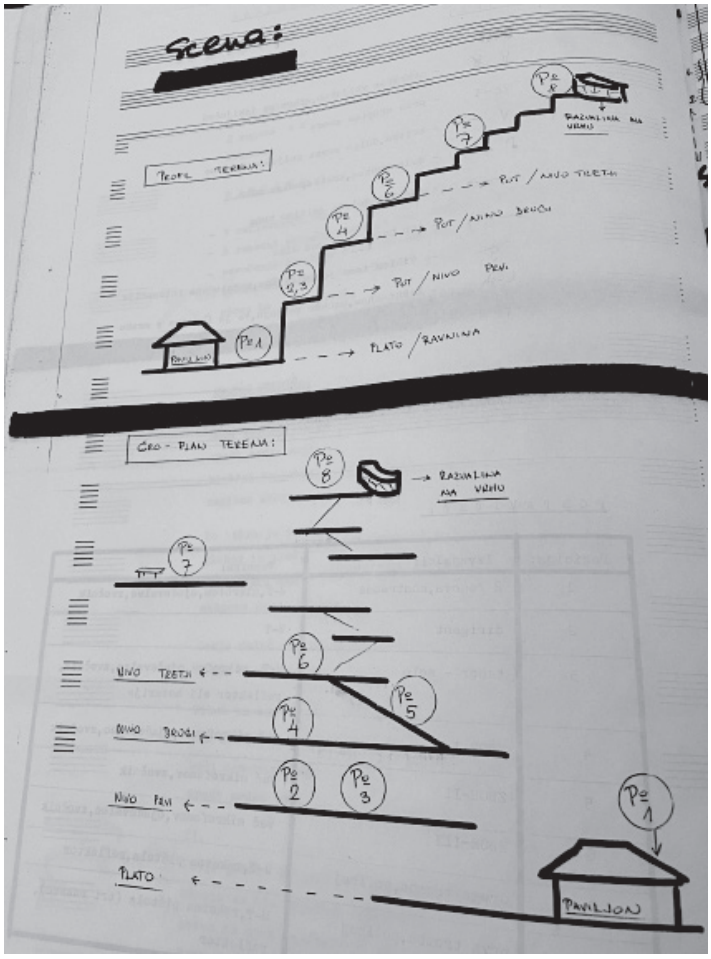


Figure 1: Ideas related to a specific location in Božič’s *The Unicorn*.

Conclusion: double imbalance

The overview of Božič's musical theatre opus leaves us with a clear impression that the composer spent his entire career – from 1958, when he wrote his first, still classical opera, to 1992, when he completed his work in musical theatre with *The Unicorn* (although there is one more work that has been preserved, the composer's own text for "a multimedia project based on the life of composer Jacobus Gallus, *Ecce, Carniolus!*") – looking for the ideal genre and form, which would, of course, resonate as closely as possible with modernity, influenced in almost equal parts by Western European modernist musical impulses as well as his knowledge about the Slovenian theatre scene. Such searching and probing and commitment to all things contemporary, perhaps even "progressive", is evidenced by a mere examination of the genre labels of Božič's works:

Table 2: Božič's musical theatre works.

Title	Year of creation	Genre label
<i>Boheme '57 (Love in Montmartre)</i>	1958	lyrical-comic opera
<i>A Respectable Prostitute</i>	1960	one-act opera
<i>Polyneices</i>	1966	collage drama
<i>Iago</i>	1968	happening
<i>Ares-Eros (Lysistrata of the Empty Hands)</i>	1970	musical-scenic drama
<i>Lysistrata '75</i>	1975	opera-farce
<i>The White Chrysanthemum</i>	1976	concert drama
<i>Maximilien Robespierre</i>	1978	concert drama
<i>Fourteenth</i>	1980	concert drama
<i>Slovenian Song of Songs</i>	1983	concert drama
<i>King Lear</i>	1985	musical-scenic project
<i>Hamlet</i>	1985	musical-scenic project
<i>Provocative Meditations</i>	1986	controlled improvisation of an artistic encounter
<i>Telmah</i>	1989	musical-theatrical happening in the theatre
<i>"Ecce, Carniolus!" (unfinished)</i>	(1992)	multimedia project
<i>The Unicorn</i>	1992	multimedia project

Except for the label *concert drama*, which is a borderline genre, as it is positioned in-between theatre and the standard concert form, the composer has chosen a new label for virtually every new musical theatre project, while the only real change

led from regularly including the term “drama” to replace it with the label “project”, which indicates a shift from subordinating music to drama to increasingly including multimedia. However, a closer inspection of the works indicates that they are unusually similar in their dramaturgical and musical logic, despite the different genre labels and that Božič outlined the basic features already in *Polyneices*, his first modernist musical theatre work. It was there that he established a special relationship between the literary, the musical and the dramatic. The music increasingly recedes into the background. The content focus shifts to the text, which is usually spoken: the music is atmospherically adapted to the text, and all the dramatic accents also derive from it. The musicologist Andrej Rijavec already first noted that the expressive gravitas of Božič’s works is more dependent on the selection of text rather than on the musical parts (123). Paradoxically, Božič’s works, thus, rely heavily on the performances of dramatic actors or reciters, particularly, at least in the concert dramas *The White Chrysanthemum* and *Maximilien Robespierre*, on the excellent performances by Radko Polič, even though he later failed the composer in his experiments that reached beyond the boundaries of the literary.

There is, however, another paradox characteristic of Božič’s work. Although he downplayed the musical part and gave the literary text and dramatic action precedence over the music, he nevertheless constantly tried to realise his works in institutional opera theatres. The institutions, however, turned a deaf ear to contemporary music and modern theatrical approaches, be it at home or abroad (an important exception in this respect being the Hamburg State Opera between 1959 and 1973, when Rolf Liebermann (1910–1999) was its artistic director, who commissioned no fewer than 24 new works during that period). However, Božič never considered the possibilities of alternative venues, of a more intimate chamber music approach, of specialised ensembles for contemporary music, which indicates a curious cross-fertilisation of the institutional and the non-institutional. In other words: after a period during which they had to fight for recognition while at the same time deconstructing the traditional heritage of their professors, the leading Slovenian representatives of musical modernism gathered in the Pro musica viva group took over the very same institutional positions that were previously held by their opponents (Darijan Božič, for example, became the artistic director and general manager of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra (1970–1974) and later general manager of the Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana (1995–1998)). Probably this refusal on the part of institutions to accept new musical theatre solutions forced Božič to invent the borderline genre of concert drama, exchanging the institution of opera for the classical concert stage – as symphony orchestras proved to be more open to contemporary experimentation. In this medium, Božič was able to realise his idea of the convergence of literature, drama and music. Thus, in the end, one could argue that the attempt to contextualise Božič’s musical theatre work indicates a double

imbalance. In his musical theatre works, he fully prioritised the literary-dramatic elements, keeping the music at the level of accompaniment so that his musical theatre works are sometimes difficult to distinguish from stage music or musical accompaniment to a radio play. On the other hand, his search for new musical theatre genres indicates that he moved beyond the traditional opera institutions, which the composer nevertheless endeavoured to realise in those institutions. This resulted in his resignation and him giving up musical theatre and moving towards multimedia, which would later probably be followed by the next logical step, i.e., a retreat into the digital and the virtual. Thus, Božič's work was not only a product of his character and time but also, to a large extent, of space.

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