

Interview with Vladimír Hirsch :: June 2005



Now that this opus is finally out, the very first thing I want to ask is if you are satisfied with the final result.

Vladimír Hirsch: Absolutely. The long waiting for the release of this project has been indisputably paid off. Through several adaptation, not only we grasped the form we are satisfied with and that moved our work forward, but also we found a publisher that makes us happy to cooperate with.

How has the reaction been to this release? Can you tell us specific highlights or downfalls you've felt from feedback given to you?

It's rather early to tell, nonetheless existing reactions are more than favorable and reassert the revival of Skrol oeuvre. I thought about concluding this chapter exactly with "Dances and Marches". The results convince me of possibility to continue with no worry of stagnation.

Going through some history, the music on this album was originally written in 1997. Why was it not released then?

In summer 1997, I prepared the framework of an album formed by my suite with rather Tom Saivon's laconic name "Dances and Marches". We finished it together in 1999, yet the outcome of our studio work disappointed us. So this project was laid aside for some time. Then the album was adapted again and again, I included some entirely new composition versions and it was finalized in 2002.

Why have you felt the need to remake it on 2002? Again, why was it not released then?

Skrol released their first two albums ("Heretical Antiphony" and "Insomnia Dei") at the German label Membrum Debile Propaganda and American label Chromosome. The MDP promised to release "Dances and Marches" as well. The communication with the publisher was troublesome, we could not accept his conditions (plus his label collapsed and disappeared mysteriously in the end). Well, we looked for another label. We have not succeeded until the verge of 2004 when I was addressed by Rui Carvalheira from Dagaz Music and we reached an fruitful agreement.

Finally on 2005, it sees the light of day. Why have you chosen Dagaz Music for the release? Were you aware it was also their first release ever? Did you know Rui Carvalheira or his work prior to this release?

It was in the luck of the draw. I got to know Rui based of his interest in some of my recordings. His deeper feeling for this kind of music induced our further communication. In the frame of our talk I asked him one day if he was interested in releasing some of our projects. I did not



anticipate that thanks to it Rui would decide to establish the label and Skrol would become its first release. We appreciate it very much and hope deeply to continue in embarked cooperation.

Back to the album, do you think "Dances And Marches For The Orphan Age" still maintains the original spirit of when you wrote it for the first time? Or has the music and its message evolved throughout the years?

The original idea of the project has not changed, nevertheless it was satisfyingly realized with formal and expression revisions. I dare to say that the development happened in spiral. Strangely enough, I was actually more satisfied with the original instrumental recording from 1997 than the studio outcome in 1999. In our opinion, the intent was reached definitively on a higher level.

Do you think the artistic content is still updated nowadays, almost 10 years after it was originally written?

The final version respects the original pattern; some means of expression were innovated, respectively by means of them we have reached the intended form.



How do you describe the music on "Dances And Marches For The Orphan Age"?

Album is based on a more volcanic and martial conception than previous works. The dominant theme is one of abandonment of a socially unacceptable individual, who seeks the raison d'être of his existence and of the world, where he is forced to live, its premises, theorems, their impeachment and yearning for catharsis. The compositions often emanate from a sort of gaping void, akin to an open chasm. Yet it is not a void in the proper sense of the word, since within we feel the presence of something beyond our rationality. The impression of a broad respiring depth, whose dark mouth is surrounded by human mass, where emotionally wrought faces surface from anonymity. The

individual visions of the differing inclinations of SKROL's individual members are projected here over a matrix of a unifying philosophical substratum of the ever-present existential theme.

Skrol current line-up is still the original one, something not easy to accomplish is the actual music scene. Do you Martina and Tom are an essential part of Skrol's music? How can you describe your relation with them and the creative process on "Dances And Marches For The Orphan Age"?

Since the very beginning Skrol are trio Vladimír Hirsch – Martina Sanollová – Tom Saivon, whose roles are relatively unequivocally determined. Composition, instrumentation and main final form of the album is my domain. Martina is an author and main interpret of solo vocal parts, Tom writes lyrics and as a sound alchemist brings up samples, noise substances and produced this album. We are alter ego of each other. It always has been so and is in the case of the latest work as well.

Moving away from the music itself, Tom is the author of Skrol's lyrics. Has he developed all the lyrical concept on "Dances And Marches For The Orphan Age"? How can you describe the lyrical concept on this album?

There is a specific idea of Skrol philosophy. We present our own vision, perception of life and spiritual values. The lyrical concept embraces the variety of themes, emotional outburst stemming out from the existentialist distrust and eternal dispute between man and God. The lyrical part is the result and expression of dialogue between the three of us. That territory of imaginary plains represents pain, suffering and our inner strifes between good and evil and understanding the unity and integrity of all things. The impossibility to consider them indivisible. We feel like orphans but we see the light and hope as well.

Why the choice of the dead dove on the album cover? Has war definitely overcome all possibilities of peace? Do you believe in the concept of peace globally, or do you think it's simply not feasible?

The dove is not taken as a traditional symbol only – its heart stabbed by sword represents the dead spirituality of today as well. Yet, it is not terminated note but call for a change, memento and alarm. We are not resigned, we fight for spirit of things systematically decimated by society and we fight against the inconclusiveness of materialism and globally accepted anthropocentric paradigm as a path to death of this world. In this context, photo collages on the cover are designed in form of a negative. It symbolizes the inverted sight of reality and also remark that each inversion has its opposite, the positive.



What is the Orphan Age? When the music was originally written or now? Both? None?

We are aware that the spirit is adrift in this world, secluded in the middle of broadly accepted spiritlessness. That's why our time is the age of orphans. We realize our music might be found in the role of an uncomfortable artefact. This understanding especially pertains to its presumed misinterpretation as a basically disturbing message.

Looking a bit more into the past, this is Skrol's third full length. How do think the music has evolved since the first release up until now? Does the music reflect your own improvement as an individual, or do you think you have been able to improve yourself due to the music you write?

I hope both ways assert themselves, but evaluation of the result is none of our business.

Moving the light from the project to the person, how do you devone the cultural heritage present in the music? Do you think your own origins and historical background have a huge impact on the music you write?

I focus on contemporary classical musical form with an attempt to enhance its action potential by modern means of expression and by searching for specific processes. I attempt to resume the tradition of rich central European musical history since baroque and above all 20th century Czech and other Slavic music. I draw inspiration from first Leoš Janáček, Igor Stravinskij, later also Miloslav Kabelác. I try to attain my own clear-cut position both in tone creative principles as in composition style and to enhance expressional agenses of orchestration by the work with sound. I want to show new important role of not quite musical components in it. This is description of my formal attitudes to composing only.

Can you give us some insight on your musical background? How were you introduced to music? What drove you to play music, and specifically this kind of music?

I started as piano and organ player, yet never was attracted to interpret somebody else's compositions, I wanted to create my own music. I have been composing since the age of 16 but it took a very long time to find the philosophy, style and form of the work that I could consider as self-revelation. I revere roots and tradition of music from my region. It was always imbued by philosophy I resonate with. Therefore it is a question of historical context. Of course, my heart belongs to different faces of music as well, e.g. Swans or Art Zoyd. Based on this, my idea of



integrated music was born, grew out of it. Music which is not any sort of artificial synthesis, yet through the natural process evolves into pure, further indivisible substance. This specific process was described in several essays of mine.

Do you have any philosophical / political belief? How does that belief reflect in your music?

I am a Catholic, more of philosophical than practical type. I felt a strong impact of novotomists in forefront with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and by writers Graham Greene and Francois Mauriac. I firmly believe that my philosophical mindset has been reflected in music I create. However, I don't express theses, sometimes I use instead methods of a very strong confrontation which might possibly result in controversial output. But it's not, I stand for the belief there is no cognition without opinion conflict.

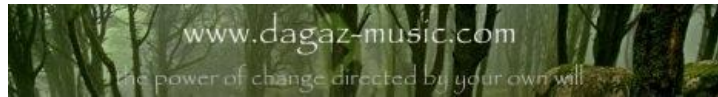


Besides Skrol, you also have Aghiatrias and Zygoté as musical projects. What are the main differences between the three? Why do you feel the need to explore three different musical paths?

Skrol is a project which doesn't completely deny residues of rock principles. At least minimally, it is music paying respect to traditional song form. Aghiatrias is a more abstract sprout of morphologically complex sound constructions and compositional techniques. Zygoté is a dialogue of two stances, the rock-simple composition geometry on the one hand and less graspable amorphous noise structures on the other.

Now that this album has seen the light of day, what are your projects for the future, both with Skrol and besides Skrol? Are you already at work on another project, or still focusing only on this work's promotion?

This April, I have finished my solo work „Nonterra“ and currently we are working with Tom on 4th Aghiatrias album „Ethos“. Meanwhile we are preparing the remaster of Zygoté album „Geometrie nevedomí“ that is planned to be released by Dagaz Music at the eve of this year.



Are any live performances scheduled for the promotion to this album? From what I've read (I still hadn't the chance to see you live), your live performances are quite a treat. Any memories that pop to mind of some special live appearance? Any plans to play in Portugal in the future?

For sure, our performances are rare and controversial in its oppressive and uncompromising nature and impact. Sometimes, the difference between our studio output and live performance expression is quite strongly present. Since Skrol beginning in 1997, we have played mostly in Czechia, Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Holland and also toured the USA once. We use our own Skrol stage strategy - special and various means of visualization, including masks, fire effects and video projection. With Rui, we plan live shows in Sintra and Portugal in general next spring.

Just to wrap things up, what's the thing that most excites and disgusts you in the music scene nowadays? Are there any projects that caught your attention lately?

I feel so much absorbed by music I create that there is not often space and mood for listening to another one. If I am able to give an ear to any other music, mostly it's the one far from that type I compose. I might find just only few projects that attract my attention in last years. Lately, for example German perfo-artist CO Caspar and Czech project Tábor Radosti. Considering my disgust you are asking, I will try to choose only the peaks of it. Above all, there are many multiethnic hybridisms and various fashion styles which remind me jazz-rock masturbation of seventies. Concluding in short, I am not markedly interested in other music. Don't get me wrong but this is not ignorance or neglecting.

For those who want to know more about Vladimir Hirsch and his projects, visit his website at <http://www.vladimirhirsch.com/>
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